Education in City Gardens
Staying relevant in times of change

Botanic Gardens Conservation International
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Social change
Social change

Tara Todras-Whitehill, International Rescue Committee
Climate change
Climate change
CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

Closed Today
How can botanic gardens stay open—and relevant—in a changing world?
How can botanic gardens stay open—and relevant—in a changing world?

Social-environmental change

Oxfam East Africa
How can botanic gardens stay open—and relevant—in a changing world?

Conservation behaviors
How can botanic gardens stay open—and relevant—in a changing world?

Conservation behaviors

Organizational change
Botanic gardens: Staying relevant

Botanic gardens: Staying relevant

Outcomes

• Confidence
• Connection to nature
• Trust
• Social interactions across different backgrounds

We wanted to be able to talk about tree conservation and climate change but [it became clear] this is not necessarily what these groups want to talk about.

Ben Oliver, Learning and Participation Manager, Westonbirt, The National Arboretum

Outcomes

• Most projects focused on social inclusion, not environmental issues.

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• **Most projects focused on social inclusion, not environmental issues.**

• **They tended to avoid directly tackling ‘problematic’ environmental issues, such as climate change.**

• **Bringing together social and environmental concerns remains a challenge.**


Civic Ecology Practice

local environmental *stewardship actions*

to enhance

*green infrastructure*

and

*community well-being*

in cities and other human-dominated systems

Social-Environmental Approach

Conservation

Social outcomes
- Confidence
- Connection to nature
- Trust
- Social interactions across different backgrounds
Self-efficacy

Beliefs about whether one's actions will achieve their individual or group goals.

Built through:
• Mastery experiences
• Role models
• Supportive social relations

Civic Ecology / Communities in Nature: Social outcomes
Nature connection

Feeling of being connected and belonging to the natural community

Built through:
long-term, repeated, sensory experiences in nature, often with family members
Sense of place

Feelings of attachment to a place and meanings attributed to a place.

Built through:

• Recreational activities
• Stewardship
• Citizen science and action research
• Unstructured time in nature
Social capital
(trust, social connections)

Trusting relationships and cooperation for mutual benefit

Built through:
- Challenging cooperative activities coupled with support
- Fairness and open communication
- Community partnerships

Civic Ecology / Communities in Nature: Social outcomes
Conservation

Conservation behaviors (e.g., green school designation)

Self-efficacy
Connection to nature
Sense of place
Social capital

Garden Activities
Civic Ecology Practices
Evaluation: How do we know?

Pre-post surveys

• Self-efficacy
• Connection to nature
• Sense of place
• Trust

Sense of Place Survey

Place Attachment Scale
• The Bronx is the best place for what I like to do.
• I feel like the Bronx is part of me.
...

Ecological Place Meaning Scale
• The Bronx is a place to watch animals and birds.
• The Bronx is a place where people can find nature.
• The Bronx is a place to grow food.
...

Evaluation: How do we know?

Stories and narrative
Evaluation: How do we know?

Embedded evaluation

• photo elicitation

Evaluation: How do we know?

Most Significant Change

“During the last month, what was the most significant change you experienced through participation in the program?”

Evaluation: How do we know?

Appreciate evaluation

• participant observation

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Conservation behaviors
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Conservation behaviors

Organizational change
Organizational change

• Default options

• Role models
Organizational change

• Greening vacant lots

Organizational change

- Community engagement
Organizational change

- Community support post-disaster
How can botanic gardens stay open—and relevant—in a changing world?

Social-Environmental Approach

Conservation behaviors

Organizational change
THANK YOU!

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