

Evaluation comments from the 6th International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens

Right to reply to – ‘What I would change for the next congress’

Over all

Thank you very much for your comments, it is extremely helpful for us when developing and organising the next congress. We shall take into consideration as many of your comments as possible, including what you enjoyed about the congress. We would like to highlight that we can only include in the programme papers and workshops that have been offered to us from potential presenters – so if there are topics you would particularly like to see included in the next congress – let us know!

Happy people

- Nothing
- Continue to give us this great variety of people, places, ideals – Hope for the future of our green planet

Thanks for this!

Name tags

- Name tags too small
- Bigger nametags with name if country too!
- Name tag print should be bigger with country obvious to see;
- Countries included on name badges
- Participants listed by country as well as alphabetical

We had huge discussions about name tags – we simply could not find any alternative environmentally friendly name tag. The ones we provided were totally recycled after the congress – the card and the metal pin. We could not do this with the regular plastic covered badges normally given out at congresses and felt it was important for us to run the congress in as sustainable a way as possible. It is a good idea about including people's country, we'll do that next time. We still haven't come up with a decent alternative though for the small badges – if anyone has any ideas do get in touch!

Field Trips

- For things like the presentations of activities at Kew have someone evaluate them for educational value first (not educators delivering and not very good practice this time)
- Make the day visit just a visit
- Possibly to stay longer at places like Kew and Oxford BG

- Keep all workshops & paper sessions at conference venue. Visits to other gardens (e.g. Kew) should be just that
- Organisation & movement of groups around the sites, Particularly Kew
- Don't organise four hours of bus trips with very little to do when we get there. Guides were boring
- Program OK except Kew day. Too much things to do and my tour guide not really good
- One full day at Kew should be of alone interest than on more workshop;
- More time needed for travelling from Kew visit to Said event in Oxford

The day at Kew was designed to try to fulfil the needs of as many congress participants as possible. We included workshops and papers for those had been to Kew before, and allowed time to explore for people who had never been there. It was unfortunate that traffic problems delayed our arrival. Next time we will look carefully at the logistics of field trips, which are an important part of any congress.

Catering

- Only vegetarian meals at public programme events
- Food must have meat;
- I feel very strongly that there should have been food available on the free evening. For those of us who come on our own to force oneself into a group for dinner when you have been at the conference less than 24 hours was very difficult. Also the £ is a very strong currency & for most eating out in the UK is expensive. To have a buffet followed by a free evening for people to go out for a drink etc would have been fine. You could even make the buffet optional & you sign in for it but please have something available.
- Logistics of food service (other than Great Hall)
- The Queues

We will continue or extend the primarily vegetarian diet at the next congress as it means that we can be sure to cover everyone's dietary requirements, whatever their religious or cultural background. Plus, it is more environmentally-sound to eat vegetables rather than meat. We included the free evening to give people a chance to explore Oxford for themselves. Had we offered a buffet on the Monday evening we would have had to increase the cost of registration.

Workshops

- More hands-on workshops more spread out so we can participate in a wider number of them vs/ presentations
- Increase more simulation workshops
- I would like to have more practical classworks next time
- Give very clear guidelines for what a workshop is...Not a long talk!
- More practical workshops

- Better Workshops; To select better the paper session's participants, some of them present very poor information;
- Make workshops promise to be participative and a little more active
- More skill sharing in workshop sessions
- Maybe a few more keynote speakers
- Perhaps more workshops
- Too many theoretical and verbal approaches, practical is also necessary
- More facilitated discussions (i.e. Round tables)

Guidelines for running workshops, paper presentations and posters were distributed to all presenters prior to the congress, with detailed information on making a workshop practical and interactive. We will increase the emphasis on this aspect of workshop design in the guidelines for the next congress. Hopefully your comments here will help too!

Programme format

- Keep format of moving sessions and visits in the afternoon
- Too many choices of programmes
- Time for reflection
- The time schedule was very tight. A little bit more time to take breath would be fine
- Possible ways to allow exchanges in-between workshops
- More time between paper sessions/workshops for “networking
- More time to talk with people of all places
- Allow free movement between breakout sessions

The format seemed to work well, but it was a very full congress. We wanted to make sure that as many delegates who wanted to present had an opportunity to do so – thereby creating a very diverse programme. The size of the congress also meant we had to have a larger number of parallel sessions, to make sure that presenters did not have 100 in a workshop.

Including more time for reflection would have been wonderful – particularly for us organisers! However, we were very conscious that the longer the congress is, the more expensive it becomes for people to attend, with additional nights accommodation etc, so we are not sure how to address this issue.

We hoped that the evening events and network meetings might help with the networking, any suggestions on how this can be improved are much appreciated.

We purposely did not allow free movement between sessions as it can be incredibly off-putting for a presenter, particularly if they have not spoken at a congress before, and disruptive to the session as a whole. Next time we shall certainly continue trying to place complimentary papers in the same session for the next congress, but will be maintaining the same rule. It also helps to keep sessions running to time.

Location

- I really would like to have another education congress in a developing country (e.g. Latin America) as our facilities, plant displays, Ed Programmes and all our reality is very different from European countries
- Venue of congress in different country
- More time for regional sessions; There are many differences among countries developed and not developed – Try to separate them in order to know about our necessities
- I would like this congress was celebrated in a non-developed country, because it's there where help in sustainability has sense and for support and see the real difficulties
- Biodiversity is too biodiversity languages, people culture. Here 65% Anglo-Saxons conferences and the rest of the world –
- All the bad things happening in the 3rd world should also be made aware of (like deforestation, maybe in Roots?)

Excellent points about hosting the congress in a developing country – which is why the 3rd International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens was held in India and the 7th congress will be held in South Africa. Where we hold the congress is determined by who offers to host it – bearing in mind that there are cost implications for the host. However, we welcome applications to host the congress, from any country.

We would not want to separate sessions from developed and developing countries as there is so much colleagues can learn from each other's different experiences. Regional meetings were held to address regional issues.

We were very happy in hosting an extremely diverse congress, with participants from 45 countries, and 72 delegates from developing countries. The scholarship programme assisted 32 delegates from 18 different countries. Roots focuses on education in botanic gardens and emphasises the way in which botanic gardens can work with the public to raise awareness about issues connected with sustainability. The BGCI website is also a source of information on these issues.

Sightseeing

- Enough time to explore the city in the evening
- Give delegates time to explore cities and meet friends
- Needed a bit of down time to process info and enjoy local sights

Oxford is a beautiful and fascinating city, we were extremely lucky to hold the congress there. Due to the full schedule, we could not and will not make time for sightseeing in the congress programme. Participants need to book this into their personal schedules when booking accommodation and flights – do bear this in mind for the next congress!

Topics

- Include more (a separate session) for theory based presentations/research e.g. a talk on Plant Blindness by an American Professor for interested parties
- A more theoretical and methodical level at the presentations. More professional & academic criterions to select papers because some of them seem to be talking about EE we have been caring on from long ago. I think papers must have more critic and proposals for improve our EE practice
- To give more attention to spiritual ideas in conservation to go to society worldwide
- More papers about enanceiation (*sic*) (how to say it practically); Education for adults is important, not only children
- More discussion on adult learning & in more interactive learning styles to facilitate creativity and exchange of ideas (and birth of new ones)
- Talking more about constraints and difficulties encountered in educational projects in botanical gardens; Share not only the enthusiasm but also the bad parts of the efforts in education in BG's; Case studies are not only to illustrate great examples but to discuss how to overcome problems as well
- No presentation of the countries natural flora

One theme of the congress was 'Reflection on Practice', to focus specifically on research and evaluation that has been carried out on education in botanic gardens. Many academic speakers were included in the programme to discuss these topics. Next time we will encourage delegates to include more critical reflection within their presentations. We would also welcome more papers on research and evaluation

As with workshops, we did provide guidelines on setting up and presenting papers at the congress. We can make the audience type more explicit for the next congress.

These are very interesting ideas for future presentations – do remember to submit them for the next congress!

Poster session

- To have much time for poster session, it was too short to look carefully and also discuss
- The poster session: give a better space and more time to see the poster and to have more time fro knowing about the experiences of these colleagues
- More time for posters, poster boards numbered (& on programme also) making it easier to find a particular poster;
- Very little time for poster session – mixed with time to eat. I felt so bad because I worked a lot on my poster and very few people saw it because there were tables and chair in front of it

These are interesting points, thank you for bringing them up – we shall definitely look into this when planning the schedule for the next congress.

Length of congress

- Longer meeting
- One day too long
- Too many workshops
- More workshops

Just goes to prove, you can't please all the people all the time!

Translations

- Y el español que sucedió?; Falta más traducción y en el lugar las mesas muy mal acomodadas
- French translation
- La información en internet decía de dos idiomas oficiales. ¿Qué pasó? Con esa organización solo una sala tuvo traducción
- Mejorar la biodiversidad lingüística free languagees
- En la información del congreso decía que era bilingüe: Inglés/Español y eso, solo ocurría en una sala!

We were very keen to get as much of the congress translated into Spanish as possible, but were restricted by the extremely high cost of simultaneous translation. The registration guide stated clearly that Spanish translations would take place only in the main room. We were also fortunate to have Spanish speaking guides during the day visit to Kew. Supplying Spanish in more rooms would have dramatically impacted in registration fees. The next congress will also be in two languages as much as possible.

Technical

- Have laser pointers for presenters to use
- Availability of Wi-Fi

We will take these points into consideration when planning the venue for the next congress.