



BGCI Accreditation

Conservation Practitioner Accreditation Standards Manual

Version 2.0



**BOTANIC
GARDENS**
CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL

About BGCI Accreditation

Introduction

BGCI's Accreditation distinguishes botanic gardens from non-botanic gardens and recognises achievements in plant conservation.

The BGCI Botanic Garden Accreditation is aimed at botanical institutions wishing to establish their credentials as botanic gardens.

The BGCI Conservation Practitioner and Advanced Conservation Practitioner Accreditations recognise conservation-orientated botanic gardens and botanic gardens that focus on conservation actions that support local, national or global conservation goals.



Rationale

BGCI's mission is 'to mobilise botanic gardens and engage partners in securing plant diversity for the well-being of people and the planet'.

Activities that botanic gardens do uniquely well – such as documenting, understanding, growing and conserving plant diversity across the taxonomic array – are not sufficiently recognised by policymakers and funders. This has led to the erosion of the values and activities that define a botanic garden compared to a public park, for example.

The BGCI Botanic Garden Accreditation Scheme assesses and places a high value on these unique skills, knowledge and data in botanic gardens.

It is also BGCI's experience that botanic gardens frequently don't realise that their collections, knowledge, data and skills are highly relevant to the conservation and management of rare and threatened plant diversity.

We believe that accreditation motivates and informs botanic gardens, thus empowering them to do more plant conservation so that we can better achieve our collective missions.

Accreditation can result in tangible benefits for participating gardens – such as recognition, peer comparison, creating standards for excellence, and funding – and will act as a motivator for botanic garden leadership.

Botanic Garden Accreditation	Conservation Practitioner Accreditation	Advanced Conservation Practitioner Accreditation
Open to all institutions	BGCI Members Only	BGCI Members Only
Members: Free Non-Members: \$65	Members: Free Non-Members: Membership Fees	Members: \$500 Non-Members: Membership Fees + \$500

Duration

Accreditation will be granted for a period of 5 years, after which gardens will have to renew their application. Gardens can apply for a different BGCI Accreditation at any time.

Recognition

Certificates of accreditation will be issued together with a certification logo that recipients can use on their website, letterhead, etc. Recently accredited gardens will be highlighted on the BGCI news homepage and in the BGCI newsletter, Cultivate. Botanic gardens accredited as Advanced Conservation Practitioners will be publicised in BGjournal.

Methodology for Accreditation Scheme

BGCI's Botanic Garden Accreditation is designed to be as inclusive as possible, but still ensure a level of standards across botanic gardens. For this reason, the criteria it measures will assess and value the fundamental components of a botanic garden.

BGCI defines these components in the [BGCI Technical Review: defining the botanic garden, and how to measure performance and success.](#)

The BGCI Accreditation assessment criteria can be divided into two categories:

- 1. Policies and Infrastructure:** Policies, infrastructures and practices in place that are fundamental to botanic gardens (e.g. well documented collections, infrastructures, etc.)
- 2. Conservation and Sustainability Activities:** Specific conservation, sustainability and ethical actions, including public engagement, training, research, ex situ conservation, in situ conservation and policy-related activities.

BGCI will assess the policies, infrastructures and practices of candidate gardens through several mechanisms:

- Through an application form and uploaded evidence, which includes documentation such as Strategic Plans, policies, scientific publications, and other types of evidence presented in the form of photos, videos, links, etc.
- Through the candidate's own and BGCI's databases, PlantSearch and ThreatSearch and GardenSearch.

Achieving Accreditation

For Botanic Gardens to achieve the different forms of BGCI Accreditation, they will need to complete the applications found at the following URL: www.bgci.org/accreditation.

These manuals provide details on the standards for accreditation for each BGCI Accreditation. Each manual provides clear indications of targets for each component of accreditation and gives examples of evidence for these targets.



Standards for BGCI Conservation Practitioner Accreditation

BGCI's Conservation Practitioner Accreditation recognises botanic gardens with a conservation-oriented approach. The application process involves filling out a questionnaire and providing documented evidence of activities. The criteria assessed include:

- Leadership commitment to conservation
- Collections of conservation value
- Public engagement on conservation issues
- Conservation horticulture
- Conservation activities
- Conservation scientific research
- Sustainability and ethics
- Staff commitment to conservation
- Network membership

Applications will be reviewed by BGCI. This accreditation is only open to BGCI members and there is no fee. For non-members, gardens can only be assessed as a Conservation Practitioner by becoming members.

Below you will find standards and examples for each of the criteria measured in Conservation Practitioner Accreditation.

Examples of evidence submitted by BGCI Accredited Botanic Gardens can be found at: www.bgci.org/accreditation/

Conservation Practitioner Accreditation Standards

Leadership Commitment to Conservation

Target 1

A strategic plan that encompasses all aspects of the operation of the botanical institution is in place and implemented. This must include a plant conservation element.

Examples of Evidence

The botanical institution's strategic plan. A strategic plan can cover the following areas; these can be part of one document or several:

- Vision and mission
- Institution wide goals, outcomes and objectives
- Organisational or governance
- Conservation priorities
- Research priorities
- Landscape management
- Sustainability
- Visitor, education, or public engagement

A short description on how the strategic plan is being implemented.

Target 2

The botanical institution mission statement includes conservation of plant diversity.

Examples of Evidence

The botanical institution's mission statement.

A link to the mission statement on the botanical institution's website.



Collections of Conservation Value

Target 3

A collections policy that includes management of species of conservation concern is in place and implemented.

Examples of Evidence

The botanical institution's collections policy (or strategy). A collections policy can cover the following areas; these can be part of one document or several:

- Collection's mission
- Collection's scope
- Acquisition (inc. biosecurity; access, intellectual rights and ethics)
- Accessioning and documentation standards
- De-accessioning/plant disposal standards
- Evaluation of collections

Target 4

The botanical institution ensures compliance with sub-national, national or international access and benefit-sharing regulations.

Examples of Evidence

The botanical institution's policies related to national and international access regulations.

BGCI ABS Certification.

Material Transfer Agreements.

Target 5

Permanent living collections documented in plant records database.

Examples of Evidence

Accession level evidence must be provided.

A screenshot of your plant records database (such as BG Base, Iris BG, etc.) or a file of your plant accession records.

If available, provide a weblink to the institution's plant records database.

Target 6

Plant records are uploaded on PlantSearch.

Examples of Evidence

A link to PlantSearch records.

A receipt of the botanic garden's PlantSearch upload.

Target 7

The botanical institution shares collections data.

Examples of Evidence

A link to shared collection data (on PlantSearch or botanical institution's website).

Documents that demonstrate the living collection's data is shared (i.e. data sharing agreements)

Target 8

Material of wild provenance is indicated.

Examples of Evidence

A screenshot of a plant record where wild provenance is indicated and location of wild material specified (accession of wild origin documented).

Target 9

Living collections include plants of conservation concern which are unique or rare in cultivation and/or threatened in the wild.

Examples of Evidence

Note: Unique collections are those that are only found in one institution's collection. Rare collections are those that are found in 5 or less institutions.

Threatened taxa must be listed in ThreatSearch.

PlantSearch download report.

Public Engagement on Conservation Issues

Target 10

Public engagement, educational, or cultural activities have conservation of plant diversity as a major theme.

Examples of Evidence

Detailed description of public engagement, educational, or cultural activities focusing on conservation of plant diversity. E.g.: course curricula or catalogue; examples of events; public interpretation material.

A link to schedule of activities.

Photos from public engagement, educational, or cultural activities and signage.

Videos from public engagement, educational, or cultural activities

Target 11

The importance of the botanical institution's collection and its value for the conservation of plant diversity is highlighted through communication.

Examples of Evidence

Links to newspapers, magazines, social media, blogs, or other media which highlights the importance of the botanical institution's collection and its value for the conservation of plant diversity.

Conservation Horticulture

Target 12

The botanical institution has invasive alien species, pest and disease, or ecological management strategies.

Examples of Evidence

The botanical institution's management strategy on invasive alien species, pests and diseases or ecological management.

Target 13

Native species are part of the botanical institution's living and/or seed bank collections.

Examples of Evidence

List of native species that are cultivated, conserved or managed at the botanical institution.

Photos of native species in the botanical institution's grounds or seed bank.

Target 14

Threatened species are part of the botanical institution's living and/or seed bank collections.

Examples of Evidence

List of threatened species that are cultivated, conserved or managed at the botanical institution.

Photos of threatened species in the botanical institution's grounds or seed bank

Target 15

The botanical institution documents propagation activities for species of conservation concern.

Examples of Evidence

Example of propagation protocols for species of conservation concern.

Conservation Scientific Research

Target 16

The botanical institution is an acknowledged, formal participant in scientific research on plant conservation.

Examples of Evidence

Provide at least one example of scientific activity within the last five years.

Examples could include:

- Peer reviewed paper acknowledging participation from the botanical institution.
- Peer reviewed papers written by visiting scholars, professionals and visitors that use the institution's collections for scientific research.
- Peer reviewed papers written by the botanical institution's staff.



Conservation Activities

Target 17

The botanical institution has a minimum of five activities focused on plant conservation.

Examples of Evidence

Provide evidence for at least five activities.

Capacity building / Public engagement

- Training courses related to plant conservation attended by staff
- Training courses related to plant conservation policy, practice or communication offered
- Conservation volunteer programme in place
- School programmes with plant conservation/environmental education component
- Support staff with formal affiliation with BGCI, IUCN, SSC specialist groups, or other conservation organisation
- Public displays with a conservation or environmental message
- Public events designed to raise awareness of plant conservation and environment

Conservation horticulture

- Horticultural trials (inc. propagation and germination studies) carried out on native and/or threatened taxa
- Improving horticultural knowledge for native and/or threatened taxa
- Invasive species removals and risk assessments

Ex situ conservation of species of conservation concern

- Propagation of species collected in the wild
- Seed conservation of species collected in the wild
- Exchange or supply of wild species material with other conservation practitioners or gardens
- Field gene banks or ex situ collections managed for conservation purposes

In situ conservation of species of conservation concern

- Habitat restoration and species reintroductions
- Natural area management
- Land and habitat protection (through policy and government engagement)
- Native species areas or gardens part of the living collection display
- Field-based ecological studies carried out on native habitats or species
- Population monitoring of native and/or threatened taxa
- Restored and managed natural areas within garden

Policy

- Engagement with local or national policy makers on the development of National Biodiversity Strategies & Action Plans, or equivalents
- Contribute to international plant conservation policy (e.g. the Global Partnership for Plant Conservation, CBD etc.)
- Collections sourced and exchanged in full compliance with the Nagoya Protocol, the Cartagena Protocol and CITES
- Conservation collections policy implemented
- Plant health collections policy implemented
- Invasive species policy implemented
- Gardens registered as national CITES rescue centres / refuges / training centres

Research

- IUCN red listing or conservation assessments compiled at local, national or global levels
- Publication of plant conservation, environmental, traditional knowledge research for policymakers, researchers, or the general public
- Publications on wild (non-domesticated) plant diversity.

Sustainability and Ethics

Target 18

The botanical institution carries out activities focused on sustainability.

Examples of Evidence

Provide evidence demonstrating at least two sustainability activities.

- Waste reduction/recycling schemes in place and on display to the public with appropriate interpretation
- Renewable energy constitutes a proportion of the institution's energy portfolio and energy conservation measures being implemented
- Water saving or recycling schemes in place
- ISO14001 or other recognised sustainability accreditation gained
- Sustainability plan/documentation
- Locally sourced eco-friendly commodities and products sold in retail outlets
- Composting facilities in house
- Use of peat-free compost for most plants in the garden

Target 19

The botanical institution has ethical practices in place.

Examples of Evidence

Provide evidence demonstrating at least one ethical practice.

- Responsible sourcing of commodities and products sold in retail outlets
- Responsible sourcing of materials and plants used by the organisation
- Ethical funding policy in place
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy
- Implementation of best practice in access and benefits sharing
- Leadership commitment to staff and visitor diversity and inclusion

Staff Commitment to Conservation

Target 20

At least one member of staff has plant conservation as part of their job description.

Examples of Evidence

Staff job descriptions that demonstrate that the institution has staff with specialist skills in plant conservation.

Network Membership

Target 21

The botanical institution partners with other botanical institutions, botanical regional, national or international initiatives, or belongs to a botanical network.

Examples of Evidence

A list of the botanical networks for which the botanical institutions is a member.

Partnership agreement with another botanical institution.

Target 22

Staff participate in at least one plant conservation conference or professional meeting each year.

Examples of Evidence

Examples of evidence can include conference programme, attendee list from conference, talk abstract or agenda for a conference for which staff of the botanical institution recently attended.



Cover Image: University Botanic Gardens Ljubljana