Leading Botanic Gardens in a changing world

Jack Hobbs
What was their main reason for visiting the Botanic Gardens?

- Exercise: 35.6%
- Lunch / morning tea / coffee: 22%
- Enjoy plants / trees: 13.6%
- Nice environment to be in: 11.9%
- Take children out: 6.8%
- Other: 10.1%
Botanic Gardens should be about gardens and gardening
BUT not just about that.
We need to provide a wider and richer experience than one focusing simply on plants.
Research themes

- People interested in diverse experiences
- They need a compelling reason to visit
- Time poor
- Information overload
- Growing environmental awareness
Almost everyone stated that they would like to be better at growing plants, there were numerous stories of flora murder - people blame themselves & feel disappointed.

Many people thought that being a good gardener is difficult and takes a lot of time.

There was strong interest in appropriate events.
Our primary purpose? “To engage people with plants and gardens”
Managing our plants and gardens

Plant collections guidelines
Sculpture in the Gardens
More than 366,000 visitors over 3 months

62% of visitors had not visited for six months (227,000)

19% had never visited before (70,000)

54% said they would visit again within 3 months (198,000)

Visitors from further afield
Threatened Native Plant Garden
Hairy willow herb or ‘Hobsonville kakapo’ *Epilobium hirtigerum*
NZ botanic gardens partnership with our Department of Conservation
The stated purpose is to

- Cooperate on plant conservation projects
- Improve coordination
- Increase research capability
- Reduce transaction costs
Camellia transnokoensis  

C. lutchuensis
Star Performers programme
What's this?

Why are there bags on these plants?

We are doing a trial on dwarf Agapanthus cultivars and need to collect the seed.
Please leave them as they are. Thanks.
Oioi (Apodasmia similis)
Wildflower research
Myrtle rust

- Monitor affects on individual plants within species
- Identify & propagate resistant strains
- Seed banking
Visitation
2005 = 465,000
Today = almost 1 million
Market research 2018

(measure changes in awareness, attitudes and appeal)

93% of Aucklanders have heard of the Botanic Gardens (up from 89% in 2012)

73% having previously visited the Auckland Botanic Gardens (up from 68% in 2012).

7% of Aucklanders had never heard of the Auckland Botanic Gardens (down from 12% in 2012).

38% of Aucklanders said they had visited ABG in the last 12 months
55% would like to receive information from ABG on gardening

16% of visitors said they had used ABG information services

80% of people found it appealing to have a list of the best performing plants for Auckland

71% are concerned about threatened native plant species

61% are interested in pesticide-free gardening
Focus now on:

Increased engagement with plants and gardens

Influencing our visitors to become more active gardeners

Planning & advice based on research data

Focus on plant conservation – native & exotic
Health Benefits of Gardening:
• Connection with nature is healthy
• Physical exercise (physical and psychological health)
• Healthier diets
• Social (interaction with others)
Long & short term benefits:
• Amelioration of chronic illness symptoms (anxiety, depression, obesity…)
• Positive emotions: quality of life, general wellbeing
Plant breeding at ABG

High health without pesticides