

Master planning botanic gardens

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Keywords: botanic garden, botanic gardens planning, master planning, strategic planning

What is a master plan and does a botanic garden need one? Many of the world's great botanic gardens have a master plan, usually a 20-year strategic document that sets an agreed direction for the gardens' landscape. A master plan provides a strategy to ensure all projects are well considered, and resources are spent efficiently. They are a once in a generation opportunity to take a big picture look at a garden, what is and is not working, and how to address all problems and opportunities from the small to the great. Master plans guard against ad hoc change, allow sustainable long-term planning, and provide consistency through changes in staff and management. This allows the landscape to better support a gardens' conservation work and ensure they are engaging and welcoming for all who visit, encouraging the enjoyment and appreciation of plants. However, for many reasons, not all gardens may have a master plan, or they may be working to a document that is out of date and no longer relevant. This presentation will discuss the development of master plans for botanic gardens, informed by 20 years' experience in the field. It will include the benefits of a master plan, the time and costs involved, the process to get the best result, and considerations that are unique to botanic gardens and their management. It will also discuss the potential problems that can arise through the process and how to avoid them. Through case studies from Australia, this paper presents a process for master plan development that has been refined over nine different botanic gardens master plans and has led to successful funding and development of many landscape projects. The aim being to help managers develop a master plan that supports everyone who works in, visitors and uses your garden.