

Appendix 1

A Clear Vision for a Bright Future VanDusen Botanical Garden 2000-2005

BACKGROUND

VanDusen Botanical Garden has been open to the public for 25 years and has, from its inception, benefitted from careful stewardship to become the much beloved institution that it is today. VanDusen is owned and operated by the City of Vancouver through the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation (VPB). It is governed in collaboration with the VanDusen Botanical Gardens Association (VBGA), a non-profit association of approximately 7,000 members. The VBGA and the VPB conducted a consultation process to assist them in developing a vision and strategic directions document that will guide garden operations for the next five years.

The consultation process included the public and key stakeholders such as garden staff, volunteers, the VBGA Board and members, VPB Commissioners and staff, representatives from colleges, universities, the horticulture industry, garden clubs, community centre associations, the tourism industry and others. This resulted in an interim consultant's report that formed the basis for the final report.

Consultation activities included:

- A questionnaire
- Workshops
- Open House
- Synthesis/Analysis
- Vision Workshop
- Consultant's Report
- Final Document: *A Clear Vision for a Bright Future*

A Clear Vision for a Bright Future

This document, *A Clear Vision for a Bright Future*, is the result of analyzing and synthesizing information gathered from approximately 450 questionnaires, three half-day workshops, an open house and a one-day vision workshop. This document will be submitted to the VBGA Board and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation for their review and approval.

Many issues have been discussed in an effort to fully explore a new vision for VanDusen Botanical Garden. Central to this discussion is finding an appropriate balance between a public facility that provides education and entertainment to the lay person while also providing education and other services to gardening experts and enthusiasts. This balance between populist and expert, or entertainment and science, is central to developing a new

and effective vision. Also central to this discussion is that the VBGA and VPB improve their working relationship to increase their effectiveness for the good of the garden.

Most importantly, the visioning process has clearly demonstrated the sincere commitment that volunteers, staff and members have to VanDusen Botanical Garden. This personal and professional commitment is rooted in a deep caring for such a unique and special place.

The following document is intended to respect the views of those who have contributed during the consultation process while also providing the best possible guide to the garden for the next five years.

It should be noted here that once the *Clear Vision* document is completed and approved by the VanDusen Botanical Gardens Association Board and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, the Garden Director and staff will be charged with the task of creating a detailed workplan to inform the VBGA Board and the VPB how garden staff and volunteers will implement the vision. The workplan will include specifics such as the required budget, staffing, materials and time required for implementation, and will be developed annually for VBGA Board and VPB approval.

VISION STATEMENT

VanDusen Botanical Garden provides an inspiring and enjoyable environment for visitors of all ages and interests. With its excellent collections and the beauty of their display, the Garden promotes knowledge and understanding of the world of plants and their fundamental importance to life.

Strategic Directions

Public Outreach – *The VanDusen Botanical Garden partners will work to increase the number of visitors to the garden. It will expand its educational programs, develop programming to encourage greater attendance by the multi-cultural community and work to successfully combine pleasurable experiences and knowledge for all ages and levels of horticultural expertise. The Garden will build stronger relationships to potential programming and funding partners. Further, it will utilize additional special events to attract more visitors while ensuring that the Garden's collections are protected.*

1. Increase Visitors

- VanDusen will significantly increase marketing and promotions and will initiate cross-promotions with other gardens and attractions to yield positive attendance and revenues.
- We will review the current policy on free entry to the Garden with a view to providing discounted rates or free periods for visitors not normally able to come.
- Do additional market research as necessary to find out why people come and why they do not come to the garden. Develop detailed information about visitors and potential visitors so that the garden can develop advertising, promotions, displays and educational programs that meet visitor needs. As supported by the market research, target under-represented visitor segments.
- Develop a bold, outstanding key feature in the Garden that will generate broad

public interest. The goal with this feature is to increase the number of local first-time visitors who will then see that there are many other wonderful and educational experiences in the garden worthy of repeat visits, membership and financial support.

- Many Garden visitors are tourists. Build on this market and encourage more tourists by working more closely with Tourism Vancouver, hotels, tour bus companies and by partnering with other gardens around the world.

2. Education

- Adjust educational programs to include more youth and young adults. Educate these visitors with programs that are entertaining and that encourage repeat visits and interest in the Garden.
- Develop educational programs for the multi-cultural community and involve them in designing the programs. Ensure that staff and volunteers understand the needs of ESL visitors.
- Recognizing the importance of gardens within a busy urban area, through its educational programs and displays VanDusen will promote itself as the place where residents of the Lower Mainland can obtain information about such topics as container gardening, low-water gardening, integrated pest management and composting. Consider the introduction of demonstration gardens in this context.
- Emphasize interactive learning with hands-on activities where possible and with computers on site and via the Internet. Expand on the Garden's current website and internet capability.
- Reach out into the community through lecture series, courses and clinics.

3. Conservation

- As part of the world-wide community of botanical gardens, VanDusen recognizes its important role regarding conservation.
- The Garden will take a broad-based and selective approach to conservation in order to provide a high-quality educational experience and contribute to conservation efforts generally.
- Consider the most appropriate means for VanDusen to educate garden visitors about the importance of conservation. The Garden will take a leadership role in educating visitors about natural ecosystems and the flora and fauna that compose them. Low-water gardening, pest management, endangered species and varieties could form part of the educational experience.

4. Customer Service

- VanDusen will provide a welcoming environment for all.
- Phase in improvements to customer service, including development of the garden shop, guide and membership services, more casual food service and better washroom facilities.
- Make it easier and more cost-effective for garden clubs, associations, community centres and other organizations to visit and rent garden facilities, such as the Floral Hall, and display space, such as the Lathhouse.
- Expand volunteer and staff training to ensure that everyone in the Garden organization understands and supports the notion that every connection with a visitor is an educational moment for both parties. Staff and volunteers learn about visitor satisfaction and needs, while visitors learn about staff and volunteer passion for the garden.
- VanDusen neighbours are appreciated as special people, so the Garden will facilitate

a better understanding of their issues as neighbours of the garden and will consider creating a special event for neighbours to encourage their attendance and membership.

5. Diversity

- Vancouver celebrates and values its multi-cultural community. VanDusen will ensure that all members of the community feel welcome. Efforts will therefore be made to provide visitor services in Canada's two official languages as well as the languages of the predominant communities of Vancouver, wherever possible.
- The Garden will encourage all our diverse communities to participate fully in every aspect and level of activity in the Garden.

6. Special Events

- In addition to some of the already successful events, consider music in the Garden, photography exhibits, art events, a wine festival, a haunted-garden event for Halloween, special events to celebrate changing seasons and a horticultural industry showcase. These are just some of the events suggested to encourage more visitors and build new relationships with families, children, the horticultural industry, and organizations who might not otherwise visit the Garden. The intent is to increase public awareness of VanDusen through special events so that those who attend a special event will be encouraged to be a repeat visitor, member and/or donor. Careful consideration needs to be given to the staff and volunteer resources required to host special events.
- All collections must be protected from the potential negative impacts of special events.

7. Membership

- VanDusen Garden benefits from the commitment and energy of its large membership. We will work to expand and diversify this membership base.

8. Volunteers

- Volunteers provide a number of very important functions at the Garden that enhance the visitor experience. VanDusen respects and values these efforts and will support volunteers in all their work.
- We will encourage further development of volunteer activities in support of the Garden, wherever appropriate.
- An effort will be made to seek input from affected volunteer groups during the planning and implementation of projects.

9. Partnerships

- Create and enhance partnerships with schools, colleges and universities, horticulture clubs, and the horticulture industry, especially within the City of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland.
- Build stronger alliances with key organizations in the tourism sector such as Tourism Vancouver, Tourism BC, hotels, tour bus operators and others.
- Consider cooperative partnerships with other botanical gardens, locally, in Canada and in other countries. These can help to pool resources to promote conservation, for example, as well as national and international recognition and visits to the garden.

- Develop stronger relationships with the media.
- Create new and strengthen existing partnerships with donors. (*Refer to Funding and Fundraising for more detail on donor partnerships.*)

Plant Collections – *VanDusen Botanical Garden will work to improve maintenance and enhance the quality of its collections. It will evaluate its existing collections and, under the curatorial leadership of the Garden Director, will determine what needs to be changed or enhanced to support the Public Outreach section of this report. The Garden will consult the multi-cultural community about possible collections that relate more to their community and would therefore attract more visits from the multi-cultural community.*

1. Evaluate the Collection

- Evaluate the existing collection and determine what needs to be changed or enhanced to support the *Public Outreach* section of this report, and to clarify the integrity of the individual areas and the garden as a whole.
- Consider how the collection will clearly define and differentiate itself from the UBC Botanical Garden and Queen Elizabeth Park and other local parks and gardens.

2. Curatorial Expertise

- Curatorial leadership by the Director will ensure that changes and enhancements to the garden maintain, improve and define the collections.
- The Garden Director and staff will develop an annual plan for the collection which will be reviewed and approved by the VBGA and the VPB.

3. Maintenance

- The Garden Director will be responsible for providing appropriate direction to staff in order to improve garden maintenance of the collections to ensure they are healthy and displayed to meet high standards.
- Consider how to better utilize volunteers in improving maintenance.

4. International Recognition

- Consider focusing on VanDusen's unique location and climate in its role as a first-class botanical garden. The garden is internationally recognized for the range of plants grown in Vancouver's temperate climate. This would direct interpretation, lighting, maintenance, plant selection, target audiences and many other decisions.
- Encourage international exchanges and partnerships with other gardens for education and awareness and potential special projects.

Physical Plant, Infrastructure and Maintenance –

VanDusen Botanical Garden will review its physical plant and infrastructure to ensure buildings and facilities support the Public Outreach and Plant Collection section of the report. Repairs and renovations will be done to upgrade roads, drains and trails, and to enhance the library and education capacity. Garden maintenance will be improved through a combination of additional or reallocated staff and the use of volunteers, where appropriate.

1. Enhanced Entrance

- The Garden will enhance the Oak Street entrance by orienting it to the street. A bold, new feature will clearly identify the Garden to those traveling along Oak Street. This would include a signage system that informs and invites new and repeat visitors.

2. New or Renovated Buildings and Facilities

- All buildings and facilities will be evaluated to determine the best allocation of resources to support the outreach programs and customer service. This would include such areas as meeting and lecture space, education and library space, office and storage space, gift shop, washrooms and food service.

3. Garden Maintenance

- Roads, trails and drains and other garden infrastructure will be improved as needed and appropriate. Staffing resources should be sufficient to properly maintain the garden.
- An agreement will be reached about how to appropriately and effectively utilize volunteers to assist with aspects of garden improvements and/or maintenance.

Governance and Leadership – *The VBGA and the VPB will work together to support the Clear Vision for a Bright Future report, to review and endorse the resulting workplan to implement the vision and will review and approve annual updates to the workplan. The Garden Director will have the support of the VBGA and the VPB to manage the Garden. The VBGA and the VPB will set overall direction and the Garden Director will manage operations. The VPB will reaffirm its support of the garden by endorsing the Clear Vision report and by committing to an annual budget that supports Garden operations. Further, the Garden Director will be the senior staff person in charge of Garden operations. The VBGA will strengthen its Board by renewing it with some key new members in support of the Clear Vision report. The VBGA Board will concentrate its efforts to expand relationship building with new program and funding partners.*

1. Governance

- The roles and responsibilities of the governing bodies of the Garden will be clarified and potential new governance structures considered.
- The VPB will commit sufficient funding to support Garden operations.
- The VPB will participate in setting policy in support of the vision and strategic directions and will support and hold the Garden Director responsible for Garden operations.
- Clarified roles of the VBGA and VPB will contribute significantly to the Garden' s progress and renewal.

2. Leadership

- The Garden Director will guide the implementation of the vision and strategic directions process by developing annual workplans. The Garden Director will support the VBGA in its relationship-building work and will contribute to the expansion of program and funding partners.
- All Garden staff, whether employed by the VPB or the VBGA, will work collaboratively to achieve the annual workplans in consultation with the Garden Director.

3. Policy and Operations

- The primary roles of the Boards are policy, fundraising, advocacy and long-term direction and the primary role of staff is operations. This will be a guiding principle to the VBGA, VPB and the Garden Director in developing and implementing the *Clear Vision for a Bright Future* report.

Funding and Fundraising – *VanDusen Botanical Garden will seek the endorsement of the VBGA and VPB for the Clear Vision for a Bright Future report. A renewed VBGA Board will make relationship building with program and funding partners a priority. The Garden Director will establish a workplan, for VBGA and VPB review and approval, that specifies programs and enhancements that will be funded, as appropriate, by the VPB and the VBGA. The VPB will provide sufficient funding to support the on-going operations of a first-class botanical garden. Enhancements will be funded through expanded fundraising efforts by the VBGA Board and membership. Enhancements will be phased in as fundraising targets are met.*

1. Role of the VBGA Board

- The VBGA Board will focus on community outreach and relationship building with existing and potential donors, rather than on day-to-day operations. The VBGA Board will develop a fundraising plan consistent with the *Clear Vision for a Bright Future* report to raise funds for enhancements to the Garden and its programs.
- The Garden Director and VBGA staff, together with the VPB and the VBGA Board, will work to expand relationships with potential donors.
- Board, staff, member and volunteer networks will be explored to expand the Garden's potential donor base.
- The VBGA Board will build relationships with individuals and organizations that have a similar vision, values and direction as the Garden. Educational facilities, the private sector, foundations and others will be approached as program and funding partners.

2. Donor Recognition

- VanDusen Botanical Garden will include an enhanced donor recognition program in its fundraising plan to allow for greater donor participation and appreciation. This will strengthen donor relationships and benefit the garden in the long term.

3. Role of Staff and Volunteers

- Staff and volunteers will be encouraged to support the fundraising plan by sharing their passion for the garden and by encouraging visitors and others to support the garden.

4. Annual Workplan

- An annual workplan, designed to show how the *Clear Vision* report will be implemented, will specify which of the garden programs are current priorities and which are enhancements. Funding (VPB and VBGA) will be approved for priority programs. Enhancements will help focus VBGA fundraising campaigns and will be implemented as fundraising targets are met.