

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EXEMPLARY LIVING PLANT COLLECTION

Excerpted from:

Rakow, D. A., and S. A. Lee. 2011. Public Garden Management. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey. p. 259.

Attaining excellence requires standards and quantifiable goals. Following an intense study of leading gardens around the world, the Chicago Botanic Garden (CBG) staff (Gates 2006) identified twelve characteristics of exemplary living plant collections. Every leading institution has its set of characteristics, though few have codified them as clearly as CBG, where all these criteria are achieved, not just selected ones.

1. **Collections policy and development plans:** based on a unified vision with clear objectives
2. **High diversity:** breadth in taxa and the germplasm represented
3. **Depth of specialization:** including building collection networks with other institutions to end duplicated efforts
4. **Thorough record keeping:** excellent documentation for research and education, not just accession and maintenance records
5. **Care and maintenance:** thriving, nurtured collections
6. **Verification:** ongoing assessment to ensure material is accurately named and authenticated
7. **Original source materials:** provenance from a known wild population or the introducing nursery or other authenticated source.

8. **Conservation value:** individual plants as well as plant communities are managed for the ecological benefits
9. **Expert staff:** knowledge is proprietary and disseminated as such
10. **Public access:** user-friendly collections with broad sharing of knowledge from professional staff
11. **Local or international plant exploration:** for the acquisition of targeted taxa
12. **Relevance:** information, expertise, and collections to meet the needs of diverse audiences over time