



Board of the  
Botanic Gardens *and*  
State Herbarium

# Strategic Plan 2023–2027

**Plants | People | Places | Planet | Potential**

# Reconciliation statement

We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country.

As part of the Department for Environment and Water, we are contributing to the goals outlined in the 2021 DEW Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan.

Our vision for reconciliation is for the relationship between First Nations peoples and the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium to be built on respect, understanding and acknowledgement of the past so that we can move together toward a shared vision.

## Contents

Our vision .....	1
Foreword from the Presiding Member ..	2
Foreword from the Director .....	3
Our mission .....	5
Our values .....	6
Theme 1: Conserving species and natural environments .....	8
Theme 2: Supporting and engaging communities .....	12
Theme 3: Enhancing our organisation and our sustainability .....	16





**Our vision**

# **Plants People Places Planet Potential**

*Our vision is a community that is inspired to contribute to the sustainability of our living world, and understands the vital role of plants, fungi and algae in our ecosystems and to human life.*



## Foreword from the Presiding Member



In 2022, the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium (BGSH) crossed the 165 year mark since the opening of the Adelaide Botanic Garden in October 1857.

BGSH Board members and its Director are custodians of this iconic and historic institution, and are committed to ensuring that we build on the legacy of the past 165 years. Conceived as an integral part of the city in 1836, and 20 years in the planning, the Adelaide Botanic Garden has become the leading visitor destination in the city. 1866 saw the addition of the arboretum of Botanic Park/Tainmuntilla, and the subsequent additions of the Mount Lofty and Wittunga gardens over our history give the BGSH a truly diverse character.

Alongside the public spaces, the scientific work of the BGSH has encompassed the building of a

collection of over a million preserved botanical specimens and a research and seed conservation program that connects deeply with State conservation and environmental monitoring efforts.

Throughout its history, all the gardens have constantly evolved, following new practices in horticulture and garden design, and working with a huge diversity of partner organisations in both the scientific and creative spaces.

The Board of the BGSH have a clear focus on both the longevity and legacy of the organisation, but also on its contemporary and future relevance to the South Australian community. Our strategic plan for the next five years emphasises our roles in both the fields of science and conservation and in supporting and engaging the community. The BGSH's roles in the education and creative sectors is growing, and at a time when national and global economies need to evolve to meet the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, the placement of plants and a love of nature at the centre of the conversation will never be more important.

**Judy Potter**

**Presiding Member**  
Board of the Botanic Gardens  
and State Herbarium

## Foreword from the Director



In an increasingly networked world, connection is fundamental to the future of the Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium (BGSB). As a scientific organisation we are part of local, national and global partnerships that increase our understanding and support more effective conservation of the natural environment.

We have seen how, as societies emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, open-air sites that connect people with nature take on a new meaning for our visitors. In a changing climate and a biodiversity crisis, the scientific and conservation work of collections-based institutions becomes ever more important.

Adelaide Botanic Garden, Botanic Park, Mount Lofty Botanic Garden and Wittunga Botanic Garden each have a unique character and living collection

that reflects the dedicated work of generations of horticulturalists and landscape designers who have created beautiful and diverse public spaces.

Our role in education and community engagement is also shifting as new opportunities for partnership and collaboration emerge. We are re-evaluating our own histories, our relationships with First Nations communities, and the roles we can potentially play exploring human relationships with the natural world.

As we have reviewed our recent past and look towards our future, these key themes have emerged as our primary focus – science and nature, community connection and education, and sustainability and partnership. We see the future as one where we build on the achievements that have brought us to this point and foster the deep relationships that the community has with its gardens and herbarium. To our visitors, friends, volunteers, scientific partners, supporters, creative collaborators and staff, our sincere thanks for your work with us to date, and we look forward to building with you for the future.

### Michael Harvey

**Director**  
Botanic Gardens and  
State Herbarium











## **Our mission**

*We are champions, protectors and storytellers, building on our collections, sites, expertise and partnerships to understand and share how people and plants shape each others' futures.*

*We create and share knowledge of plants, fungi and algae and their roles, to underpin global biodiversity conservation efforts.*

*We care for living, preserved and cultural collections and sites of beauty, heritage and significance.*

*We create landscapes, gardens and displays that attract, surprise and delight visitors. These spaces enhance our city and our state.*

*We work with others to advance knowledge and to bring variety and new perspectives to our sites and collections.*



## Our values

Our core values drive the way we approach our work and work with each other and with our partners and stakeholders:

### Community Connection

Service to the public is at the heart of all we do, creating public spaces and programs, and building knowledge and sharing it openly.

### Excellence

We accept that perfection is impossible but excellence is achievable, and we strive to achieve it in all we deliver.

### Stewardship

We are deeply aware we care for collections and sites that span multiple generations.

### Respect

We respect Australia's unique environment, its First Peoples, our visitors, our partners and each other.

### Curiosity

We are an organisation that demonstrates curiosity to better understand the natural world, our community and our visitors, and how we can best serve all of them.

### Optimism

We bring a fearless and positive attitude to our work, seeking to build on successes and learn from challenges.

## Our focus areas

### 1 Conserving plant species and natural environments

Enhancing collections and our knowledge of plants, making our collections accessible, and learning from others.

### 2 Supporting and engaging communities

Create and showcase our beautiful gardens, and share our knowledge of plants and stories.

### 3 Enhancing our organisation and our sustainability

Ensure a world-class workforce utilising efficient technologies and processes, and ensure diverse and sustainable income.







## Theme 1

# Conserving plant species and natural environments

*Enhancing our collections and  
our knowledge of plants, making  
our collections accessible,  
and learning from others.*





As a collections-based institution, the BGSH acts both to directly conserve species and to provide fundamental botanical research. We provide collections access to support plant and ecosystem conservation on local, state, national and international levels. Our teams engage with communities and organisations with a conservation focus to build our understanding of the state of our ecosystems, key threats and ways of mitigating them, and to share openly that knowledge with others.

**Measures: Growth in collections and collections access, in publications and in research partnerships.**

## Priorities for the next five years

Building our role as **(a) the knowledge hub for plant science** in South Australia, collaborating and sharing knowledge on South Australian flora, safeguarding our collections and making collections-based data freely and widely accessible.

Acting to **(b) investigate, understand and conserve threatened flora**, identifying and tracking invasive species, and working as a trusted partner in species rescue and rehabilitation projects that contribute to the national Threatened Species Action Plan 2022-2032.

Undertaking **(c) future-aware biodiversity projects** to understand the evolutionary adaptations and likely future state of Australian flora, and to build publicly available resources documenting the variability of species traits including morphology, genetic diversity, threats to human health and production systems, species responses to fire, disturbance, and drought.

**(d) Increasing the amount of species growth in situ**, promoting climate adaptation awareness and showcasing climate resilient collections, and identifying strategic opportunities to share our living collections via programs, partnerships, exhibitions, garden displays, publications and online.

**(e) Promoting native flora**, and advocating for nature conservation initiatives as a trusted voice supporting environmental policy development and fostering community support for projects to amplify environmental outcomes.

Seeking opportunities to ensure **(f) traditional knowledge is integrated respectfully with our work** to improve awareness, and supporting the development of displays demonstrating our past, present and future landscapes.





## Case study 1: Restoring lost populations

Our Seed Conservation Centre's  
work on Kangaroo Island

As a response to the catastrophic 2019-20 bushfires, our South Australian Seed Conservation Centre (SASCC) entered into a partnership with the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia, Bio-R, the Paton Family, Troppo Architects and the local community in a bid to safeguard native plants from extinction by creating a Threatened Flora Seed Production Garden.

This garden opened in 2022 and is a genetically diverse, living plant collection that will be used for conservation, restoration and translocation, research and seed banking. It is the result of almost two decades of seed collecting trips to the island by the BGS team.

The garden now includes more than 60 endemic and threatened species from across the island and presents them in a series of interlinked habitats that reflect the local diversity.

Located at Cygnet Park, just 20 minutes from the township of Kingscote, the garden will also serve as a place of education, where researchers, schools, the community, and tourists can learn about Kangaroo Island's flora and fauna and the importance of conservation.







## Case study 2: Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin

BGSH supporting and leading  
a major research project

BGSH staff, facilities and collections provided leadership and critical scientific botanical knowledge to the Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin (HCHB) Program, which is a commitment to restoring the long-term health of the Coorong, one of South Australia's and Australia's iconic natural assets. BGSH Chief Botanist Professor Michelle Waycott acted as the Science Technical Leader for the research program delivering integration of overall science outcomes informing the next steps to ecological restoration of the southern Coorong.

Staff from the BGSH Science and Conservation team supported the aquatic plant research and State Herbarium collections were used to provide a direct evidence base for the historical presence of aquatic plants. The final outcomes of this project, recently presented to senior Commonwealth Environment agency staff, are central to planning future large scale infrastructure management options in the Coorong.



## Theme 2

# Supporting and engaging communities

*Create and showcase our  
beautiful gardens and share our  
knowledge of plants and stories.*





The Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium occupies a series of well-loved public destination gardens, each with its own character and audience. We know that these sites, along with our education and community programming, provide a range of public benefits including places supporting wellbeing, solace and tranquility, spaces for social and family connection, and places of surprise and wonder to inform and inspire current and future generations.

**Measures: Growth in visitation and participation in education and public programs, new creative initiatives in public programs and gardens landscapes and horticulture.**

## Priorities for the next five years

**(a) Creating unique educational opportunities** to ensure that all have access to and appreciation of natural spaces and biodiversity now and into the future.

Playing a key role in education, **(b) developing innovative and engaging life-long learning experiences** across all age groups, creating and inspiring future advocates for nature conservation, the living world and the role of botanic gardens and botanical science.

Extending our work through **(c) outreach and partnership programs** to expand the creative uses of our site and our collections, to extend our reach and amplify our messages, our research and our collections.

Working with community to **(d) support and promote First Nations knowledge and culture**, and reflecting a complete history of our site beyond the formation of the BGSB.

**(e) Promoting urban greening** and showcasing urban greenspace highlighting the sustainability, mental health and wellbeing outcomes from city parks and gardens and developing projects that directly support public education and health and wellbeing outcomes.

Working to more fully **(f) understand our current and potential visitors**, how we can effectively engage with them and serve their needs through our collections, sites and programs and to inspire them to value, protect and conserve native plants and ecosystems.

*Photo opposite: Australia Day Council of SA Mourn in the Morning Smoking Ceremony, 26 January 2021. Glenn Skuthorpe is performing.*





## Case study 3: Therapeutic Horticulture Pilot

Using the Botanic Garden  
for health and wellbeing.

Internationally, there has been a trend towards introducing programs within botanic gardens targeting wellbeing outcomes. The COVID-19 experience reinforced the value of connection to nature and outdoor activities for mental health and wellbeing.

BGSH has trialled programs with different cohorts and delivery modes. Evaluation demonstrated the positive impact that being part of these programs had on all participants.

From 2023, we will engage new partners to expand this area of our public programming, and continue to watch international trends in relation to the social role of botanic gardens.







## Case study 4: Space Botany Digital Education Program

Innovation in education  
programming

With the objective to be a destination of choice for teachers and students, BGSB has a commitment to engaging school-based learners using contemporary educational methods and curriculum-aligned content.

Our Space Botany program reimagines the Bicentennial Conservatory as a Martian biodome, and invites students to explore botanical science as it will be practised in the future, when humans explore options for life beyond Earth.

Using gamification and the unique assets of the Adelaide Botanic Garden, this program leads the way for digital learning opportunities.

Introduction

Because of this, all your systems in the biodome have been locked. We need your help to unlock our next, next system, & our team is asking you to be brave to help them succeed!





## Theme 3

# Enhancing our organisation and our sustainability

*Ensure a world-class workforce utilising efficient technologies and processes, and ensure diverse and sustainable income.*





BGSH faces a range of challenges in the contemporary environment. The demands on both people and budgets of managing living and preserved collections are constant, and rising, as economic and climatic factors shift. While we receive the support of our government and of dedicated and passionate volunteers and donors, we recognise that we must also continually evolve and innovate as an organisation to meet each new challenge.

**Measures: Positive staff morale and retention, growth in volunteer engagement and in self-generated revenue.**

## Priorities for the next five years

**(a) Implementing sustainability measures across all our organisations,** making improvements in water and waste management and in energy use to minimise our own ecological footprint and strive towards carbon neutrality.

**(b) Developing and nurturing our relationships with volunteers** and Friends to create volunteering opportunities and maximise the mutual benefits.

**(c) Implementing commercial, marketing and communications strategies** aimed at enhancing our relevance to the community, government, supporters and commercial partners. We will diversify our sources of revenue to supplement the resources we receive from government to support our scientific and public engagement activities.

**(d) Creating a supportive, inclusive and safe work environment** for staff, Board and volunteers, and developing a workplace culture that embraces excellence, curiosity, openness to ideas, diversity and collaboration combined with our shared ambition to serve the community and conserve nature.

Developing **(e) a fit-for-purpose asset management plan** to ensure that the diverse assets of the BGSH are fully documented, and that we are managing risks and deriving the maximum possible benefits from these assets through their life cycle.

**(f) Increasing the profile of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens Foundation** to build and sustain our supporter base, grow our number of donors and the Foundation's endowment fund for future benefit.











## Case Study 5: The International Rose Garden

Making the most of volunteer  
and Foundation support

In 2022 the World Federation of Rose Societies bestowed upon the BGSB's International Rose Garden their Award of Garden Excellence. This recognition, towards which the BGSB has been working for some years, reflects the achievements of collaboration between the gardens and with a range of external supporters and project participants.

From its conception, the International Rose Garden has received significant support from Australian rose experts and thousands of volunteer hours to ensure the over 2,700 roses, showing more than 350 rose cultivars are maintained to the highest standard. Donated plants, fertilizer products, and funding raised through our Foundation all contributed to a collection, presented within a beautifully landscaped garden, full of colour and perfume.

More than this, the International Rose Garden is now a place for us to share botanical knowledge, host weddings and other functions, and to hold demonstrations, education and training programs and pursue horticultural experimentation.





## Case study 6: New safe storage for our Herbarium collections

Innovation in collections data management to maximise space for collections growth.

When State Government funding was provided to upgrade the compactus storage in the Tram Barn A building, the Herbarium team undertook to modernise their collections management while optimising the use of space to enable long term collections growth. With over 1 million specimens in the herbarium, this task entailed both a huge volume of work, and an innovative approach.

The redistribution of the collections included changing the arrangement of the flowering plants which occupy approximately 87% of the collections storage space to an arrangement reflecting modern DNA based classification. This provides the opportunity for plants closely related to each other to be shelved together better facilitating collections use.

In addition, the fungi, algae and moss collections are better housed, collections are now in clear easy-to-access spaces and staff will have digital tools to assist them in their access and use of the collections. All boxes now have an identity (QR code) and the logistics of this work has given the team improved options for managing our collections for at least the next 15 years.









[botanicgardens.sa.gov.au](https://botanicgardens.sa.gov.au)

 AdelaideBotanicGarden  BotGardensSA  botanicgardenssa



Government of  
South Australia



Board of the  
Botanic Gardens and  
State Herbarium