

Hard landscape design elements

As a large public botanic and open space facility, Mount Annan Botanic Garden requires a diversity of hard landscape design elements to implement many of its site management strategies. These landscape elements have both vehicular and pedestrian functions and include signage, lighting, traffic control devices, and furniture. These elements play a number of important functional roles in the Garden acting as signal and points of reference for visitor orientation and circulation, as well as contributing to the Garden's appearance and overall character and identity.

This section of the Site Master Plan aims to provide a structure to aid Garden Managers in the development of a Hard Landscape Design Elements Manual, which would detail a number of policies, guidelines and design documents to guide current and future Garden Managers in the appropriate selection and use of hard landscape design elements across the site.

The Site Master Plan has emphasised the importance of defining a unique and memorable character for Mount Annan Botanic Garden, both as part of the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney and as a major botanic and open space facility in south-western Sydney. The development of this character will require a unique response across all areas of site design, development and management, including the selection and use of hard landscape elements. These elements should contribute to the development of the Garden's identity, reflected through their physical design, materials selection, and the intensity of use across the site.

Landscape elements also have important functions which signal different areas of the site, contributing to visitor orientation and understanding of the site's circulation patterns and scale. Landscape elements can act as markers at nodal points across the site, which differentiate different Garden precincts and landscape types and indicate movement patterns, landscape character and intensities of use across the site (act as signals - orientation, character, identity, and also have potential to signify/indicate types and intensities of use across the site).

Garden managers must develop a range of landscape elements and materials that are unique to the Mount Annan site, promoting Garden identity and character and improving visitor orientation and circulation through hard landscape elements and materials selection. There is potential for the Garden to utilise a range of innovative landscape elements that display pioneering uses of environmentally sustainable designs and materials, which in turn will contribute to the unique character of the Garden.

Current use of landscape elements

There are a range of hard landscape elements in the Garden which are appropriate and successful in function and design, resulting in a positive contribution to Garden character and identity. The form and character of the entrance signage for example is considered very appropriate, as these custom designed structures contribute positively to the Garden's character and identity. The picnic shelters and amenities structures in the Garden are also very successful from both a visitor/user and a Garden management perspective and are a good example of a custom-designed element which is now strongly identified with the Garden's landscape. The dry-stone walling is another unique element which can have many uses in different areas of the Garden, and assist in defining a distinctive Garden character.

The use of standard proprietary items however should be resisted in order to avoid unwanted associations and the reduction of Garden identity.

Developing a manual for the use of hard landscape elements across the site

To ensure appropriate and consistent usage of landscape elements across the Garden, a series of policies and recommendations for Garden landscape elements must be developed. This document would detail relevant procedures, approvals and procurement processes for each element type as well as suppliers, installation and maintenance requirements. For custom-designed and constructed elements, design prototypes, recommended suppliers and materials information should also be supplied.

Qualified professionals should be commissioned to develop these policies and guidelines, particularly signage and communication specialists.

The manual for Garden landscape elements should address the following:

- detailed sections on each different type of landscape element, providing information on product manufacture, installation and maintenance, as well as the preferred use on site
- guidelines on the use of each of these elements across the site
- regular review periods for the landscape elements policies, on a 1-5 year basis, and review times for the guidelines, on an annual basis
- The document must be provided in a flexible, digital, in an easily updatable format, which is very accessible to all Garden management and staff



Urban settings

- *intensively developed, urban settings*
- *major Garden entry points*
- *manicured character*
- *dominance of built elements*
- *unrestricted access*

The Site Master Plan has also identified a number of planning principles and concepts that have been used to inform and guide the structure of the Site Development Plan. It is important that the relevant principles and concepts, such as Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) and a commitment to design excellence, are also applied to the development of policies for Garden landscape elements. It is important the hard landscape design elements throughout the Garden are practical and functional as well as conforming to these broad guiding strategies. These strategies will require detailed policy development as part of the development of the Hard Landscape Design Elements Manual, to provide direction as follows:

Environmentally Sustainable Development

- Initiate product development, and act as industry pioneers in the development and use of recycled materials in hard landscape elements
- Investigate alternate energy sources for areas of new lighting etc
- Utilise ESD materials wherever appropriate, such as of permeable materials for large areas of hard surfaces including paving areas and carparks

Continuity across the site

- Ensuring consistency of design and character, materials selection and application of elements across the site

Commitment to quality

- Ensuring that the Garden's commitment to design excellence is reflected in the selection of landscape elements across the Garden, promoting quality in design and materials as well as quality through environmentally sustainable design principles.

Safety and access issues

- Ensuring that landscape elements are designed, installed and maintained to promote safety for Garden staff and all Garden visitors.

The hard landscape design elements should respond to different areas of the Garden, reflecting a diversity of settings ranging from highly developed urban areas of the site through to natural settings including conservation areas, whilst simultaneously be able to be recognised as elements which are inherently part of the Garden's character. There are a number of considerations which will determine the use of landscape elements in different areas of the Garden, which can be depicted by landscape elements to differentiate

(i) scale - the physical size of the elements

(ii) siting - the way in which the element is located in the landscape, in either a dominant or subtle manner

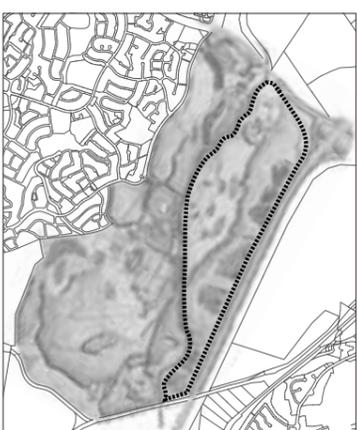
(iii) materiality, - the materials used to build the landscape elements, and

(iv) intensity of use - the frequency with which the elements are used across the site, denoting areas of high visitation and access, through to low visitation and restricted access.



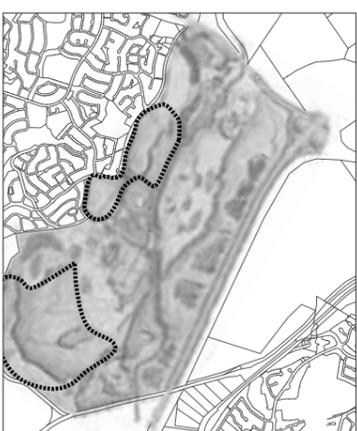
Urban Park setting

- *formalised park settings*
- *structured picnic areas*
- *formal vehicular and pedestrian entry points*
- *well-maintained*
- *prominent hard landscape elements*
- *Access graded*
- *reflects a balance between the natural and urban settings of the site.*



Rural setting

- *informal settings*
- *large open areas*
- *less maintained - infrequently mowed areas*
- *simple hard landscape elements, low-key roads and signage*



Natural setting

- *natural settings, includes conservation areas*
- *minimal interference*
- *restricted access*
- *minimal hard landscape elements - tracks, some signage*