

MOUNT ANNAN BOTANIC GARDEN

SITE MASTER PLAN REVIEW

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS

2005

Note: Responses for several questions have been divided into Staff and Visitor statistics. The reason for the separation was to indicate disparate responses. Generally there was agreement between staff and visitor points of view.

Question 1

Have you visited Mount Annan Botanic Garden (MABG) before?

Survey results indicate that 87% of respondents have visited Mount Annan Botanic Garden at least once.

Question 2

What is/was the main purpose of your visit? / Recreation or not.

214 from 243 surveys provided comments. There were three key reasons for visiting the Garden: recreation (70%), plant appreciation (21%) and education (7%). 'Recreation' included activities such as bike-riding, playground use, bird and wildlife appreciation and walking.

Question 3

Part one: Have you visited the Garden's website www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au

While 94% of Botanic Gardens Trust (BGT) staff respondents have visited the website only 41% of visitors have, even though it is on all BGT literature.

Part two: If so, did it provide the information you required?

Of those who have visited the website, 86% of staff felt the information provided what they required compared to 89% of visitors.

Part Three: Improvements to website

More than 71% of those who completed this section wanted better presentation, easier navigation and more up-to-date information.

Question 4

Have you visited or used: Playground, Garden Shop/Visitor Centre, Restaurant, Theme Gardens, Taken a guided tour, BBQ and picnic areas, Walking trails?

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The higher attendance at the Garden Shop, Restaurant and Playground is a strong indication that Yandel'ora Circuit road reversal in the central precinct is working as planned. Visitors are more easily able to identify the Playground, Restaurant, Garden Shop and Terrace / Connections Garden prior to making the decision to park their car and explore the area.

Q.4 Part Two: What could be improved?

In order of importance, key areas to be improved are: signage and interpretation, the restaurant, more established gardens with shade trees, and walking trails. Yet when we compare this with responses for Question 9, respondees said that on the whole they found signage and interpretation interesting, easy to read etc.

Question 5

Part One: What do you like and enjoy most about Mount Annan Botanic Garden? Please number your preferences. (1 = best)

Because the majority of the surveys did not rate 10 choices, completed and averaged scores were used in the final calculated totals and percentages.

Physical beauty	Fresh air	Recreation facilities	Educational activities	Shopping	Remnant natural areas	Fauna	Restaurant	Australian plant gardens	Walking trails
Score									
532	384.5	236.5	159	79	401.5	292.5	81.5	589	285
Respond									
65	54	42	37	33	53	46	32	66	47
Average									
8.185	7.12	5.619	4.297	2.394	7.575	6.359	2.547	8.924	6.064

Australian plant gardens (19%), physical beauty (17%), fresh air (13%) and natural areas (13%) are the key related preferences of all visitors. Obviously people come to Mount Annan to enjoy the physical environment more than anything else. While the restaurant and the shop rated quite low, even though people come for other reasons, they are still a facility they all use and would expect to find.

Q.5 Part Two / Other things liked and enjoyed most about the Garden

Answers indicate a very positive response to the range of features and attractions the Garden offers. More than a third of all these responses referred to the peace and quiet of the Garden i.e. the atmosphere, which must be taken into account in any future planning.

Question 6

Note: Responses for several questions have been divided into Staff and Visitor statistics. The reason for the separation was to indicate disparate responses. Generally there was agreement between staff and visitor points of view.

Part one: Do you have a favourite area at Mount Annan Botanic Garden:

54% of respondents do have a favorite area at MABG.

Part two: Please number your preferences:

If numbered correctly 1 to 6, each fully completed survey accounted for 21 points (6+5+4+3+2+1). As the majority of the surveys were not fully completed (less than 6 preferences e.g. 6+5+4) scores had to be averaged.

Woodland	Bottlebrush Garden	Wattle Garden	Terrace / Connections Garden	Playground	Banksia Garden
Score					
119.5	86.5	100.5	160.5	20.5	170
Respond					
26	22	22	34	14	29
Average					
4.596	3.932	4.568	4.721	1.464	5.862

Over 50% of surveys did have a favourite area at MABG. The preferred areas were Terrace/Connections Garden 22%, Banksia Garden 21% Woodland at 19%. Therefore MABG should ensure these areas are provided with suitable facilities e.g. for Banksia Garden, more than only 1 male and 1 female toilet; and activity areas to cater for future demand as indicated by the high return visitation responses to Question 1. The survey also indicates that the decision to reverse the central precinct / loop road and enhance the old Terrace / Connections Garden pond has been strongly endorsed. This endorsement supports further redevelopment of the Terrace/Connections Garden.

Part Three: Favourite area beside list

Many people have a favourite area, but there is a preference also for quieter, less developed areas eg. around the lakes and elevated sites with scenic views. Approximately one third of respondents stated their preference for these less populated areas.

Question 7

Part One: Have you or your children attended any classes/courses at Mount Annan Botanic Garden?

Only 26% of those surveyed stated that they attended an educational program at Mount Annan Botanic Garden.

Part Two: What educational activities have you participated in?

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There has been a fairly even attendance at a range of educational forums at the Garden without any true concentration on a particular activity e.g. school holiday activities accounted for 12% of responses with school excursions, with dry stone walling, seminars and workshops and guided tours each accounting for 10%.

Part Three: What educational activities would you like to see offered in the Garden?

More than 50% of respondents still wanted educational activities to focus on Australian plants and design. It is no surprise that a further 21% wanted the Garden to conduct environmentally based programs, followed by programs for children (11%), art and craft classes (5%) and Aboriginal culture and history programs (3%).

Question 8:

Part one: There are a few artistic installations at Mount Annan Botanic Garden. Please tick what you have seen.

More than a quarter of all responses confirmed that the Sundial is the most frequently visited Artistic item (26% compared with 17% for Room with a View, the Blue Ruin tree and the Federation Maze). The survey also indicates that the artistic items presented on the northern loop are less frequented (10%). The Sundial is the oldest installation and those on the northern loop are comparatively recent, which may account for this response variation.

Part two: Would you like to see more artistic installations:

50% of the total responses indicated that people would like to see more artistic displays in the Garden. Only 6% said "No", 25% had no opinion and 19% did not respond. So the inference to be drawn is that very few people (6%) are not supportive of more art in the Garden.

Question 9:

Part One: Is the signage about Mount Annan Botanic Garden:

The signage question scored 29% for easy to read, Sufficient 24%, Interesting 20% and In good order also 20%. Generally people only chose one item rather than multiple responses so analysis of the responses is difficult. If it is assumed that people thought they could / should only choose one comment, then the survey result would indicate that generally people are happy with the style and quantity of signage offered. If not, then the conclusion could be drawn that the signs are not easy to read, are not in sufficient numbers, are mildly interesting and in poor condition. However, when a comparison is drawn against the responses to Questions 27 and 28, it would appear that in general visitors are happy enough with signs, but would like more of them. Yet in Question 4 signage and interpretation were reported as the top priority / key areas for improvement.

Part Two: Signage Comments:

Only 52 people (21% of respondees) made a comment about the Garden's signage. 25% of these approved the current standard of signage. The rest believed that the Garden's signage quality and quantity needed improvement. While this is a recognized focus for the Garden's future planning, it is a surprise that the number requesting this improvement was so small.

Question 10:

Note: Responses for several questions have been divided into Staff and Visitor statistics. The reason for the separation was to indicate disparate responses. Generally there was agreement between staff and visitor points of view.

Part One: At Mount Annan Botanic Garden we conduct research and trials on Australian plants for conservation and sometimes for commercial release e.g. the Wollemi Pine and Flannel Flower. Do you consider this work important?

87% of people consider the Wollemi Pine and Flannel Flower research to be an important role for MABG so our mission is perceived as being met by our research activities.

Part Two: Why do you see research for conservation and commercial release important?

People consider this research to be important for 4 main reasons: Conservation and biodiversity (58%); raises community awareness about Australian plants (17.5%); is ideal research for MABG (16%); and, has increased the profile of the Garden (8%).

Question 11

Mount Annan Botanic Garden's Millennium Seed Bank collects and saves seed from NSW including rare and endangered plant species. Do you think conservation should be an important function of the Garden?

The survey results (91% positive response) overwhelmingly endorse the NSW Seed Bank's role as a vital part of BGT and MABG.

Question 12:

A goal of Mount Annan Botanic Garden is to manage fire and maintain a green corridor link to the Nepean River to safeguard growing numbers of native animals. Do you consider this work important?

The survey result overwhelmingly endorses the current policy and procedures in place for fire management at BGT and MABG. It also endorses the need to work toward extension of green corridor spaces that are needed to link the Garden to the local river system.

Question 13:

How do you rate the importance of the Garden's work to protect, extend and improve natural remnant Cumberland Plain Woodland on site?

79% of responses rated the need to protect, extend and improve natural remnant Cumberland Plain Woodland on site as highly important and 11% moderately important.

Question 14:

A total of 34% of those who responded thought that access and views had been improved. However, 36% had no opinion, 12% of respondents did not answer the question, 9% said "no" and 9% believed there had been "no change". This is obviously a matter which did not concern people unduly.

Question 15:

What would improve access to the Garden for you?

Note: Responses for several questions have been divided into Staff and Visitor statistics. The reason for the separation was to indicate disparate responses. Generally there was agreement between staff and visitor points of view.

The three key access improvements would be: better public transport links (25%), improved roads, paths and parking within the Garden (18%), and entry fees being removed, reduced or changed to a per vehicle charge (16%).

Question 16:

Part one: How important do you believe Mount Annan Botanic Garden is to the local and regional community?

65% of responses believed that the Garden is extremely important in the local and regional community and 23% very important i.e. almost 90% of respondees thought the Garden has an important place in the local region's community.

Part two: Why?

Of the answers given, there was a fairly even spread between Open Recreation Space (15%), Natural Areas (14%), Australian plants showcase (14%), Green Lungs of the Region (12%) and a Scientific Hub (11%).

Part three: Other reasons?

The only other reasons given were being a part of the bushland/green corridor link and a contrast to suburban development. Please also refer to Questions 5 and 28 responses.

Question 17:

Do you believe Mount Annan Botanic Garden should develop more partnerships e.g. with Local Government, RTA and Landcom so that the plantings and promotions outside the Garden can announce its presence?

72% of responses saw partnerships that would support promotion and specific plantings in the vicinity of the Garden as a good idea. 12% had no opinion and 11% were unanswered. This is perhaps because they did not quite understand the question.

Question 18:

Part one: The Garden is a full partner in the developing Macarthur Centre for Sustainable Living (MCSL). Do you believe partnerships like this are important to the Garden's future?

80% of all responses believed that partnerships that result in centre development like MCSL are important to the future of the Garden.

Q.18 Part Two: Reasons to support partnerships

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An overwhelming 93% said it was a good idea for three key reasons: complementary promotional opportunities (of the Gardens, MCSL, conservation, sustainability and the environment) 36%; additional educational opportunities 24%; and to improve the relevance of the Garden in the community 17%. Minor reasons were the potential to draw more funding and resources (8%) and to allow a broader range of activities on offer to the community (8%). The expectation, therefore, is for a complementary relationship which will promote environmental sustainability which the community at large will welcome.

Question 19:

Part one: Entry fees to the Garden assist with its running costs. Are you happy to continue paying fees which contribute to the Garden's facilities?

70% responded positively, while 9% said "No", 5% had "No opinion" and 16% did not answer the question. So the majority of people are happy to pay entry fees to visit the Garden and use its facilities.

Part Two: Entry fees comment

68% of the total responses were equally spread between fees too high (47) and fees good value (46 respondents). 9% were members of the Friends of The Gardens. 7% mentioned they would welcome a per car entry fee while 6% stated people do not value what they do not pay for. 6% mentioned inequity with Royal Botanic Gardens' free entry and 4% said there should be a reduced fee for local residents especially families and walkers/pedestrians. Interestingly enough local ratepayers for some reason had the impression that as ratepayers they somehow had an additional / vested interest in the Garden. Perhaps the relationship with Council and NSW Government is poorly understood. Promotion is important in the future.

Question 20:

Part one: Are you a member of the Friends of the Gardens?

Of the visitors surveyed, Friends of the Gardens accounted for 31% of the total.

Part two: If not, are you aware that for an annual fee of \$64, a family of 1 or 2 adults and children under 18 living in the same household can come to the Garden for "free" as often as they please?

31% of respondees were aware of the annual household fee. However 22% did not know and 47% did not respond. Obviously the Friends need to advertise to a wider audience the benefits of Friends of the Gardens membership.

Part Three: Friends of the Garden – value for money?

Again there was an even split between good (36%) and poor value (33%) responses. The need for special consideration of people without families or extended family groups was mentioned by 6 people.

Question 21:

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Are you from: Multiple choice question: Note: Respondees may have been getting tired at this point.

47% of survey responses were from the local area and 41% from the Sydney metropolitan area. Only 5% came from country NSW and the rest did not answer.

Question 22:

Part one: What is your age group?

The age groups 31-40, 41-50 each accounted for 21%; 51-60, 22%; over 60, 14%; 18-30, 13%. So generally the survey was answered by mature adults.

Part two: When you visit the Garden, do you usually come:

Interestingly, the largest group (42%) come with one or more adults [44% staff, including those who came to MABG for Big Day Out, compared to 40% of visitors]. Large and small family groups only account for 34% and almost 1 in 5 visitors has come alone.

Part three : Visited the Garden - other?

There were no major variations here to indicate other purposes for entry besides education and tour groups.

Question 23:

Are you aware that the Garden has researched and developed plants which are commercially available?

83% of respondees answered in the affirmative so it is a well known fact.

Question 24:

Do you know that the Garden can be hired for a range of functions including weddings, conferences, seminars, photography?

Again 83% of respondees did know of venue hire in the Garden. Obviously the survey group knows the Garden well.

Question 25:

Did you know that Mount Annan Botanic Garden encourages individual sponsorship - such as for trees and bench seats in the Garden?

Only 61% confirmed knowledge of this form of individual sponsorship with 30% saying "No".

Comment about sponsorship of trees and bench seats

Only 19 people responded to this question. However, of those, 74% believe tree and bench sponsorship is a good idea. The Garden needs to promote this sponsorship form better.

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Question 26:

Part one: Have you found staff in the Garden to be:

Perhaps this was a leading question. However, 31% of staff are considered helpful; friendly, 30%; informative, 26%; and visible 12%. The visibility figure is probably so low as the majority of visitation is on weekends and the bulk of staff work week days only.

Part two: Comments about staff in the Garden

There were only a few comments about helpful, friendly and supportive staff which indicated the bulk of these visitors must have come to the Garden on weekends, when few staff are at work.

Question 27:

Part one: What could the Garden improve?

Food outlets accounted for 15% of responses; signage, 14%; walking tracks and education / conference facilities, 12%; and garden presentation 10%. Yet in Question 5 most of the respondees said they were generally happy with signage.

Part two: Suggestions for garden improvements

There were two key areas for comment: the Restaurant ; and improvement of Garden displays with 19 comments each. The Restaurant comments showed the need for a kiosk to operate separately from the restaurant i.e. physically separate. There is also a need to have simpler and cheaper foods available through that smaller outlet and better coffee. The Gardens comments concentrated on more floral displays, theme garden development, trees for shade, African Olive and other weed control, and gardens for the elderly, disabled and children.

Question 28:

What do you want Mount Annan Botanic Garden to be like in 10 years time e.g. developments, facilities, attractions, events etc.

Key priorities should be: 1) Attractions - 117 comments about types of attractions and to whom they should appeal; 2) Gardens- presentation, displays (92 comments); 3) Facilities - what is needed to assist with Garden visitation growth and meeting of core goals (65 comments); 4) Natural areas - improvements needed and future goals like weed removal [of African Olives especially] (61 comments); and 5) Atmosphere - what people value and wish to retain most in the Gardens (37 comments). Generally the statements related to keeping the Garden as it is - ambience, quiet, peaceful, safe, secure, calm and green, welcoming, relaxing, classy and well respected.

ATTRACTIONS: There were many suggestions made with most focusing on: fauna related displays/activities (19); more annual events especially designed for children and teenage audiences (family events) eg. outdoor concerts (15); More artworks (12); and more tours (buses especially).

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GARDEN PLANTINGS: The key messages were: more Australian plants in established displays (25); more large shady trees (13); complete current projects (Connections Garden especially); continue to manage Gardens well/improve presentation in the future. All bar one agreed the emphasis on native Australian plants should continue.

FACILITIES: People saw this question in the light of future population growth in the region, with continued residential development. Respondees focused on the need for improved research centre/facilities, education centre/facilities (permanent, well-built), and conference centre/facilities or multi-function centre including wedding centre, visitor centre, auditorium and undercover outdoor venue. These were perceived also as community facilities, designed to meet their social needs. A bigger shop (as part of a new visitor centre) was mentioned a few times also. Other facility requirements were more infrastructure related e.g. more parking, better lighting, more shade and barbecues; more seating; more toilets for future needs. And a bigger restaurant and separate kiosk were considered a must, also.

NATURAL AREAS: The natural areas focus was particularly on the need to keep the Garden as natural as possible, protect and extend our Cumberland Plain Woodland and control weeds. A common request was for African Olive to be targeted over the next ten years and totally removed.

ATMOSPHERE: What visitors like best is the peace and quiet/tranquility of the site and a place they see as a haven free from rubbish and graffiti. The majority of people expressed a wish to keep it as it is and never make it a 'commercial' theme park. They wanted it to remain safe, relaxing and a welcoming green oasis.

Survey Committee:

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