



The 5th Global Botanic Gardens Congress took place in Dunedin in October 2013 to celebrate the success of botanic gardens and address sustainability concerns.

Delegates:

347 delegates and 20 partners

Destination:

Dunedin, New Zealand

Duration

20-25 October, 2013

Venue:

Glenroy Auditorium, Dunedin Centre.
Capacity: 474 theatre style

Botanic gardens are increasingly aimed at new audiences in an effort to get people looking beyond the garden walls. For more than 450 years botanic gardens have been the source of knowledge on plant life and the environment they live in. But as concern grows over the effects of human pollution and the degradation of the natural environment, experts have mounted a response by creating horticultural change through botanic science and innovation. Addressing the sustainability of botanic gardens in a time of global change was a key theme at The 5th Global Botanic Gardens Congress, held at the Dunedin Centre.

Dunedin is home to New Zealand's first botanic garden. At 150 years old, the Dunedin Botanic Garden has cemented its position as a garden of national significance. As a Garden of International Significance the Dunedin Botanic Garden is recognised for its

extensive plant collections, native bush, city vistas and beautiful walks. It is home to 6800 plant species attracting native bellbirds, wood pigeons and tui, all spread across 28 hectares in north Dunedin. Its New Zealand native plant collection is the cultivation of rare and endangered native plant species while the Victorian collection features plants from around the world including North Asia, the Americas, South Africa and the Mediterranean and the Himalayas. Not only does Dunedin's botanic garden have an international reputation for quality training and education programmes but the city is also home to another Garden of International Significance - Larnach Castle Garden - as well as Glenfalloch Woodland Garden and Wylde Willow Garden which are Gardens of National Significance.

Organised by akB Conference Management and hosted by the Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) and Botanic Gardens Australia and New Zealand (BGANZ), in conjunction with Dunedin City Council, the congress attracted 347 delegates from 45 countries. Entitled Celebrating Success - the influence and appeal of botanic gardens - the congress was secured with the help of Tourism New Zealand's Conference Assistance Programme (CAP) fund, part of a bid made in Ireland at the last congress three years ago. Keynote speeches, symposia and workshops covered the challenges and achievements of botanic gardens the world over including in-depth discussion on climate change, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, plant collection management, industry innovation and education, and social relevance. The two industry bodies, BGCI and BGANZ, also organised activities separate to the congress to raise funds for new research initiatives.

The main venue was the newly refurbished Dunedin Centre, home to the Dunedin Town Hall which can hold 2300 theatre-style or 550 for a banquet meal. Additional social functions were held at the botanic gardens including tours, a garden fete and festival and a welcome reception, at the Toitu Otago Settlers Museum. Outside of the congress delegates took in a full day tour to Aramoana salt flats for a look at native dune and salt marsh vegetation, visited the Orokonui Eco-Sanctuary to see rare forest wildlife, took in fishing spot Sullivan's Dam, the majestic Larnach Castle and its gardens, saw the habitat restoration of the Yellow Eyed Penguin at Penguin Place and the Royal Albatross Centre, as well as a specialised tour to the back country including Macraes gold mine.

Stephen Blackmore, Regius Keeper at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh and incoming chairman of the BGCI, called the congress was "exceptional" and said attendees were touting it as "the best global congress yet".

"Several people here had said they think it has been the best global congress yet". It was estimated the conference injected \$1.5 million in to the Dunedin economy.

The congress gala dinner, which featured Taiko drummers, Kapa Haka and a Paskifika dance group, was held in the Dunedin Town Hall - part of the recently refurbished Dunedin Centre.

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