



CITY OF
BALLARAT

Ballarat Botanical Gardens Masterplan

“FINAL DRAFT”

This document contains a summary of the major recommendations and concept plans as part of the final draft of the Ballarat Botanical Gardens Masterplan.

It has been prepared by Landscape Heritage Consultants, John Patrick Pty Ltd for the City of Ballarat.

The Masterplan will be on display in the Robert Clark Horticulture Centre until Wednesday, ~~29~~²⁶th December 1995 during which time special interest groups and the community are invited to make written submissions or comments.

A comments form is attached to the back of this document for your convenience however if you require further information, please contact Mr Adam Parrott on 338 647.

Thank you for your interest.

BALLARAT BOTANICAL GARDENS MASTERPLAN AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Summary and Major Recommendations

Introduction

The Ballarat Botanical Gardens reserve is an outstanding example of a Victorian period pleasure garden and is one of Ballarat's most significant assets. Its nineteenth century character is displayed by a number of built elements in addition to its magnificent trees. Many of the trees are around 120 years old, in particular the avenue of Giant Sequoias. Large evergreen trees dominate the gardens' skyline in winter including Pines, Cedars, Cyresses and native conifers such as the Bunya Bunya pines. The gardens also contain an outstanding collection of rare Elms, a collection which is becoming increasingly significant because of the devastation of these trees in the northern hemisphere by Dutch Elm disease. The trees provide the setting for Victorian elements such as the unique 1887 statuary pavilion, the 1884 collection of original Carrara marble statues, the 1894 ornamental Morey gates and Adam Lindsay Gordon's Cottage. The presence of a fish hatchery in the gardens dates from 1885. The practice of setting out colourful displays of bedding plants also survives from the Victorian era.

Not all of the elements in the gardens date from the nineteenth century. Many of the diverse plants in the botanical collection were planted more recently including Azaleas, Camellias and alpine plants. A set of 1920s structures provides an Edwardian flavour including gateways, pergolas and pavilions on the Lake Wendouree foreshore. The Fernery has been altered many times but carries on the traditional presence of such a structure in the gardens dating back to 1870. The avenue of Prime Ministers' busts was established in 1940 and is one of the main attractions in the gardens. More recently the pride of place has been taken by the new Robert Clark Conservatory and Resource Centre.

The gardens provide a setting for significant cultural events, such as the Begonia Festival and Australia Day celebrations, while also enabling more informal events such as picnics, family reunions and passive recreation to take place within its parkland buffers.

Unfortunately, trees grow old and die or are damaged by storms. Without maintenance, buildings and structures slowly fall apart. Statues succumb to exposure in the weather and lichens grow on them. Garden staff come and go and even management personnel changes, both at departmental level and council level. Other changing circumstances include possible new horticultural technologies, reductions in available finance and increasing tourist demands.

It is therefore important, both to the citizens of Ballarat and of Victoria, that the existing character of the gardens be maintained and reinforced, and that guidelines and strategies be adopted to plan for the gardens' future. The Masterplan and Management Strategy is a document that provides a flexible management tool to protect the Botanical Gardens past while also providing a framework to guide its future. The Masterplan should be reviewed at five year intervals.

Management Strategies

- (1) The central philosophy of the masterplan is the future preservation and management of the Botanic Gardens to provide for it's ongoing role as a pleasure garden to residents and visitors giving recognition to the character and strength of Victorian/Edwardian history. The following are recommended actions/methods for consideration by the community and council:

Implement a strategy for replacement of diseased, dead or missing trees. This strategy should look up to 25 years ahead, or more, as some of the trees have many years of growth left in them. The mix of conifers, evergreen and deciduous broadleaf trees should be maintained. Tree management strategies should also allow for relocation of trees which are currently in inappropriate locations

Reconstruct missing pathways, where appropriate, to restore original circulation patterns.

Maintain or increase the diversity and complexity of planting including the development of Victorian-character shrubberies and ornamental plant collections.

Improve visitor access for viewing of plant collections by development of collections in traditional layouts.

Prepare maintenance schedules for sculpture and structures, including the Statuary Pavilion, the Fernery, Adam Lindsay Gordon Cottage, plus other shelters and garden structures.

Establish guidelines to ensure that future development is sympathetic to the gardens' character. These relate to placement of trees, sculptures and monuments, plus design guides for materials, paint schemes and sizes of structures and site furniture.

- (2) Reduce the impact of modern traffic demands in Wendouree Parade to improve the links between the gardens and Lake Wendouree foreshore.
- (3) Improve the educational and scientific aspects of the gardens by the provision of plant labels and interpretative signs. Develop a new wetland and wildlife habitat to the poorly-drained section of the North Gardens, plant with indigenous vegetation, and provide a system of boardwalks, bird hides and interpretative facilities. Improve public access to the Tramways Museum and the Fish Hatchery.
- (4) Upgrade visitor facilities including car and bus parking, toilets, shelters, seating, picnic facilities, rubbish bins, lighting and directional signage. Provide garden maps at strategic locations.
- (5) Priorities should be established for all actions based on high, medium or low rankings. Highest priorities should be given to conservation actions, safety issues, plant labelling, security, establishment of a wetland to the north gardens and completion of the drainage system to the Botanical Gardens.

Detail Strategies for Precincts

Priority

Wendouree Parade

- Highlight entries by reconstruction of short sections of fencing to bluestone pillars on Wendouree Parade in conjunction with signage and lighting. Reinstall original gates, if available, and fix in a fully open position. Rejuvenate adjacent avenue tree planting. M
- Implement a 50 kmh Tourist Zone by reducing the width of Wendouree Parade to slow traffic and to improve pedestrian safety. H
- Retain and improve the tram service. Relay the tram tracks and replace the road surface. Extend the tram lines to Sturt Street if possible. M

- Provide a bus parking zone near the north toilet block. Increase the extent of angle parking on the west side of the road past the south toilet block. M

South Gardens

- Maintain as an open parkland buffer for passive recreation. Provide informal gravel paths to allow all-weather access. M
- Reinforce the perimeter planting to adjacent streets and extend the planting of flowering trees parallel to Carlton Street.
- Proposed site for the Apex / Leathers Playground subject to town planning approval. L
- Replant missing Cedars to the central avenue. Remove poor specimens of Elm and Hawthorn to allow the Cedars to spread. Construct a shelter at the Carlton Street end to serve as a focal point for the avenue. M
- Provide removable bollards to restrict non-authorized vehicular access from service roads. H
- Extend the Tramway Depot and museum shed to the south to improve facilities. Provide parking and access to Gillies Street. Provide paths to Wendouree Parade with planting to screen the tram tracks. L
- Upgrade toilet facilities including the addition of disabled facilities. H
- Construct a new entrance to the Botanical Gardens from the south including a gateway / shelter with a short section of fence to highlight the entrance and include interpretative signage. M

Botanical Gardens

- Construct a 2.1m high timber-framed corrugated steel fence to Gillies Street to replace the existing 1.3m high fence and to improve weather protection to the garden from the west side. Provide three new entries with shelters, lockable gates and with see-through sections of adjacent fencing to allow glimpses into the gardens. Construct recesses along the fence at intervals to allow for tree planting and to provide interest. H
- Complete the installation of a drainage system throughout the gardens prior to any new planting. H
- Reinforce planting to the main north-south avenues (Giant Sequoia and Horse Chestnut) by filling gaps with similar tree species. M
- Reinstate some minor pathways to original positions. Reconstruct the straight path from Wendouree Parade to the Mrs W.D. Thompson Memorial Corner, and the curved path from Wendouree Parade to the statue of Hercules. M
- Remove the Wishing Well from its current location and construct a new Wishing Fountain at the south entry to the Fernery. Reduce the wide expanse of scoria path around the statue of Hercules to reduce root compaction to the Weeping Scotch Elms. M
- Simplify lawns by the removal of minor planting beds and provide additional planting to enhance perennial beds and shrubberies. L

- Remove the floral clock and relocate it to the Sturt Street central median opposite the Tourist Information Centre. L
- The Prime Minister's busts should remain in their current locations. Remove flower beds surrounding the busts. Future busts should continue to be spaced among trees in accordance with the existing pattern. M
- Construct secondary paths in a semi-circular format to provide structure to the Camellia and Azalea areas and to allow all-weather access. Provide additional shrub planting of related species, such as Rhododendrons, to provide height to the centre of the beds and to increase enclosure. L
- Construct a low wall to the Alpine Garden to match the appearance of the Sensory Garden and to provide a more formal surround in character with the rest of the gardens. Provide surrounding paths to allow all-weather access. Remove the water feature. Generally revitalise this area by including more low-growing species and remove inappropriate planting. M
- Reconstruct the Dahlia beds with a semi-circular theme. Provide new paths for all-weather access and surround the area with low hedges. Construct a gazebo as a focal point for this area which will serve as an interpretative shelter and provide a termination point to the long vista from the north. L
- Establish new mixed border plantings of trees, shrubs and perennials to the western boundary to provide more interest to the western side of the gardens. Planting themes should relate to existing planting on the opposite side of the western path. Provide seating arbours for shaded rest areas. M
- Improve the diversity of ferns and other plants in the Fernery. M
- Construct a new entry to the north end of the gardens, complete with shelter and a short section of fence similar to the proposed southern entry. Construct a circular planting bed around the bust of Adam Lindsay Gordon to serve as a focal point to the entry. M
- Extend lighting for security and to permit use of the gardens at night. H/L

North Gardens

- Maintain as an open parkland buffer for passive recreation. Provide informal gravel paths to allow all-weather access. M
- Reinforce perimeter planting of trees to the surrounding streets. Provide infill planting to gaps around Zoo Drive and reinforce the planting groups defining the central space. M
- Improve picnic facilities and upgrade the small adjacent playground. Provide a kerb to roads around the existing picnic shelter and increase the provision of angle parking. M
- Reinststate the Maze based on the original layout but include measures to reduce vandalism. M
- Construct a path from the new north entry to the Botanical Gardens and terminate it opposite the existing picnic pavilion and the maze site. L
- Develop a wetland area with indigenous vegetation, boardwalks, bird hides,

- interpretation centre and car parking facilities to the north-east corner. H
- Retain the Sound Shell. L
- Construct a post-and-cable fence to Gregory Street and The Boulevard to prevent unauthorised entry by vehicular traffic. Provide pedestrian access openings. M

Fish Hatchery

- Improve public access by the construction of a new interpretation centre adjacent to the existing north gate and at the end of the Horse Chestnut Avenue. Provide a path to link to the new gardens entry in the south-west corner. M
- Develop car parking facilities off Gillies Street in conjunction with the Tramway Museum. L
- Replace the existing chain mesh fencing with a black pvc-coated mesh fence. Plant screening shrubs. L