. The following is a list of criteria that may be met in part or whole by any institution that is considered to be a botanic garden:

* A reasonable degree of permanence
* An underlying scientific basis for the collections
* Proper documentation of the collections, including wild origin
* Monitoring of the plants in the collections
* Adequate labelling of the plants
* Open to the public
* Communication of information to other gardens, institutions and the public
* Exchange of seed or other materials with other botanic gardens, arboreta or research institutions
* Undertaking of scientific or technical research on plants in the collections
* Maintanence of research programs in plant taxonomy in associated herbaria.

The above list does not, however, constitute a comprehensive summary of the activities undertaken by botanic gardens.

BGCI has considered what makes a botanic garden different from a public park or pleasure gardens. In the International Agenda for Botanic Gardens in Conservation the definition of a botanic garden is as follows:

"Botanic gardens are institutions holding documented collections of living plants for the purposes of scientific research, conservation, display and education."

Did you know...

There are botanic gardens and arboreta in 148 countries worldwide and they maintain more than 4 million living plant collections. Use the BGCI [GardenSearch](http://www.bgci.org/garden_search.php%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) database for detailed information on more than 2500 gardens around the world

Amongst their collections are representatives of more than 100,000 species, almost one third of the known vascular plant species of the world. [Click here](http://www.bgci.org/plant_search.php) to search their collections

There are a total of 142 million herbarium specimens in botanic garden herbaria and 6.13 million accessions in their living collections.

Over 500 botanic gardens occur in Western Europe, more than 350 in North America and over 200 in East and Southeast Asia, of which the majority are in China . Most of the southern Asian botanic gardens are to be found in India.