

The Friends of Allan Gardens



refresh

A Vision Document for Allan Gardens

February 2017



“ What does a 21st century horticultural garden in the centre of downtown Toronto look and feel like? What can you do there?



A CALL TO ACTION

ALLAN GARDENS, A CULTURAL JEWEL IN NEED OF A *refresh*

In its more than 150-year history as a public park and garden, Allan Gardens has been a valued sanctuary and place of engagement with the natural world. While Toronto has grown up around it, Allan Gardens has also evolved. Today, it offers glimpses of its former horticultural splendour, but new thinking is required to unlock its vast potential and re-integrate with Toronto's robust new urban life.

Downtown Toronto continues to densify at an astounding rate. This growth adds an exciting vibrancy, but a growing population of residents, workers, and visitors places extraordinary pressure on the public realm. To safeguard the livability of city life, our parks need to be adapted to accommodate more intensive levels of use while offering a higher quality experience. Allan Gardens, like many downtown parks, was designed to serve a smaller, less complex city.

In response to the dense urban growth of the past decade, many park and public realm-related organizations and initiatives have emerged, insisting on higher standards of quality and performance and experimenting with new funding models and operational partnerships. The City-led TOcore: Planning Downtown, an ambitious study which will inform a new secondary plan for downtown Toronto,

analyzes this evolving parks system and proposes fresh and multi-scaled policy directions in a chapter called 'Rebalancing Parks & Public Realm.' Here, the City of Toronto is leading the way by recognizing the role that parks and their advocates play in the creation of a great livable city.

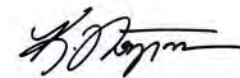
The Friends of Allan Gardens (FOAG) formed within this context of innovative advocacy and fresh thinking about downtown parks. Building on three decades of studies and planning, and in close partnership with the City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation Division and the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation, FOAG is proud to present this vision document and call to action: the Allan Gardens Refresh.

The Refresh outlines a bold and holistic **Vision** and catalogue of **Opportunities** for revitalizing Allan Gardens and integrating it into the social and cultural fabric of the city.

As one of the city's oldest designed landscapes, which is also endowed with significant built heritage resources, Allan Gardens is poised to play a much bigger role in enhancing quality of life in the city. Drawing on this potential, the Refresh project imagines a revitalized Allan Gardens as a high performance (horti)-cultural landscape: a public

garden offering a wide range of meaningful opportunities to engage with and explore our relationship with plant life.

What does horticulture mean in modern-day Toronto? What should a 21st century horticultural garden in our urbanizing downtown look and feel like? What cultural traditions and practices might it reflect and what could you do there? We have a vision, and believe that the time for harvesting the best ideas for a re-inspired Allan Gardens has never been riper.



City Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam,
Ward 27, Toronto Centre-Rosedale



Janie Romoff,
General Manager, Parks, Forestry and
Recreation, City of Toronto



Andrew Sorbara,
Chair, Board of Directors
Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation

Chair, Board of Directors
Friends of Allan Gardens

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Allan Gardens is located on the traditional lands of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishnaabe, and the Wendat. The Friends of Allan Gardens acknowledges them and any other Nations who care for the land (acknowledged and unacknowledged, recorded and unrecorded) as the past, present, and future caretakers of this place named Tkaronto: “Where The Trees Meet The Water.”

FOAG looks forward to sharing the stewardship of this land with Indigenous organizations and support groups throughout the city, and with our many benevolent society neighbours adjacent to the Gardens.

FOAG recognizes the donation by George Allan to the citizens of Toronto of the five acres that became Allan Gardens, an early example of Canadian park philanthropy.

This report is dedicated to Joseph Green, former Founding Chair of the York University Department of Theatre and Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts from 1973-80. Professor Green produced many works for stage and screen, and was an active and inspirational board member of Friends of Allan Gardens from 2013 to 2016.





CONTENTS

5	A Call to Action
6	Acknowledgements
8	The FOAG Board
10	Allan Gardens Timeline
12	MISSION: Planning in Context
14	VISION: Principles for Revitalization
16	WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? Priority Actions
18	Character Areas Map
20	A Catalogue of Opportunities
83	Resources

“ The Friends of Allan Gardens (FOAG) is a registered not-for-profit organization composed of neighbours, civic leaders, and engaged city builders.

FOAG BOARD MEMBERS:

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- Curtis Evoy, PFR *ex officio*

PRODUCTION ASSISTANCE:

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ALLAN GARDENS TIMELINE

A CULTURAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY OVERVIEW

Pre-Contact Indigenous uses of the land occurred in and around Allan Gardens;

1790's Park Lots surveyed:
100 acres intended for colonial elites;

1800's Indenture of the Toronto Purchase registered;

1810's Park Lot 5 purchased by William Allan;

1820's Moss Park villa constructed by William Allan;

1830's Toronto Horticultural Society founded;

1840's Homewood estate is built on northern part of Lot 5 by George Allan (William's son);

1850's Geo. Allan offers oval 5 acres to Toronto Horticultural Society, with conditions;

1860's First pavilion built in Gardens, Prince of Wales opens new Botanical Gardens, plants a Canadian Maple;

1870's New (2nd) pavilion is constructed, becomes important city concert venue, fountain added at intersection of axis;

1880's City Assumes control of Gardens;

As part of his North American tour in 1882, Oscar Wilde gave a well attended lecture on "The House Beautiful" in the Horticultural Pavilion.

1890's Rose garden planted;

In 1893, Allan Gardens was the venue for a meeting of 1500 women led by Lady Ishbel Aberdeen, wife of the Governor General of Canada. The meeting established the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), an organization which

would work for women's education, suffrage, and other societal reform.

1900's 2nd pavilion burns but conservatory and its plant collection survive;

1910's Domed Palm House erected, plant collection from old conservatory is transferred to Palm House ;

Organized by Toronto's unemployed councils and the Workers' Ex-Servicemen's League, over two thousand Canadian Communists met in Allan Gardens in 1933 to protest the fact that their party had been virtually outlawed since 1931. Police attempted to disperse the demonstration by encircling protestors with their motorcycles and covering the crowd with a cloud of exhaust. The standoff lasted two hours.

1940's Neighbourhood and city transitions to post-war suburban ideals and downtown real estate value is diminished;

1950's Heritage fountain, fences and gates and Ionic portico removed, modernist cascading fountains and new greenhouses added, designed by Austin Floyd;

1960's Jarvis Collegiate Institute relocates north of site and land it occupied added to Allan Gardens;

During the summer of 1962, a group of orators and 'ban-the-bomb' advocates known as the "bearded poets" held demonstrations in Allan Gardens. In Spring 1963, as a result of these demonstrations, a bylaw amendment allowed public speaking in all Toronto parks upon

issuance of a permit, a major victory for the free speech movement in Toronto.

The media announced in advance that the leader of the Canadian Nazi Party, William John Beattie, would speak at a rally in Allan Gardens on May 30, 1965. That morning, four thousand anti-Nazi demonstrators gathered in the park. Six suspected Party members were severely beaten during the riot, which police broke up after only fifteen minutes. The Allan Gardens Riot has been called a watershed moment for Toronto's Jewish community.

1970's Palm House designated under Toronto Historical Board's first list of historical buildings;

Since the 1970s, Allan Gardens has served as an important meeting point for marches and other events as part of Pride Toronto, celebrating and empowering people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions.

1980's An ambitious Allan Gardens Revitalization Study issued by Arcop;

1990's Cascading fountains removed, semicircular pergola installed;

In 1999, homeless Torontonians and poverty activists set up camp in Allan Gardens with the goal of establishing a "safe park," where homeless people could stay without worry of harassment. While city officials tallied by-law infractions – from operating barbeques without a permit, to nailing

hammocks into trees – protesters occupied the park for four days. After police officers ended the standoff in a pre-dawn raid, a group of students took up the cause and kept vigil in the park every Friday night for a number of months.

2000's Series of studies and master plans issued, none strictly adhered to;

Since 2006, Sisters in Spirit Vigils – honouring the lives of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls – have been held on October 4 in cities across Canada, starting with 11 in 2006, and growing to 216 by 2014. The Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto has held Sisters in Spirit Vigils in Allan Gardens for the last several years, adding programming and events in the week leading up to the Vigil.

One week before the leaders of the G-20 were to hold their 2010 summit in Toronto, citywide protests began, especially rallying against poverty and capitalism. A group of one hundred demonstrators set up a tent city in Allan Gardens, which became both a starting point and a destination for a number of marches in the following days.

2010's FOAG reforms and constitutes as not-for-profit Board of Directors; issues 'refresh.'

PLANNING IN CONTEXT

Both a Neighbourhood and Destination Park

In recent decades, the park has struggled to evolve in a coherent manner, due in part to two competing sets of pressures. On the one hand, Allan Gardens acts as a neighbourhood park serving the local community, while at the same time, it is a regional destination featuring a landmark conservatory that attracts tourists, school groups, and other visitors. Reconciling these distinct uses and expectations for the park underscores the need for a clear guiding vision.

The 2006 Masterplan

Intended to balance this challenging set of conditions, the most recent Allan Gardens Master Plan was completed in 2006 (authored by Landplan, following upon a series of predecessor reports). Stemming from its recommendations, a dog park and a children's playground have been realized, bringing new regular users to the park.

The decade since the Master Plan was completed has seen a significant evolution in the way that Toronto approaches park planning and public realm improvements. Planning processes place a greater focus on public consultation, and a burgeoning parks movement has elevated public interest in and expectations for the quality of Toronto's parks. In addition, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings urge a fundamental reconsideration of how Indigenous communities and values are actively acknowledged, respected, and included as we collectively re-shape our vision for Canada's future, including our shared public spaces.

A More Inclusive Vision

Given the concentration of social services in the neighbourhood, Allan Gardens has long been a daytime congregation point for homeless people and other vulnerable members of the community. While they have a significant passive presence within the park, opportunities for them to actively participate in park programming and stewardship, and to interact with other visitors, have been limited. More Moss Park and the George Street Revitalization, two major projects in close proximity, respond to the particular needs of the more vulnerable in our community, and aspire to create welcoming, safe, and vibrant public spaces. Allan Gardens needs to evolve in a way that respects and includes all members of community.

Allan Gardens is also located nearby to a number of Indigenous cultural organizations, and an emerging Indigenous BIA. These groups currently make regular use of Allan Gardens, for instance, as the setting for the annual Sisters in Spirit vigil for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, organized by the Native Women's Resource Centre, and engage in initiatives within the park, such as a recent temporary mural art project called 'All My Relations', which involved more than twenty Indigenous Artists, and explored visual representations of Indigenous life and culture in Toronto. The Indigenous Placemaking Council, a national organization, focuses on engaging Indigenous youth in placemaking initiatives, which aim to restore a strong Indigenous presence within Canadian communities. The Council has expressed a keen interest in thinking about the future of Allan Gardens.

Allan Gardens has served many roles within the history of Toronto and its ever-evolving urban imagination: a place of creativity, education, natural beauty, and influence. At present, the park is well used by a diverse range of communities, and continues to grow busier.

Refreshing the Allan Gardens Master Plan

It is time to re-examine whether Allan Gardens is evolving in a way that honours its rich cultural heritage, reflects the needs and ideas of existing users, and nurtures its enormous potential to contribute to the livability and inclusivity of 21st century Toronto.

This document is not intended as a conventional park master plan. Rather, it is a Vision document which builds on the best ideas from many past reports, creates a platform for meaningful engagement with themes of Truth and Reconciliation, and reflects emerging models for contemporary public parks, including new concepts about partnerships, governance, programming, and stewardship. The Refresh is intended as a living and flexible document: it is not prescriptive, and input is welcomed. It reflects research into models of park revitalization from other successful and livable global cities.



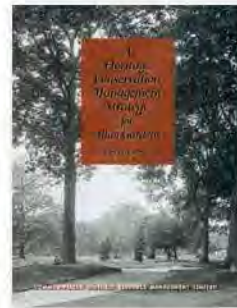
1986



1987



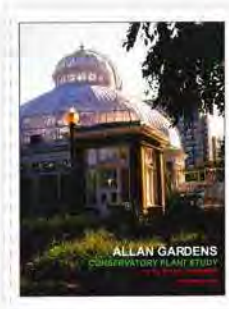
2001



2004



2010



2009



2007



2006



2014



2016



2016



2017

- In early 2016 FOAG generated a draft list of park improvement themes based on recommendations from previous studies, internal workshops and other observations and comments from the public, beginning the ongoing process of engaging with the community and other stakeholders.

- In 2016 FOAG met with the Parks, Forestry and Recreation [PFR] Division to discuss the status and outcomes of the many reports, revitalization studies, and master plan documents that addressed Allan Gardens' identity and future. PFR requested that FOAG undertake a study of these past initiatives, distill them, and apply fresh thinking to Allan Gardens' improvement. This undertaking was formalized in a Letter of Understanding.

- In June 2016 FOAG convened a workshop in the Children's Conservatory with representatives from PFR, City Planning, the Board of the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation [TPTF], and faculty from U of T's Landscape Architecture program to identify general themes for enhancement, and more specific programmatic and physical Opportunities.

- In July, FOAG's Board of Directors and representatives from PFR met with representatives from the consultant team of TOcore to share with them the Refresh mission, to learn about the findings of their report – both in general and with specific regard to parks – and to set the Allan Gardens Refresh in the context of Toronto's urban realm renaissance.

- In September, FOAG hosted a public open house in the Children's Conservatory as part of Community Environment Day, hosted by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam. With in-progress ideas on display, board members engaged in lively conversations with interested members of the public about the future of Allan Gardens.

* For a full list of previous documents, please see RESOURCES on page 83

VISION

The *refresh* aims to lay the groundwork for a holistic revitalization of Allan Gardens – bringing new governance, programming, design excellence, and visitors to the park.

PRINCIPLES

PROMOTE

horticultural excellence, interest in plant life and cultivation and enjoyment of nature while provoking new interpretations of vegetal beauty and utility.

RESPECT,

MAINTAIN and ENHANCE the heritage qualities of the park, its conservatories and collections.

PROVIDE

new opportunities for people to enjoy, participate in and take stewardship of Allan Gardens at the neighbourhood scale, the city scale, and the regional scale.

THEMES

ART &
CULTURE

CONNECTION
TO JARVIS

EXPANSION OF
EXISTING
FACILITIES

HORTICULTURAL
EXCELLENCE

PARK EDGES &
SURROUNDING
STREETS

PARK
FUNCTIONALITY

REVIVAL OF
HERITAGE
FEATURES

STEWARDSHIP

VISION

PRINCIPLES FOR REVITALIZATION

- 1 **Promote** horticultural excellence, rooted in a broad understanding of horticulture that brings together different practices and perspectives on the relationship between people and nature.
- 2 **Respect**, maintain, and enhance the components and qualities of Allan Gardens that reflect the park's heritage value, including the tangible (such as the greenhouses and their collections) and the intangible (such as the park's social functions).
- 3 **Provide** new opportunities for diverse visitors to experience and take stewardship of Allan Gardens, as both a neighbourhood park and a landmark destination within the city and wider region.

The Refresh aims to lay the groundwork for a revitalized Allan Gardens – bringing new governance, programming, design excellence, and visitors to the park. Consistent with its historic role, Allan Gardens will be a place of creativity, education, natural beauty, and cultural influence. It will continue to evolve as part of a larger network of horticultural facilities within the city, characterized by its particularly urban context. Serving as a place of gathering and respite within a vibrant downtown, Allan Gardens will embody a distinctly Torontonion identity. It will offer a layered experience that springs from its Victorian roots but reflects its current reality, utilized and valued by diverse communities. The park will attract a wide range of visitors of all ages and backgrounds – from the neighbourhood, across the city, and beyond – and will offer nurturing, restorative, educational, and celebratory horticultural spaces to frame and broaden our complex cultural relationships with nature. Distinguishing it from conventional European-influenced horticultural gardens, Allan Gardens will embrace an inclusive concept of horticulture that includes diverse cultural practices and explores new opportunities for engagement between people and nature—such as encouraging dialogue between Victorian botanical principles and Indigenous horticultural practices. Guided by these goals, FOAG will work closely with the City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division (PFR), the Toronto Parks & Trees Foundation (TPTF), and other parks allies, and FOAG believes that a Park Conservancy would be an appropriate model through which to achieve this vision.

The Friends of Allan Gardens *refresh* aims to galvanize consensus around the Vision and Principles, assist in the identification of priorities, and catalyze, inspire, and guide the creation of unique partnerships and innovative funding models that will be required to support PFR and TPTF in the implementation of the many component parts of the revitalization.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

NEXT STEPS:

SHARE

By sharing the FOAG Refresh with citizens, park users, community leaders, city builders, gardening amateurs and horticultural experts, a reinvigorated interest in the Gardens can blossom. We welcome feedback from all and will continue a process of broad consultation that will lead to the eventual integration of the Opportunities presented here.

Please visit www.friendsofallangardens.ca to join the mailing list, and keep up to date on progress, or email us directly at friendsofallangardens@gmail.com

PROGRAM

The city is currently exploring possibilities for its existing and future programming in Allan Gardens and ideas and data generated there will be aligned with Refresh Opportunities.

FOLLOW UP AND IMPLEMENT

FOAG will host a spring event in Allan Gardens to share progress and exciting plans for the summer.

PRIORITY ACTIONS:

FOAG recommends the prioritized implementation of four key Opportunities that would build momentum for the revival of Allan Gardens:

1. **Implement the recommendations** in the upcoming 'state of good repair' report for the conservatories, to ensure that all necessary repairs and restorations are made to the historic buildings, choosing long-lasting, appropriate and sustainable materials and methods. Restoring the existing facilities to excellent condition is the critical first step to enhanced user experience;
2. Develop, run, and maintain a **Volunteer Program**, bringing interested citizens into the Conservatory and Gardens as stewards, docents, and assistant gardeners;
3. **Establish partnerships** with neighbouring organizations and existing park user groups to identify and implement key programs and priority projects;
4. Build an innovative **Greenhouse Link Building**, creating a connected circuit of greenhouse spaces for new special display exhibitions, an expanded collection, and events, both public and revenue-generating;
5. Develop a **Landscape Framework Plan** to guide the placement and scale of new interventions and minimize further compartmentalization of the Gardens.



CHARACTER AREAS MAP



The plan opposite identifies historic character areas of Allan Gardens (both existing and those needing enhancement such as Jarvis Terrace) and important axes.



The *refresh* Opportunity descriptions on the following pages refer to these character areas.

THEMES & OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout the Refresh process, consistent Themes became evident. From each of these conceptual Themes, FOAG identified a set of definable and realizable Opportunities: some programmatic and operational (i.e. developing volunteer programs); some physical and horticultural (i.e. constructing a new link building). The following pages present FOAG's working catalogue of Themes and Opportunities; additional ideas may arise as FOAG continues to seek public and stakeholder input. Ultimately, FOAG envisions the implementation of all of the Refresh Opportunities.

Each of the Opportunities must be holistically considered and fit within the framework of the historical landscape, community needs, funding, and sponsorship. For that reason, developing a Landscape Framework Plan for Allan Gardens is identified as a next-step priority.

How to use the Document: Catalogue of Opportunities

The opposite chart organizes the 30 Opportunities under 8 Themes of park improvement. Each opportunity is described and illustrated with successful precedents from around the world.

It is intended that each Opportunity or Theme will be championed and further developed and the path to their implementation stewarded by a range of entities: City departments, private donors, groups or institutions etc., within the defined Landscape Framework Plan.



1 ART & CULTURE 2 CONNECTION TO JARVIS 3 EXPANSION OF EXISTING FACILITIES

1.1 Support Existing And Future Cultural Uses And Ceremonies In The Park

1.2 Establish Programs for Performance Arts in the Park

1.3 Establish Programs for Temporary Public Art

1.4 Introduce Seasonal Night Lighting Displays

2.1 Animate and Improve Pedestrian Connectivity to the West Side of the Park

2.2 Connect and Collaborate with Neighbourhood Churches

2.3 Connect with the Jarvis Street Cultural Corridor

3.1 Build a New Greenhouse Link Building on the Park's West Side

3.2 Create a Café in the Park

3.3 Create Outdoor Gathering Spaces



HORTICULTURAL EXCELLENCE

- 4.1 Develop An Indigenous Arboretum And Traditional Gardens
- 4.2 Create Programs for Temporary Demonstration Gardens
- 4.3 Develop an Interpretation Program
- 4.4 Develop a Children's Garden
- 4.5 Enhance and Expand the Horticultural Collection
- 4.6 Host Events Related to Urban Gardening
- 4.7 Increase Horticultural Programming



PARK EDGES & SURROUNDING STREETS

- 5.1 Create Defined Park Entrances
- 5.2 Re-Imagine Surrounding Streetscapes to Define a Transitional Zone
- 5.3 Vegetate the Park's Edges



PARK FUNCTIONALITY

- 6.1 Develop a Holistic Accessibility Plan for The Park and Conservatory
- 6.2 Provide a Works Yard that Services Park Management Requirements
- 6.3 Adopt Sustainable Management Practices And Systems



REVIVAL OF HERITAGE FEATURES

- 7.1 Create a Central Water Feature
- 7.2 Reinterpret Lost Paths and Garden Experiences on the Park's East Side
- 7.3 Restore the Existing Palm House and Conservatories



STEWARDSHIP

- 8.1 Explore Models for Park Governance and Operation
- 8.2 Partner With Indigenous Groups to Manifest Truth and Reconciliation in Allan Gardens
- 8.3 Extend Visiting Hours in the Conservatory
- 8.4 Run a Volunteer Program



ART & CULTURE

1.1 SUPPORT EXISTING AND FUTURE CULTURAL USES AND CEREMONIES IN THE PARK

Allan Gardens has long served as a venue for important cultural activities, a locus of activism and civic engagement, and a site for ceremonial and sacred uses. Reflecting this social history, page 10 lists some of the significant events that have occurred, and in some cases continue to take place, in the Gardens. As Allan Gardens is revitalized, programs for existing and additional cultural uses and ceremonies (involving for example dance, fire, smudging, music, drumming, and storytelling) should be encouraged and supported. Opportunity 3.3 proposes enhancement of spaces to accommodate these and other programs in the Gardens.



*The Raging Asians
Dyke March, Allan Gardens*

*The Sisters in Spirit Vigil, an annual event honouring missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls organized by the Native Women's Resource Centre, takes place every October 4th in Allan Gardens and in a growing number of cities across Canada.
(photo: Cal Brook)* →





ART & CULTURE

1.2 ESTABLISH PROGRAMS FOR PERFORMANCE ARTS IN THE PARK

Continuing Allan Gardens' long history as a setting for cultural gatherings, the park should serve as a venue for music and other performance art. The City's 2001 "Market Research/ Financial Viability Study for Allan Gardens" recommended that "artists should be involved with Allan Gardens, and music and art display programs expanded." To that end, classical concerts that have taken place in the Palm House should continue, and more formal recitals could be staged in the Children's Conservatory or in event spaces within the proposed Link Greenhouse (see 3.1). There are spatial opportunities for exterior performances: the Palm House Terrace could serve as a stage or seating for music, dance, or theatre, and be buffered from street noise with planting. Similarly, areas in the Arboretum or Jarvis Terrace (see Character Areas plan), enclosed or defined by planting and lighting, could shelter performances.



*Sidewalk Crusaders - Urban Harvest
Allan Gardens - Toronto, ON (photo: Lisa Kates)*



*Sharon & Lois - Urban Harvest
Allan Gardens - Toronto, ON (photo: Lisa Kates)*





ART & CULTURE

1.3 ESTABLISH PROGRAMS FOR TEMPORARY PUBLIC ART

Temporary or seasonal public art displays can re-animate and recontextualize all areas of the Gardens, including within the Conservatory, and attract and engage more visitors. In addition to London's Serpentine pavilion (where an innovative new pavilion is designed by an emerging architect every year) and New York's PS1 Young Architects Program, New York's Madison Square Park has an excellent program of engaging public art, usually large-scale sculpture. Winnipeg's warming huts and Toronto's Winter Stations competitions are good models for popular and fun winter shelters. Flexible partnerships with arts groups and cultural communities are key to the realization of the pieces. In Allan Gardens these installations could have a horticultural theme or engage the vegetal world in a creative, educative way, similar to the Mosaïcultures Internationales in Montréal.



Gates by Christo
Central Park, New York (photo: Wolfgang Volz)





ART & CULTURE

1.4 INTRODUCE SEASONAL NIGHT LIGHTING DISPLAYS

Creative night lighting (of gardens, spaces, plants and architecture) would bring a new and adjustable ambience to the park, while extending its usable hours and enhancing safety. Light displays can be programmed seasonally (Harvest Party/ Halloween, Solstice events, Pride, etc.) or to align with a Nuit Blanche circuit. Cohesively designed lampposts, architectural illumination highlighting the Conservatory, lanterns in trees and gardens, and new path lighting can be programmed together for atmospheric effect and to define nighttime spaces in the Gardens, while contributing to security.



Botanic Lights

Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh (photo: Chris Radley)





CONNECTION TO JARVIS SIDE

2.1 ANIMATE AND IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY TO WEST SIDE OF THE PARK

The west side of Allan Gardens facing onto Jarvis Street ('Jarvis Terrace' in the plan), was acquired incrementally by the City after the relocation of the Jarvis Collegiate Institute in the 1920s. For that reason, Jarvis Terrace is not well integrated with the Garden's original formal organization east of the Palm House. The Conservatory divides the open space of the park, and the newer additions of the Children's Conservatory and more recently the Children's Playground, result in a lack of clear, integrated routes from Jarvis Terrace to the Arboretum. While there is a path along the north side of the greenhouses, there is no direct connection between east and west on the Gardens' south side. A Greenhouse Link Building (see 3.1) would animate and define Jarvis Terrace, and provide the wing greenhouses with a formal western face and an entrance from Jarvis Street. New exterior pedestrian routes, such as a path from Jarvis Street to the Link Building, a route linking to Horticultural Lane (considered in the 2001 "Market Research/ Financial Viability Study for Allan Gardens"), and a formal connecting path defined by a pergola should be explored. This greater connectivity would allow a more active use of Jarvis Terrace.



Urban Orchard
Project Proposal, Memphis, TN (image: Marciela L.)





CONNECTION TO JARVIS SIDE

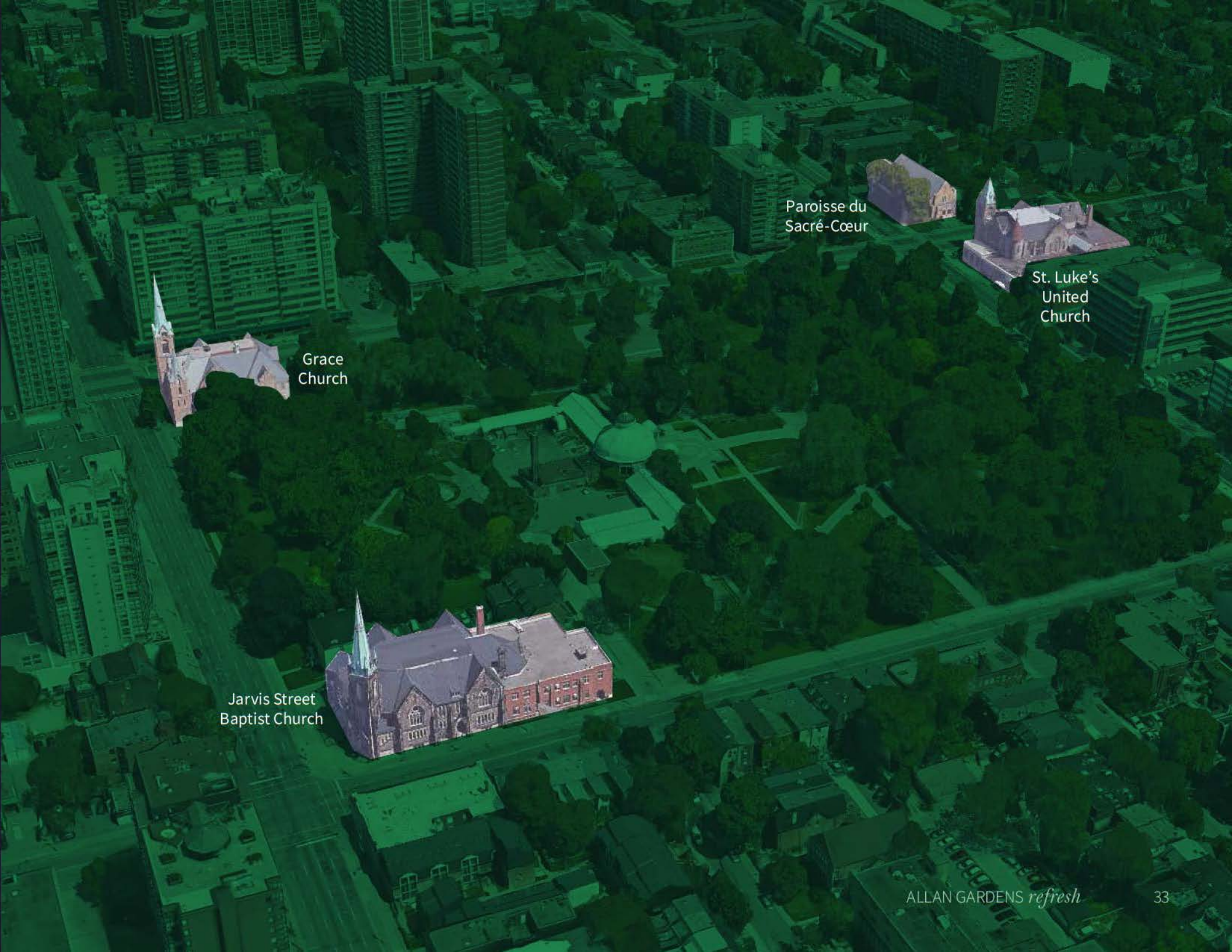
2.2 CONNECT AND COLLABORATE WITH NEIGHBOURHOOD CHURCHES

While previous master plans and reports have not addressed connections with the surrounding churches, community consultation encouraged exploration of these relationships. There are a number of religious buildings in the immediate vicinity of Allan Gardens, and most are housed in significant heritage structures. Their architectural appearance, especially the three copper-clad steeples that mark all but one corner of the Gardens, contributes greatly to the context of the park, but more importantly, the churches perform vital public services for the wider neighbourhood. Two historic churches – the Jarvis Street Baptist Church and Grace Toronto Church – share the block with the Gardens, while St. Luke's United Church and the Paroisse du Sacré-Cœur form part of the street edge on the periphery, and St Peter's Anglican Church is one block away. The potential exists to learn more about the programs run by the various congregations and seek opportunities for collaboration with the park revitalization. As places of assembly, the churches may serve as convenient locations for holding meetings or classes related to the park, either informally or on a regular basis. Congregations should also be encouraged to participate in events in the Gardens.



Tafelmusik

Trinity St. Paul's United Church - Toronto, ON (photo: Rick Madanik, Toronto Star)



Grace Church

Jarvis Street Baptist Church

Paroisse du Sacré-Cœur

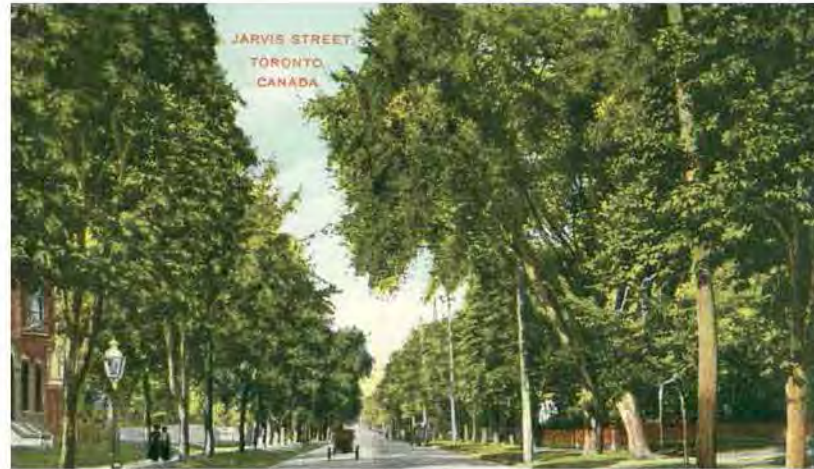
St. Luke's United Church



CONNECTION TO JARVIS SIDE

2.3 CONNECT WITH THE JARVIS STREET CULTURAL CORRIDOR

A 2001 study called “Toronto’s Urban Waterfront: Waterfront Culture and Heritage Infrastructure Plan,” produced for the City of Toronto’s Culture Department, introduced the idea of cultural corridors in the city – specifically major north-south streets that connect the city’s cultural resources to the waterfront. Jarvis Street was one of the identified cultural corridors. Once grand, Jarvis Street still invites an interesting walk, linking a string of significant public places from St. Lawrence Hall and Market, and St. James Park to Sugar Beach. Allan Gardens could contribute to the Cultural Corridor by animating the Jarvis Street frontage (which was not originally part of the Gardens). As the 2001 “Market Research/ Financial Viability Study for Allan Gardens” observed, “the evolution of Jarvis Street into a ‘Grand Allee’ should be recognized; it suggests providing an imposing presence on Jarvis Street for the Conservatory.” The potential for food-vending, seating, or even art installations along the Jarvis Terrace would enrich the experience not only of Allan Gardens but also of Jarvis Street, making greater connections to the larger context and to the city as a whole.



“Jarvis Street”

Historic Postcard - Jarvis Street at Allan Gardens



*Expanding the cultural activities of the park to the street edge
Rittenhouse Square Fine Art Festival - Philadelphia, PA (source: theconstitutional.com)*

3

EXPANSION OF EXISTING FACILITIES

3.1 BUILD A NEW GREENHOUSE LINK BUILDING ON THE PARK'S WEST SIDE

While Allan Gardens Conservatory is an excellent horticultural facility, it comprises significantly less space than most conservatories of a similar calibre. The six connected greenhouses in Allan Gardens currently cover 16,000 square feet. For comparison, the Phipps Conservatory in Pittsburgh includes over 43,000 square feet under glass; Chicago's Lincoln Park Conservatory has over 92,000 square feet. If Allan Gardens were to gain greenhouse space, the park's programmatic potential would also grow.

Both the City's 2001 "Market Research/ Financial Viability Study for Allan Gardens" report as well as Arcop's 1987 Revitalization Study identified the construction of new greenhouses and "link structures" as a high-priority element of the recommended approach for revitalizing Allan Gardens.

The keystone idea of the Refresh, the construction of a Link Building would provide critical infrastructure for new programs, partnerships, and resources in Allan Gardens. Significantly increasing the amount of indoor space, the link could house horticultural programming such as new display gardens, demonstrations, classes, a rentable venue for events, and a café. These uses could foster new partnerships, attract many new and returning visitors, and generate revenue. With an entry and new program facilities adjacent to Jarvis Terrace, the Link would help to animate the Gardens' west side. Importantly, it would enhance the experience of the current greenhouse displays, connecting the existing north and south wings, establishing a complete circuit to improve visitor flow, and creating clearly defined courtyard spaces.



Maggie's Manchester
Manchester, UK (source: Foster and Partners)



3

EXPANSION OF EXISTING FACILITIES

3.2 CREATE A CAFÉ IN THE PARK

There are currently no opportunities for food or drink in the park. In David Harvey's 2010 paper "Fertile Ground for New Thinking: Improving Toronto's Parks," one of his five key recommendations is to "use food as a tool to engage people in parks." The sale of food and beverages in an Allan Gardens cafe can attract visitors to the park, encourage them to linger, provide staff jobs and official staff presence, and serve as a source of revenue. An all-season café patio could be situated in Jarvis Terrace, the South Lawn or the North Grove, with associated interior spaces in the new Greenhouse Link Building. Temporary experiments such as food truck 'pop-ups' could test the concept.



*Shake Shack Food Kiosk
Madison Square Park - New York, NY (photo: Candice Culpepper)*



*On-site Film Set, Imagining a Terrace Cafe
Allan Gardens, Toronto*

*Cafe in the Glasgow People's Palace
Glasgow (photo: Brent Wagler)* →



3

EXPANSION OF EXISTING FACILITIES

3.3 ENHANCE OUTDOOR GATHERING SPACES

Allan Gardens has long exerted citywide influence as a setting for social activism, civic expression, and cultural events. It has also served as a green public space for people of all backgrounds to stroll and informally congregate. The latter use reflects the concept of “receptive” recreational spaces, which the influential 19th-century park designer Frederick Law Olmsted believed were essential to the health of individuals and society.

Spaces within the park have naturally lent themselves towards these uses—for instance, the central north-south axis as a processional pathway, the basin of the former Victorian fountain as a space for gathering, playing, and people watching, and the Palm House Terrace as a stage for speakers, performers, and ceremonies.

In order to encourage existing and future cultural uses in the park (see Opportunity 1.1), and to enhance the park as a setting for more informal “receptive” forms of outdoor activities, existing spaces within the Gardens should be enhanced. The Palm House Terrace can be better defined as a civic living room within the park through improvements to edge plantings, improved seating opportunities, and through the provision of services (such as electricity and water) to allow for events. The historic portico can be re-built as an architectural backdrop to the terrace, and decorative light fixtures can enhance the



*Washington Square Park
New York, NY (source: gawker.com)*

atmosphere and improve safety at night. The historic north-south path could become a civic promenade, lined with benches and lighting, improved with an attractive pavement, and animated by a central water feature.



Bethesda Terrace
NYC (photo: BradleyFarless.com)



HORTICULTURAL EXCELLENCE

4.1 DEVELOP AN INDIGENOUS ARBORETUM & TRADITIONAL GARDENS

FOAG imagines that Allan Gardens will promote an inclusive concept of horticulture that encourages a dialogue between Victorian botanical principles and Indigenous practices. While this approach could inform all aspects of the Gardens, it could also take form within particular areas of the park. Some examples might include:

- An arboretum to interpret the Seven Grandfather Teachings of the Anishinaabe;
- Traditional or healing gardens of the Haudenosaunee featuring the Three Sisters (corn, beans and squash), as well as sacred plants common to many Indigenous Nations, such as sage, sweet grass, tobacco and cedar.





HORTICULTURAL EXCELLENCE

4.2 CREATE PROGRAMS FOR TEMPORARY DEMONSTRATION GARDENS

Consistent with Allan Gardens' history as a centre of horticultural innovation and education, demonstration gardens would provide an opportunity to showcase the world of plants and introduce visitors to a range of horticultural principles and practices. The establishment of spaces and programs for demonstration gardens would create opportunities to connect individuals more intimately to plant life in Allan Gardens. Demonstration gardens would also help foster relationships and partnerships with garden clubs, urban farmers, plant societies, the Toronto Botanical Garden, and with the wider community through public programming.



City Hall Victory Gardens

San Francisco, CA (source: 'Amy Franceschini: Victory Gardens 2007+')





HORTICULTURAL EXCELLENCE

4.3 DEVELOP AN INTERPRETATION PROGRAM

Opportunities to encourage engagement with cultural, historical, and horticultural themes in Allan Gardens can be provided in a range of ways including a modern wayfinding and interpretive signage system. A comprehensive signage program will allow for independent exploration and navigation of the many specimens housed within the Conservatories, as well as specimen trees and plants in the Arboretum, North Grove, and Jarvis Terrace. The 2001 Market Research/ Financial Viability Study observed that “interpretive signage, labeling, story-boards, hand-outs are virtually non-existent.” The 2004 Management Strategy called for a “unified signage system” for wayfinding as well as for conveying horticultural information and “messages of significance.”



Garden Signs

Toronto Botanical Gardens - Toronto, ON (source: Adams + Associates Design Consultants)





HORTICULTURAL EXCELLENCE

4.4 DEVELOP A CHILDREN'S GARDEN

With the new, enclosed playground in Jarvis Terrace (near Horticultural Ave.) a feature specifically for children's use has been added to the Gardens. Drawing lessons from other successful conservatories, such as Phipps in Pittsburgh, Allan Gardens could further appeal to families and children by offering a range of complementary child oriented spaces and programs. Imagine a whimsical series of garden spaces that engage the senses at the scale of a child, and programs to teach children to appreciate nature. A new Children's Garden would most likely be situated south of the Children's Conservatory, in close proximity to the playground, the Greenhouse Link, and the Washroom.



Wychwood Barns - Children's Garden
Toronto, ON (source: thetop.org)



*Children's Discovery Garden
Phipps Conservatory, Pittsburgh (photo: Paul G. Wiegman)*

4

HORTICULTURAL EXCELLENCE

4.5 ENHANCE AND EXPAND THE HORTICULTURAL COLLECTION

The Conservatory permanently displays plants from tropical, arid, and cool temperate climates, and offers popular seasonal flower shows. The grounds contain a collection of mature trees and newer replacements. Many respected Botanical Gardens boast special collections: Atlanta's Botanical Garden is known for its collection of orchids, Denver's Botanical Gardens for their rock gardens, and New York's Botanical Gardens are seen as a museum of the plant kingdom.

A first step towards enhancing and expanding the horticultural collection is to take stock of existing resources. Currently no database exists of the plant specimens in either the Conservatory or the grounds. The creation of a specimen database would aid in the proper care of plants, and in the design of a specific vision for enhancing and expanding the collection, both under glass and outside.

A Tree Plan should also be developed which outlines a long range vision and clear management guidelines for the trees of Allan Gardens. The Plan would ensure that all efforts related to park trees (removals, maintenance, new plantings etc.) work toward a clear, consistent vision. Because of the horticultural history of the Gardens, and its existing inventory of significant trees, the notion of establishing an arboretum in a portion of the park could be an appropriate opportunity.



Multitudes of Species
Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh (photo: David Winterton)