



Dominica Botanic Gardens

*Roseau, Commonwealth of Dominica, West
Indies*



Scribal Consultancy Services and Historical Tours

***PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT:
PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR DOMINICA BOTANICAL GARDENS
(DBG)***

April 2006

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document attempts to collate the opinions received from various stakeholders about the future development of the Dominica Botanical Gardens. At the same time, it embodies the primary analysis compiled by the specialists commissioned to conduct this study and to prepare a Master Plan for its Development. This is not a completed task, and will be revised and updated in accordance with the reviews of the primary and secondary clients, the Ministry of Tourism-Eco Tourism Development Programme and the Forestry and Wildlife Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, respectively.

2.0 STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE FUTURE OF DBG

Based on consultations with a wide cross section of stakeholders and influencers of the DBG, the following (five) 5 broad perspectives have been identified:

1. There is a general agreement that the Botanic Garden is not in an acceptable condition, and must be improved and upgraded.
2. To return the DBG to its original pre-1979 Hurricane David appearance, with continued focus on exotic and introduced species. This perspective also concludes that the use of the Gardens for “Cricket” and “Kweyol in the Park” should be suspended.
3. To return the DBG to its original pre-1979 appearance, with a focus on exotic and introduce species, and to include water features in the form of a pond and/or water-fountain.
4. To return the Garden to its original pre-1979 appearance, to maintain the cricket grounds inside and to continue the “Kweyol in the Park” but with strict management guidelines that include carrying capacity considerations, a solid waste management plan, and an emergency response plan. This position is justified by the consideration that the garden and recreational activities like

cricket and music are not necessarily conflicting activities, and can be complimentary.

5. With a current tourism development policy that focuses on eco-tourism, biodiversity conservation policies should mandate the introduction of endemic and indigenous species within the garden's collection of plants and trees.

3.0 EXPERT ASSESSMENT OF THE DBG AND ITS DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES

Having considered the various opinions presented, the initial task is to define the precise objectives of the Gardens, and then provide various development options for the short, medium and long terms. However, it is the expert view of the consultants, that given the historical and cultural significance of both cricket and music, in Dominica specifically and the West Indies generally; the plan should attempt to find accommodation for the continued presence of cricket and music in the Gardens. In view of these considerations, four (4) options have been presented:

3.1 Option No. 1 short term

1. DBG continues to provide an arboretum of exotic plants from the tropical flora of the world.
2. The Agricultural Department buildings are kept in place within the Gardens
3. The area devoted for plants of economic interest will be enhanced in order to improve attractiveness, and to create access avenues for visitors.

3.2 Option No. 2 short term

1. DBG continues to provide an arboretum of exotic plants from the tropical flora.
2. The Agricultural Department buildings are kept in place within the Gardens
3. The area devoted for plants of economic interest will be enhanced in order to improve attractiveness and create access avenues for visitors.
4. Collection of plants from Dominica's indigenous flora to be introduced within the Gardens.

3.3 Option No. 3 medium term

1. DBG continues to provide an arboretum of exotic plants from the tropical flora.
2. The Agricultural Department buildings are relocated outside of the Gardens, while retaining the Forestry and Wildlife Division building.

3. The area devoted for plants of economic interest will be enhanced in order to improve its attractiveness and to create access avenues for visitors. Special consideration to be given to the introduction of fruit trees from the Caribbean.
4. Collections of plants from Dominica's indigenous flora to be introduced within the Gardens.

3.4 Option No. 4 long term

1. DBG continues to provide an arboretum of exotic plants from the tropical flora of the world
2. The Agricultural Department buildings are relocated outside of the Gardens, while retaining the Forestry and Wildlife Division building.
3. Plants of economic interest continue to be displayed but only for exhibition purposes, as an additional attraction within the garden's collections.
4. DBG will be developed primarily as a place devoted to endemic and indigenous plants coming from Dominica's flora, and as a promotional center for biodiversity and environmental education.
5. On the grounds currently occupied by plants of economic interest, an artificial pond will be created and displayed at the lowest level point, using natural design concepts; and surrounding this space, plants from aquatic and high humidity environments will be introduced.
6. In close relation to this pond, a short water course, including a narrow cascade will be developed within the natural forest, which will create a scenic background and landscape ensemble.

4.0 SHORT-TERM INTERVENTIONS TO BE UNDERTAKEN INDEPENDENTLY OF OPTION

ADOPTED.

Independently of any of the above options being applied, it is necessary to undertake a set of actions, as soon as possible, in order to address current critical problems identified in the Gardens. These are as follows:

- 1) Ensure safe walking conditions for visitors, anywhere within the walls of the Gardens. Vehicles appear to have priority over human beings, as they move and park freely within the gardens without restrictions. Visible signs to direct or guide the behavior of either vehicular or pedestrian traffic to be introduced.
- 2) Resolving the traffic circulation problems inside and around the Gardens must be considered a number one priority. Various recommendations that

- include the creation of a link-road that circumvents the gardens; or the creation of a road that separates the recreational areas for cricket and special events, are both riddled with problems of a civil engineering nature on one hand and the other that will compromise the authenticity of the gardens. However, it is absolutely desirable that the practice of using the Gardens as a thoroughfare should cease. It is also necessary to develop parking lots for visitors outside of the Gardens, particularly alongside Valley Road.
- 3) It is necessary to establish control points aside from garden entrances, in order to collect entrance fees and offer information to visitors to the Gardens.
 - 4) The *arboretum* of exotic plants from the tropical flora must be redesigned in order to overcome environmental, functional and aesthetic contradictions, acceding at the same time to best landscape planting practices.
 - 5) Internationally accepted standards for the construction of steps and trails must be adhered to in order to enable the safe access of visitors, for example to the natural forest at the base of Morne Bruce.
 - 6) Several facilities to be introduced, including public conveniences and light cafeteria services. At the same time it is absolutely necessary to provide information booths where visitors can obtain information about the Gardens and other interesting aspects of tropical plants and Dominica's outstanding flora.
 - 7) A signage system is absolutely necessary to facilitate the easy and effortless movement of visitors within the Gardens and its various facilities. An interpretation system which includes the identification of plants and trees to be developed.
 - 8) A system for urban garden appurtenances must be developed, including seats for resting, waste paper receptacles, lighting posts and other components, using an integrated appropriate technology design approach.
 - 9) The existing pathways must be rationalized as part of an appropriate pedestrian circulation system.
 - 10) The loose river stones alongside the internal roads must be removed and replaced with bigger polished stones to be partially buried in the ground, in order to prevent vehicles from driving or parking on the lawns.
 - 11) The garden's nursery has to be re-developed in accordance with the new requirements consequent to the introduction of Dominica's tropical flora, for example. Besides being a working place, the Nursery can also be used for environmental education purposes.

5.0 LONG-TERM INTERVENTIONS CONCERNING BUILDINGS IN THE GARDEN

Once the buildings of low-value associated with the Agricultural department are relocated outside of the Gardens, new possibilities will become available in order to facilitate the enlargement of exhibitions and the creation of new landscaped environments.

1. The Forestry department's headquarters should be retained, with slight modifications to its external appearance and its relationship to the surrounding environment.
2. A new light structure building to be introduced in order to provide the following functions:
 - a. information and interpretation center,
 - b. lecture hall,
 - c. visitor's general services
 - d. other uses.

The general appearance of this new building should reflect Caribbean architectural vernacular and traditions.

3. If option 4 is adopted, a small green house with glass pitched roof should be introduced in order to allow the exhibition of plants coming from very dry regions at the windward coastal regions of Dominica.
4. In the same way, special exhibition devices to be constructed to allow for the appropriate open space exhibition of vines.

6.0 INTERVENTIONS CONCERNING SPORTING ACTIVITIES AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Sporting activities can be kept within the garden, but confined to the northern border stripe. This space might also be used for special events that usually take place several times during the year. A management plan to be developed specifically for this area. The light constructions that support these activities are in poor to bad condition. The following actions are recommended:

1. To improve the constructions that support these activities, enlarging them in order to fulfill other requirements, for sportsmen and fans.
2. To introduce facilities to enable the practice of jogging around the sport grounds or perhaps including part of the garden areas.
3. To establish natural borders between sport grounds and garden grounds, in order to improve security and control measures within the gardens. Solutions coming from the field of landscape garden design will be useful.

7.0 INTERVENTIONS CONCERNING PUBLIC ROADS AROUND THE GARDEN SITE

Taking into account the poor aesthetic conditions within the vicinity of some entrance gates; the pedestrian circulation problems alongside Valley Road; and notwithstanding the broader urban development issues of the city of Roseau, consideration to be given to the following actions:

1. To improve the aesthetic conditions at the west entrance gate on Bath Street, by masking or relocating the public conveniences next to it.
2. To enlarge Valley Road cross section up to 36 ft. in order to have three lanes for cars and a suitable sidewalk for pedestrians.

8.0 CONCLUSSIONS

1. There are a wide range of problems affecting the physical space, the functioning, the management, the general image, and the environment of the Dominica Botanical Gardens.
2. This document is intended to collate the opinions of different stakeholders as well as to provide specialists technical inputs in order to synthesize the best and most workable ideas for the future improvement of the gardens.
3. FOUR options have been presented for action within the short, medium and long terms, to be developed once consensus on the institution's main objectives has been achieved.