Benefits of using the BGCI Plant Search Database

1 December 2008

PlantNetwork
The Plant Collections Network
of Britain & Ireland

The Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) plant search database (http://www.bgci.org/plant_search.php/) allows you to search for plants in living collections all around the world. It gives cross-referenced information with Red Data Lists, plant images, the International Plant Names Index, Crop Wild Relatives, and the Tree Conservation Database. To date just 54 gardens in Britain and Ireland have submitted a plant list, and of those just 18 have more than 500 plant names on them. The database will be a substantial contribution to Target 2 of the GSPC - telling us how many endangered species of plant are in *ex situ* collections - but this requires many more gardens to submit their lists. Beyond the obvious benefits to the world community of Gardens, and to researchers, BGCI do not emphasise how very useful the service can be to you, the submitter, and to the possible survival of certain plant species. At the very least Gardens should submit a list of all their holdings of threatened taxa.

THE BENEFITS TO YOUR GARDEN

By submitting a list of all your accessions (see below for how to do this) you will not only receive an email notification of any names that BGCI cannot find on IPNI (Fig.1) but you can also then retrieve a list from the site with several very useful pieces of information: firstly an indication of how many other gardens have submitted the name (giving you an idea of how unusual it is in gardens); whether it is a crop wild relative; the IUCN red data categories for 1997 and 2006; and lastly whether it is on a CITES appendix (Fig. 2). As well as using the rejected list to check your spellings (unfortunately synonyms are accepted since they occur on the IPNI site), the conservation data can be used to update your database plant names list.

There is a possibility that you will get email requests from researchers and other gardens about your list from the BGCI Plant Search page. Firstly these are blind copies – no one can find out if you have the plant in your collection; secondly this is not at all burdensome (NBG Glasnevin has 7000 names submitted, but receives less than 1 request a month); and lastly any request you do receive can be of additional value, in that it tells you the plant is sought after. Not submitting your plant list is the equivalent of a zoo not admitting to the fact that they have a Giant Panda in their collections – conservation of many endangered plants requires sharing the existence of the entire *ex situ* gene pool.

Figure 1: Example of email from BGCI that arrives the day after submission, indicating all the rejected names. "Ceratozamia fusco-viridis" has been spelt wrong and is therefore rejected. Other typical rejects are cultivars with no species name.

From: Botanic Gardens Conservation International To: matthew.jebb@
Subject: BGCI Plant Upload Report

Dear Garden Editor

The following plants have failed the IPNI test for valid plant names and have not been imported into the BGCI plants database:

Institution: National Botanic Gardens of Ireland

Plant Name: Ceratozamia fuco-viridis
http://www.ipni.org/ipni/plantsearch?find_genus=Ceratozamia&find_species=fuco-viridis&find_infraspecies=&query_type=by_query&output_format=normal

ID	Genus Hybrid	Genus	Species Hybrid	Species	Infraspecific Rank	Infraspecific Epithet	Cultivar	No. Locations	Crop Wild Relative	Red List	1997 Red List	CITES Appendix	CITES Last Assessed
1128		Ceratostigma		plumbaginoides				52	No				
1129		Ceratostigma		willmottianum				33	No				
318978		Ceratozamia		fusco-viridis				1	No		Critically Endangered			
1131		Ceratozamia		kuesteriana				13	No		Critically E	Vulnerable I		01/08/1985
1133		Ceratozamia		mexicana				65	No		Vulnerable	Intermedia I		01/08/1985
278355		Ceratozamia		mexicana	var			1	No					

Figure 2: Example of downloaded plant list in csv format from the Plant Search page.

To submit your list, go to http://www.bgci.org/worldwide/plant_upload/