

RCMG Outstanding Gardens Scheme

Guide for applicants

The criteria have been developed from the International Camellia Society's criteria for their Camellia Gardens of Excellence scheme, with permission, so if you are already in that scheme, you should already have most of what is needed here.

This document lists the sort of information your application dossier needs to contain so that it can be assessed by the Plant Committee, and you can use it as a starting point. There should be sufficient information that the assessment can be performed impartially by people who are not necessarily familiar with the garden. The garden visit that comes after the dossier is assessed is intended to verify that the garden fulfils the objectives of the scheme, not to fill gaps in the dossier.

The dossier should be submitted in electronic form, e.g. as one or more PDFs.

You are strongly encouraged to contact the Outstanding Garden Scheme coordinator (ogs.rcmg@gmail.com) at the outset, and work with your local branch and/or members of the plant committee to put together this dossier. It is not expected that this task will be onerous, and most of the information should be readily available: if you are finding that some parts are taking an inordinate amount of effort, please contact the OGS coordinator for advice.

Overview:

What are you applying for: Outstanding Rhododendron Garden, Outstanding Magnolia Garden or both?

Criterion 1:

The garden is well established, and the ownership and management structures are stable and perpetual as far as can be reasonably assessed.

Ownership and governance:

- Who (person, company, charity) currently owns the garden, and for how long?
- What is the history of ownership before the current owners, if any?
- How is the garden governed?
- Is the garden run by a charity? If so please give details, including a list of the trustees.

About the garden

- How large is the garden?
- How has it developed since inception?
- Gardening staff:
 - Who is the head gardener?
 - Number of full time, number of part time and number of volunteers.
 - It is important that the gardening team as a whole have a substantial expertise in the genus: so describe the expertise and who possesses it. Be specific, for example with relevant items from the CVs of the key people.

- What succession plans do you have in place in order to maintain a substantial level of expertise? For example: educating existing staff and encouraging them to participate in relevant external events; or identifying additional experts to bring on to the staff.
- How many other staff?
- Include a number of photographs – do not include too many, just enough to give a feel for the garden.

Criterion 2:

The garden is open regularly to the public, especially during the flowering season. (Admission may be free, by donation or by set fee as the garden determines for its needs.)

- Provide details of opening times and admission.
- How is the garden publicised?
- What information (guides, maps, etc) is available to visitors?

Criterion 3:

The garden need not be devoted completely to Rhododendrons and/or Magnolias (as appropriate), but must feature them prominently. There must be a sufficiently broad and extensive collection, maintained to a high standard in a manner suitable to the garden and its climate, and be mostly well established.

- ***For Rhododendrons, a minimum of 250 cultivars or species is required.***
- ***For Magnolias, a minimum of 50 cultivars or species is required.***

Give an outline of the collection (separately for each genus):

- How many cultivars and species? (Note that this is distinct cultivars/species, so multiple plants of the same cultivar/species do not add to the count)
- Do you have a particular specialism?
- Do you have any original introductions?

Criterion 4:

The garden has some method of making cultural information available to visiting members of the public.

Give details about ways in which the garden does this. Examples are:

- Talks about anything related to Rhododendrons and/or Magnolias (as appropriate) - plant hunters, cultivation etc.
- Demonstrations on propagation, planting, pruning etc.
- Escorted walks where the head gardener/owner/somebody else with knowledge provides information and answers to questions about cultivation to groups as they are shown round the garden.
- Relevant shows.
- Printed leaflets and guidebooks.

Criterion 5:

The garden must be a corporate member of the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group and agree to display information about the Group, including contact addresses, to be available for prospective members.

Criterion 6:

The garden maintains a register of all its Rhododendrons and/or Magnolias and their location in the garden.

- What form does the register take? Paper, computerised, ...?
- If computerised what system/program is used?
- Is the register available on the web?
- Provide an example of **a couple of** pages of the register (a scan of a paper register, printouts for computerised register). (Please **do not** include the entire register)
- How can a visitor access the list? This must be possible – the minimum requirement is a paper copy they can refer to at the garden.
- How is plant location identified – please provide a copy of any relevant map.
- NOTE: It is recognised that most gardens will not be prepared to publish plant locations widely for security reasons. This is perfectly fine: it is sufficient that locations are only provided to those who visit the garden in person and identify themselves.

Criterion 7:

All cultivars and species have identifying labels, where known.

- What type of label is used: these must be easily readable by visitors (not just after they have been installed)?
- Detail the information on the label
- Provide an example (photo or scan) of a label

Criterion 8:

A programme of propagation should be in place (using suitable methods to ensure the integrity/purity of the plants) to bring on future generations of the species/hybrids on the garden's register. This may be in-house or use external services.

Describe the propagation programme

Criterion 9:

Non-obligatory, but desirable, features are:

- Research programmes on Rhododendron and/or Magnolia culture, heat or cold tolerance, pest or disease control, or other subjects adding to the overall knowledge of the genus.***
- Shows or displays during flowering times.***
- Demonstrations of good growing practices such as pruning, at appropriate times.***
- The stocking of Rhododendron and/or Magnolia literature for sale and/or publication of such literature by the garden itself.***
- Any other initiative by the garden which promotes enthusiasm for and better cultivation of Rhododendrons and/or Magnolias.***

For each of these provide details