

RCMG Outstanding Gardens Scheme

Application template

This document provides a template for your application – use it as the starting point for completing your application dossier. **Please read the Guide for Applicants** before completing this application to help you understand what needs to be included. 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 has been 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.

The criteria for the Outstanding Garden Scheme 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.

You are strongly encouraged to contact the Outstanding Garden Scheme coordinator (ogs@rhodogroup-rhs.org) at the outset, and work with your local branch and/or members of the Plant Committee to put together your 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:

- Name and address of the garden
- Applicant details
- Contact email
- 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 (individual, company, charity) currently owns the garden, and for how long has this been the case?
- Give a brief history of ownership before the current owners, if any?
- How is the garden governed?
- Is the garden run by a charity or trust? If so please give details, including a list of the trustees.
- Is the garden listed?
- In the case of a private garden, do you have any expectation of leaving the garden within 10 years? If so, do you have any plans for succession, for example passing the garden to an interested family member?

About the garden

- How large is the garden?

- Give a *brief* overview of its development since inception.
- Gardening staff:
 - Who is the head gardener?
 - How many each of full time, part time, and volunteers?
 - It is important that the gardening team as a whole have a substantial expertise in the genus: so describe the expertise available, identifying key members of staff where relevant. We do not need an exhaustive CV of every member of staff, just key highlights of the team.
- 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 actively looking for new members of staff with relevant expertise.
- 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?

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, with the plants 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 of the genus are in your register? (Note that this is distinct cultivars/species, so multiple plants of the same cultivar/species do not add to the count.)
- Give an estimate for what proportion of the total number of cultivars and species of this genus in your garden are listed in the register.
- Do you have a particular specialism within the chosen genus?
- Do you have any original introductions?

Criterion 4:

The collection must be maintained to a high standard, in a manner suitable to the garden and its climate.

This criterion will be primarily judged based upon the site visit, but please identify here any particular issues that you may have with the maintenance of the garden. For example, there may be some older areas where the plants have become overgrown and cramped, or generally reaching the end of their life.

Criterion 5:

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. Some examples are given in the Guide for Applicants.

Criterion 6:

The garden (or owner, or significant permanent member of staff) must be a member of the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group and agree to display information about the Group, so that it is available for prospective members.

- Is the garden a corporate member of the RCMG?
- If not, then who on the staff is a member of the RCMG?
- If none of these, then who will be joining the RCMG: the garden, with corporate membership, or a member of staff?
- By applying, the garden commits to membership of the RCMG, to place the award plaque(s) prominently, usually at the entrance to the garden, and have RCMG leaflets available and on display.

Criterion 7:

The garden maintains a register of its Rhododendrons and/or Magnolias and their location in the garden. This register should be accessible to visitors in some form.

- What form does the register take?
- If computerised what system/program is used, and is the register available on the web?
- Roughly how many plants (not species/cultivars) of all genera are in the register?
- Roughly how many of those are Rhododendrons and/or Magnolias?
- Roughly what proportion of the Rhododendron and/or Magnolia plants (not species/cultivars) in the garden are in the register?
- Provide an example of a page of two 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 register?
- How do you find a plant in the garden given its record in the register. And, vice versa, how do you find the record in the register for a particular plant in the garden.
- Are you willing to share your register, confidentially, with the RCMG for conservation purposes?

Criterion 8:

Cultivars and species have identifying labels, where known.

This criterion will be primarily judged based upon the site visit, but please provide some details here along with your own assessment of the labelling.

- What type(s) of label is used? What detail is shown on the label? (A photo of a representative label would help here)
- What resources do you have available to maintain and improve the labelling?
- Estimate what percentage of the plants of the relevant genus in the garden are labelled.
- Identify any issues that you have with labelling, and areas of the garden where the labelling is weak (e.g. few labels, or poor quality labels). Provide reasons for the issues, and explain any steps you may be taking to address them.

Criterion 9:

Non-obligatory, but desirable, features are:

- a. A programme of propagation (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.***
- b. 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.***
- c. Shows or displays during flowering times.***
- d. Demonstrations of good growing practices such as pruning, at appropriate times.***
- e. The stocking of Rhododendron and/or Magnolia literature for sale and/or publication of such literature by the garden itself.***
- f. Any other initiative by the garden which promotes enthusiasm for and better cultivation of Rhododendrons and/or Magnolias.***

For each of these that applies, provide an outline of what you do.