

# Measuring Understanding & Awareness.

## *A Baseline*

for the

### **BC Landscape & Nursery Association**

#### **Phase I - Research Strategies**

(prepared May 2007)

#### **Introduction**

This document outlines the research strategies which will serve to establish a baseline of public levels of awareness of the BCLNA and the industry, as well as opinion on a number of specific issues. Within the BCLNA's Strategic Plan, this project was identified as the #3 Communications and Awareness priority.

Within this extensive research project it should also be possible to obtain a degree of input for additional BCLNA strategies currently in development – Export, Labour Recruitment and Retention, Membership and PM Accreditation.

#### **1. Perceptions of BC's Current Garden Image**

This aspect of the research will serve to further inform and solidify strategy and planning for the development of BC's garden image.

The knowledge that will be gained in this section of the study will relate to the public's appreciation and understanding of the value of a strong garden image, and what constitutes that image in the public's mind. To the degree that the value of a strong garden image is or is not understood, this information will guide message content for the garden image project and, to some extent, Export.

#### **What we want to know**

- **What does it mean to say a city or province has a 'garden image'?**  
*(Here we anticipate responses such as – lots of public gardens, beautifully maintained parks and public areas, homeowners taking pride in their own properties, hanging baskets and planters along shopping thoroughfares, planted highway medians and interchange slopes, obvious preponderance of garden centres and shops, community centres offering garden courses etc etc)*
- **What areas, anywhere in the world or close to home, do you believe have a garden image?**
  - What gives you that impression?  
*(Here we expect responses such as Holland, France, England, Italy, Victoria and depending on the base of knowledge of particular respondents, possibly California, Oregon, Australia and cities with well-known botanical and display gardens)*
- **What are the benefits of an area having a strong garden image?**  
*(Answers may include economic – hort industry prospers, companies want to have conferences there, increased tourism generally, nicer to live there because it's beautiful, people and businesses want to move there etc)*
- **Do you think BC has a strong garden image?**
  - Why/why not?
  - What areas in particular do? (Expect Victoria and Vancouver to be mentioned)
  - What areas do not?

- **Does your community in particular have a strong garden image?**
  - If so, is living in an attractively planted, garden-oriented community a source of pride for you?
- **What does a community need to do to have a strong garden image?**
- **Should taxpayer dollars be used for community beautification projects such as public garden planting, baskets, planters in public areas etc?**
- **Should homeowners be expected to take responsibility for maintaining their own yards and gardens attractively?**
- **What do you think about BC's garden image as one of the reasons for tourists to visit?**
  - Do you think the Province currently uses 'garden image' as a reason to visit?
  - What particular features/areas/attractions should tourists see?
  - If you don't think BC's garden image is a viable reason for visiting BC, what should we do to earn a reputation as a strong garden-oriented area?

### **Issues for industry only**

- **What role, if any, should the horticulture/garden industry play in furthering BC's garden image?**
  - Growers, retailers, landscape professionals, UFG to respond
  - If you feel industry does not have a role in this, elaborate.
- **What role, if any, should the BCLNA play in furthering BC's garden image?**
  - If you believe BCLNA does not have a role, elaborate.
- **Would a strong garden image in BC benefit your business directly? Explain.**

### **Who we need to talk to**

- a) General public (resident in BC)
  - Home gardeners
  - Non-gardeners
  - Respondents from both large and smaller communities
- b) General public (non-resident)
  - Other Canadian provinces
  - US West
- c) Industry
  - All commodities, BCLNA members and non-members
- d) Visitors to BC, one question being 'was BC's garden image among the reasons you chose to visit?'

### **Best means to get information**

The nature of the information needed is not yes/no, black/white, objective data. We are looking for perceptions, opinions and ideas and as such, a lively engaging exchange is most likely to deliver useful, actionable results.

Plus, it is my experience that discussion groups typically uncover notions, concerns and ideas that are both unexpected and valuable.

That said, budget will not allow for out of province travel and we will have to be creative with respect to obtaining input from group b) and also group d) to whom we do not have easy access.

- Discussion groups – a) & c). Developed, moderated and analyzed by NK. Participants will be given a BC-grown plant as an incentive.
- Email or mailed questionnaire – b), developed and analyzed by NK. Budget will not allow for out of province travel.
- For visitors, group d), it may be necessary to work through Tourism BC. If so, and if TBC agreed to include a question for us in exit surveys, it would be unlikely that we would get the input we would like to have this year.

## 2. Perceptions of ‘Communities In Bloom’

As the ‘lay-up’ vehicle for the development of BC’s garden image, the information gleaned from this study will be of immediate value in the preparation of CiB’s 5-year Plan as it moves beyond its exclusively competitive focus. It can be expected to have direct influence on the marketing plan, the identification of partners and funding sources and on the content and delivery mechanisms for workshops. It will almost certainly allow the annual competition to remain fresh and exciting with tweaks, new features and wider visibility.

### What we want to know

- **Are you aware of the ‘Communities in Bloom’ program?**
  - If so, what is it all about? *(This should uncover any misperceptions out there, including that it is more than a competition. We will ensure that they understand what it is over the course of this discussion.)*
  - Does the name ‘Communities in Bloom’ make sense to you, given what the program is?
  - What kinds of activities do you think could be included in this program? *(Here we are trying to give ‘Bloom’ a broader definition than the literal one, ‘Bloom’ connoting economic prosperity, progress around sustainability, the heritage aspect, community spirit etc.)*
- **Has your community participated in Communities in Bloom?**
  - If so, do you feel it was a positive experience for your community? How so?
  - If not, would you like to see your community become involved?
  - What could your community do, in your view, to participate in the program?
  - Would you like to see your community win?
- **What kinds of projects do you think a community could undertake as part of its participation, other than beautiful plantings in parks and public areas? Discussion would be steered somewhat towards:**
  - undertake to promote and practice sustainable landscape and gardening methods
    - within the parks system, and as homeowners
  - preservation or restoration of heritage buildings
- **Would you personally be inclined to be involved, either as a volunteer for your community’s submission, or simply in beautifying your own garden at home?**
- **What do you perceive to be the benefits to a community of participating in Communities in Bloom?** *(Here we would ensure the discussion includes the economic aspects, including being a tourism draw, the beautification in and of itself, the opportunity to promote sustainable landscapes as individuals and as part of a community’s plan and the possibility of winning with attendant visibility.)*

- **Do you know of any other programs in BC that promote the idea of community development?** (Here we are looking for responses such as ‘Spirit of BC’, 2010 Legacies, the BC 2008 program, Tourism BC programs, BCRPA programs etc as there are some potential partnership opportunities on the horizon.)

#### **Who we need to talk to**

- a) General public from a range of large and small communities, including those who have and have not been involved with Communities in Bloom.
- b) Civic/municipal officials, probably parks staff, in the same range of communities.
- c) BCRPA

#### **Best means to get information**

Close collaboration with Catherine Kennedy with respect to selecting communities and soliciting respondents, possibly some through judges. Combination of email, mail and telephone interviews – again, given that budget will not allow for travel to communities too far outside the lower mainland. Developed, administered and analyzed by NK.

### **3. Perceptions of BC’s Landscape & Nursery Industry**

The information to be gained in this sector is expected to be rich and provide the focus for multiple strategies. Once we know what level of understanding and appreciation the general public has for what services and knowledge landscape providers offer, and the scope of the economic contribution made by the industry as a whole, we will be able to fill specific gaps and influence consumer willingness to engage those services.

We will also have a platform upon which sustainability messaging can be promoted – PM accreditation, water wise gardening, the value of choosing plant material for the region, etc., things a qualified/certified landscape provider knows.

#### **What we want to know**

- **What is your general impression of BC’s garden, nursery and landscaping industry?**
  - Do you know what it encompasses?
  - Do you believe it is healthy
  - Do you believe it is significant (compared for example to forestry, mining, manufacturing, tourism)?
  - Do you believe it is a sizable contributor to the BC economy?
  - Do you believe it operates in most areas of BC?
  - Can you guess at the number of people employed directly and indirectly – hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands? (We would provide the real figure and assess level of surprise.)
- **Would you be surprised to learn that ornamental horticulture is the #1 agricultural sector in BC?**
- **Would you be surprised to learn that the total value of the industry exceeds \$1.6 billion?**
- **Do you feel that BC’s garden, nursery and landscape professionals can be considered leaders in North America? In Canada?**
- **Considering your own home and garden:**
  - Would you consider yourself to be a -
    - Knowledgeable dedicated gardener

- Someone who likes gardens and gardening but doesn't know that much about it
- Someone who likes to have a nice garden but hires outside help to manage it
- Someone who doesn't know a dandelion from a begonia
  
- Do you consciously seek out plants marked as grown in BC or Canada for your own garden?
  - Why/why not?
  - Do you feel that plants grown in BC, or elsewhere in Canada, are better quality, or represent better value than plants grown in other provinces, or in the US? Why/why not?
  
- Have you ever started up a garden/yard from scratch, or done a major re-do?
  - Did you hire a professional landscape designer? Why/why not?
  - Did you hire a professional landscape installation company? Why/why not?
  
- If you hire help for your garden maintenance do you:
  - Seek out professionals? Why/ why not?
  - Seek out the nearest guy with a truck and a lawnmower?
  
- When it comes to managing pests in your garden, and understanding that this includes diseases, bugs and weeds, do you seek out trained professionals to assess your situation and implement a solution? Why/why not?
  
- For your own yard and garden, do you have an interest in seeking out and hiring gardening, landscape and pest management companies that promote environmentally responsible gardening practices? *(We will explore both the 'yes' and the 'no' answers here in order to inform later plans for promoting PM accreditation, labour recruitment and sustainability generally.)*

*(For the above 4 questions, we expect that 'lack of knowledge of what to look for' will be a key reason people do not go to the extent of finding a professional in whatever profession.)*

- **Do you have an understanding of the level of training required to become a landscape designer or installer, garden maintenance provider or pest management professional?**
  - If the services of a trained or certified horticulture professional cost a bit more than those of an untrained individual, do you feel the extra expense is worth it? Explore.
  
- **Do you know what sort of varied jobs can be associated with a career in horticulture?**
  
- **Do you know what educational institutions in BC offer professional horticulture programs?** *(If they don't know, they will when we are through.)*

### **Who we need to talk to**

- a) General public, all of whom are potential customers of our industry, and most of whom are voters.

The group should include both garden-savvy and non-garden experienced individuals, and ideally we would be able to include respondents from various regions of the province. Practically, we are likely to be limited to respondents located in the lower mainland. However, anticipating the value of the lower mainland results, it may be recommended to consider this a pilot and secure additional funding to explore these issues in other regions of BC. We will all share in the recruitment process, taking care to solicit participants who are close friends or family.

### **Best means to get information**

Discussion groups, developed, moderated and analyzed by NK.

Questionnaire (much simpler than discussion outline above) distributed through garden centres in the form of a postage-paid return postcard.

## **4. Perceptions of the BCLNA – Services, Activities & Publications**

The BCLNA has long had a strong image within the industry, and the ability (through membership) to display the BCLNA logo has become a source of pride for members, indicating as it does that the public can have confidence in the grower, retailer or landscape professional displaying it.

The BCLNA is playing an increasingly high profile role in a number of horticulture, environmental and sustainability issues of interest and import to the general public, and will be called upon for industry perspective and media comment more and more in the coming months and years. While we are confident that the Association has, by and large, a good public image, we are interested in what exactly that image constitutes in the marketplace generally.

With this information we will be able to tailor communications programs around issues that people are interested in, and also correct any misperceptions about the role of the BCLNA.

### **What we want to know**

- **Have you heard of the BCLNA?** *(Initially use the acronym in the question. If not....)*
- **Have you heard of the BC Landscape & Nursery Association?** *(If they have not heard of it in either format we may not be able to get much of value, other than an indication of what such an organization might be involved with.)*
- **Where did you hear about the BCLNA?**
  - See an ad?
  - Read an article?
  - At a home or garden show?
- **Who belongs to the BCLNA**
  - Individuals?
  - Companies? What kind of companies? What do they do?
- **What do you think the BCLNA does?** *(This should be completely open ended to see what we get.)*
- **What kinds of issues or causes do you think the BCLNA gets involved with?**
  - Environmental/sustainability related?
  - Invasive plants
  - Organic gardening
  - Professional horticulture practice
  - Safe pest management practice, for bugs, weeds and plant disease
  - Horticulture education programs in the schools
  - Post-secondary hort education
  - Government/regulatory issues
- **Would you consider the BCLNA an authority on:**
  - Best gardening practices
  - Best ways to handle garden pests, plant disease, weeds
  - Lawncare
  - How to select the right plant

- How to grow healthy plants
  - Plant propagation/breeding
  - Hw to find a landscaper
  - Best gardening products (fertilizer, pesticides, tools, soil)
  - Horticulture education
  - Other?
- **Have you noticed the BCLNA logo? Where?** *(We would show the logo.)*
  - **When you see the BCLNA logo in a store, on a truck bumper, in a magazine etc what, if anything, can you assume about the company displaying it?**
    - Does it signify that the company has had to reach some level of competency in their particular business?
    - Does it mean that the company is 'approved' by the BCLNA?
    - Does it signify that the company is reputable, can be trusted?
    - Does it mean that the company is 'professional'?
    - Does it signify that the owner and employees of the company have a professional training in horticulture practices?
    - Do you assume that you would get a better result hiring a company or visiting a garden store displaying the BCLNA logo, than from a company without?
    - Other impressions?
  - **What sort of publications do you expect the BCLNA puts out?**
    - Trade magazines, intended just for companies, or gardening magazines for the general public?
  - **Do you have an interest in getting involved with BCLNA as an individual interested in gardening and horticulture?**

### **Who we need to talk to**

General public – gardeners and non-gardeners. We would be careful to screen out people involved in the hort industry so as to not prejudice or slant responses.

As with Section 3, we are likely to be limited by budget to respondents located in the lower mainland and it may be recommended to execute this survey elsewhere in BC at a later date given that there are specific areas in which the BCLNA is planning pilot programs which will involve media activity, and other areas where we would like to expand membership.

### **Best means to get information**

Discussion groups, developed, moderated and analyzed by NK. We would recruit, screening out industry-related people, friends and relatives.

Questionnaire (much simpler than discussion outline above) distributed through garden centres in the form of a postage-paid return postcard; potentially also as a 'blow in' to GardenWise which could hopefully be negotiated as a 'no charge'. Although these potential respondents would be garden-oriented, they may or may not have any awareness of the BCLNA, and most will not have a deep understanding of the Association.

We might also investigate the possibility of an email questionnaire that could be send out to our various email contact lists, again, screening out garden/hort industry people.