

Annex E – About the Singapore Botanic Gardens

- a. Established in 1859, the Singapore Botanic Gardens played an important historical role in the introduction and promotion of many plants of economic value to Southeast Asia, including the Para rubber tree. In 1877, Kew Gardens gifted the Singapore Botanic Gardens with 22 rubber seedlings which was the catalyst for the rubber industry's revolution in Southeast Asia and an economic boom across the region. Over the years, the Gardens has continued to introduce and rejuvenate its horticultural attractions while continuing its mission of connecting plants and people.
- b. In the 1960s, then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew envisioned Singapore as a Garden City. The Singapore Botanic Gardens, through actively supplying plants for streetscapes and parks, contributed significantly towards the realisation of this vision. A School of Ornamental Horticulture was set up in 1972 to provide trained personnel for the Garden City cause, and this established the skills base upon which the modern Gardens is founded.
- c. The Gardens has also been at the centre of Singaporean culture since its foundation. It was the 'neutral' meeting place for families to introduce partners in former arranged marriages; in 1959, it was the venue for a multi-cultural concert where Malay, Chinese and Indian performances shared the stage for the first time. This was followed by a 3-month series of events that shaped the formation of the multi-racial culture as the island prepared for independence.
- d. Today, the 74-hectare Gardens is a key civic and community space, and a national tourist destination. Attracting an annual visitorship of more than 4.4 million, it is also an important institution for tropical botanical and horticultural research, education and conservation. Singapore has moved on to its next phase of greening: from Garden City to City in a Garden. The continual development of the Gardens is a key thrust of Singapore's City in a Garden vision.
- e. The Gardens showcases the best and most spectacular of tropical flora, including more than 10,000 types of plants and the region's most significant living collection of documented palms, orchids, cycads and gingers. Its historic 19th century garden landscape is well preserved and includes the earliest ornamental designed lake in Singapore. Home to a tract of primary rainforest, the Gardens is less than a 10-minute walk from the shopping belt in Orchard Road.
- f. The Gardens also houses a number of historic buildings constructed between 1867 and 1930, which include Ridley Hall (1882), Burkill Hall (1867), as well as the Swan Lake Gazebo (1850s) and the Bandstand (1930). There are also 47 heritage trees in SBG, the oldest of which is over 200 years old.
- g. The Gardens was ranked the number one park in Asia in TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Awards for attractions in 2014. In 2012, the Gardens edged out others in Canada, Europe and the USA to clinch the inaugural *International Garden Tourism - Garden of the Year Award* by the Canadian Garden Tourism Council. It also joined the ranks of renowned international attractions when it was awarded the Michelin three-star rating in 2008. In the same year, the Gardens was selected by Time Magazine as Asia's Best Urban Jungle.
- h. The Singapore Botanic Gardens is managed by the National Parks Board.