

CALGARY  
HORTICULTURAL  
SOCIETY

# **Calgary Horticultural Society 2006 Member Survey Results & Recommendations**

# Society Background

- The Calgary Horticultural Society has been incorporated since 1908.
- The mission is “To encourage gardening for the enhancement of our environment and quality of life.”
- The mandate is, “To educate, promote and support gardening in the Calgary area”.
- The Society has approximately 5,500 members.

# Project Background

- It had been years since the last member survey and it was decided a new survey was needed.
- Public Relations students at Mount Royal College were engaged to design, implement and analyze the survey and provide recommendations.
- Costs were \$0 for student time; under \$100 for on-line implementation.
- The students chose to implement a survey focusing on current member opinions on products and services.
- The goal was to provide useful information the Society could use for future programming.

# Survey Development

The survey concentrated on the eight key areas of services offered to members:

- *Calgary Gardening* magazine
- Workshops
- Monthly speaker series at SAIT
- Garden Show
- Garden Competition
- Website
- Shopping discounts
- Volunteer opportunities

# Survey Development

- The research team developed 29 questions with the input of MRC instructors and the Society.
- The survey was then placed on the Society's website with a link to Survey Monkey, an inexpensive, on-line survey tool.



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# Analysis

# Response Rates

- 667 members responded to the survey equaling a 12 per cent response rate – considered very good.
- The results represent a 90 per cent confidence interval, meaning the results are accurate plus or minus three per cent, 18 times out of 20.

# Calgary Gardening

- 73 per cent of respondents *frequently use* the magazine.
- When asked if they feel eight issues is an appropriate amount, 94 per cent responded *yes*.
- For those who answered *no* to the above, 41 per cent want 12 issues.

# Workshops

- 37 per cent of respondents *never attend* and 27 per cent *occasionally attend* workshops (total = 64 per cent).
- The main reasons for not attending are busy personal schedules and not being interested in the subject matter.
- Members also stated they wanted the schedule of workshops to come out earlier so that they could plan the events into their personal schedule.
- There are a number of suggestions for workshop topics, including landscaping and Calgary specific gardening.

# Monthly Speaker Series at SAIT

- 49 per cent of respondents *don't attend* and 26 per cent *rarely attend* the monthly speakers at SAIT (total = 75 per cent).
- The main reason for not attending is busy personal schedules.
- However, 20 per cent of respondents stated the location as a major deterrent.

# Garden Show

- 42 per cent of respondents *frequently attend* and 32 per cent *occasionally attend* the Garden Show (total = 74 per cent).
- Overall, those who attend are very pleased with the Show.
- Those who did not attend said it was mainly because of busy personal schedules.
- Some respondents stated they lived out side of the city limits and would like some Society events held in rural areas if possible (this may be better suited for workshops).

# Garden Competition

- Three per cent of respondents participated as a *competitor* in the Garden Competition.
- Many felt that their garden was not good enough to compete.
- 42 per cent participated as an *admirer*.
- Busy personal schedules and being away on vacation were their reasons for not participating (as a competitor or an admirer).

- Overall, 62 per cent are *satisfied or very satisfied* with the web site.
- 34 per cent of respondents visited the web site every two months.
- 67 per cent *rarely or don't use* the Gardening Forum.
- 25 per cent of additional comments stated that they preferred the previous website format\*.

*\*Please note:* when respondents referred to the previous web format, many are referring to the Gardening Forum or Chat area that was on the old Society web site. Also, some Internet browsers don't display our web site correctly and that may be why navigation is affected.

# Volunteering

- 29 per cent of respondents stated they *had volunteered* with the Society.
- 68 per cent of volunteers were *casual* (up to 4 hour shifts).
- Respondents stated flexible volunteer schedules and a variety of positions were the most important factors about volunteering.

# Other Society Features

- 62 per cent of respondents stated the *shopping discounts influenced* their decision to become a member.
- 47 per cent of respondents *don't participate* in the Plant Share.
- 69 per cent *don't use* the Library.
- 54 per cent *did not attend* any Open Garden Tours; 35 per cent attended 1-3 tours over the summer.
- 99 per cent believe the Society *should participate* in more projects like the restoration of the Reader Rock Garden.

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# Recommendations

# *Calgary Gardening*

- Maintain eight issues/year, but add more pages and beef up the editorial content.
- Revise the layout starting 2008 (launch in the anniversary year).

# Workshops

- Ensure the calendar of workshops is set well in advance and posted on the web site.
- Use the web poll on the web site to ask for workshop suggestions.
- Post a “suggestion box” on the web and in the newsletter.
- At each workshop, ask participants for topic suggestions.
- In the monthly e-mail notice to members, recap upcoming workshops.
- Consider videotaping some workshops and offering them as a “virtual workshop” for purchase from our web site. Members can then watch the workshop from the comfort of their home.

# Monthly Speaker Series at SAIT

- Consider moving the location since SAIT is not ideal for parking and many in the deep SW or NW won't travel to the meetings.
- Re-package the meetings and partner with garden centres to hold them at their locations around the City (and even outside once in a while).
- Consider reducing the number of meetings per year – create a demand.
- Bring in “big name” speakers once in a while. Charge a small fee.

# Garden Show

- No changes recommended at this time.
- Members attend and they don't have any major concerns about the event.
- They like that it is an intimate, unique event.
- For 2008, we will beef up the content for the Society's anniversary year.

# Garden Competition

- Added promotion from the Calgary Zoo sponsorship this year may help with Passport sales.
- Entrants were up last year. Expect same trend for this year as the dates for judging and viewing are earlier.
- Need to re-do the design of the Passport. This will be done in conjunction with a “look” for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.
- Plans are in place to create a special memento for G.C. entrants and winners to reflect the 100<sup>th</sup>.

- Work with Redengine to improve the Gardening Forum.
- Put together a plan to increase member usability of the web.
- Consider posting a regular column in the newsletter about the web site to build awareness, help members navigate and use it better (eg. screen captures of pages so they know what to look for; what's new on the web).
- Work on getting more photos on the site.

# Volunteering

- Ensure we create flexible opportunities and good training so it is a win-win for both the volunteer and the Society.
- Generally, members want to volunteer, but don't have time. They had many nice comments about the Society and the good work everyone is doing.

# Next Steps

- *Communicate* survey results to members.
- *Work with the committees* to start making plans to implement/ brainstorm changes that are necessary.
- *Ensure strategy plans are created* for each initiative.
- *Board reviews the plans* and provides recommendations for going forward.
- Once the plans are in place; *communicate to the members* the plans and any changes to programming.
- *Evaluate the changes* and adjust as necessary for the next budget year.