

This Master Plan for the Colac Botanic Gardens has been developed working with Colac Otway Shire Council and the community to set a vision for the Gardens for the next ten to twenty years. The vision focuses on protecting what is valued about the place, while responding to community needs through a series of sensitive new projects. Proposals are designed to respect the historical core of the site and focus more extensive developments in the places with limited to no heritage value - in particular along the periphery of the formal gardens and along the Lake Colac foreshore.

The 2012 Master Plan by Richard Barley has been used to successfully manage the Gardens for the past decade, with a number of yet to be actioned recommendations carried over into the current plan as a continuation of that vision.

The Master Plan for Colac Botanic Gardens is split into two main sections, reflecting the historic use and design of its two distinct spaces - the formal botanic gardens at the top of the hill, and the wider foreshore area. This includes implementing the endorsed recommendations of the Lake Colac Foreshore Master Plan for the foreshore area.

Formal Botanic Gardens

The formal botanic gardens is largely the work of prominent designer William Guilfoyle and is seen by the public as the most botanically rich and peaceful part of the site. The Master Plan proposals for this space are subtle and look at strengthening what was implemented of Guilfoyle's design and sensitively rolling out parts of his proposal that were never constructed, while responding to 21st century desires for the space. This includes the addition of a new

summer house to provide all weather project and sensitive placement of new toilets, one of the most consistent needs to emerge from community consultation.

Plant collections, and the role they play in displaying, conserving and educating people are what separates botanic gardens from public gardens. The Colac Botanic Gardens already have well documented living (plant) collections and a botanically diverse landscape, with new recommendations focused on strengthening the collections and providing more emphasis on conservation and education work. This includes a new Childrens Garden, in line with the Lake Colac Foreshore Master Plan, at the eastern end of the site on the location of the current play space. This would sensitively incorporate existing equipment where appropriate, while providing a nature-based space for younger children which connects to the existing Otway Rainforest Collection.

Lake Colac Foreshore

The second part of the Master Plan, and the one that attracted the greatest community interest during initial consultation, is the treatment of the Lake Colac foreshore. The design of this area was commenced in the Lake Colac Foreshore Master Plan, with a number of items identified for action by the Botanic Gardens Master Plan. Items for action included:

- Relocation of the CFA Running Track
- An infinity jetty at the point
- Increased tree planting for wind protection
- A Childrens Garden on the site of the current playground

- Formalising parking near the café
- Safer pedestrian connections
- Additional feasibility study of the use of the buildings (especially Rowing Club and Anglers Club Buildings)
- Additional feasibility study of the potential for a regional level playground

All of these endorsed proposals were supported by feedback received during initial community consultation, and the Master Plan responds by carrying out the additional feasibility work required and providing a greater level of design detail around high level proposals. New proposals have also been made in response to requests received from recent community feedback, which remain in line with the Lake Colac Foreshore Master Plan.

Larger proposals include the renewal of the Anglers Club Building and its activation as a broader community space, the relocation of the CFA track and activation of the area as a potential event space, and a new regional play space which will strengthen connection between the formal botanic gardens and the foreshore.

In addition to these new projects the Master Plan provides solutions to a range of management issues impacting the gardens, including car parking, event management, accessibility, education, plant collections, response to climate change, tree replacement, staffing, pathways, irrigation and drainage. In particular, it looks to strengthen the heritage management of the Gardens and their work as a botanic garden, including conservation work and the quality of its plant collections.

In making these recommendations, the Master Plan provides a long-term vision for the Colac Botanic Gardens, one which allows this beloved garden to continue to be a thriving botanic garden and a place for everyone to enjoy.



COLAC BOTANIC GARDENS

MASTER PLAN 2024-2044

Scale 1:1000 @ A1 / 1:2000 @ A3

