

**MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION
among Member Organizations of
GLOBAL GENOME INITIATIVE GARDENS**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Global Genome Initiative for Gardens (GGI–Gardens) is a program initiated by the Global Genome Initiative (GGI), an international collaboration that was led by the Smithsonian Institution until December 31, 2021 that seeks to “preserve and understand the genomic diversity of Life.”

1.2. GGI–Gardens seeks partner organizations that possess living collections of plants—gardens, greenhouses, and arboreta—willing to collect genome-quality tissues and voucher specimens from their living collections for basic research and long-term preservation. This Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) establishes the organizational framework to achieve this goal. If needed, GGI–Gardens will provide training in best-practices for collections, and facilitate storage in herbaria and biorepositories nearby to GGI–Gardens partners.

1.3. GGI–Gardens collections will be preserved and utilized for basic research that fulfills the mission of the GGI in accordance with terms of this MOC. Information about activities and the mission of the GGI is available at <https://fwbg.org/research-projects/biodiversity-and-floristics/ggi-gardens/>.

1.4. **The GGI–Gardens mission** aims to support the GGI mission specifically for plants in three phases: (i) to collect and preserve voucher specimens (including genome-quality tissue) from each of the approximately 460 families of vascular plants; (ii) half of the approximately 15,000 genera of vascular plants; and (iii) each of the ca. 350,000 species as recognized in The World Flora Online (<http://www.worldfloraonline.org/>).

1.5. **GGI–Gardens recognizes** the historical and invaluable contribution of germplasm collections focused on plant genetic resources (e.g., the Millennium Seed Bank, Svalbard Global Seed Vault, and USDA Agricultural Research Service National Plant Germplasm System, among many others). These and similar organizations preserve living plant genetic resources and carry out their mission with extraordinary focus and dedication. The GGI–Gardens program seeks to complement their mission by broadening taxonomic scope and preserving genomes—regardless of viability—through diverse strategies such as cryo-preserved tissue and nucleic acids for modern genomic research.

1.6. GGI–Gardens and its Member Organizations are encouraged to deposit frozen tissues in Global Genome Biorepository Network (GGBN) member biorepositories because GGBN repositories share a common and public data model that makes frozen genomic samples discoverable. Formal agreements between GGI–Gardens Member Organizations and GGBN biorepositories are the responsibility of the institutions involved.

2. MUTUALLY AGREED TERMS

2.1. This Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) is a statement of intent that joins gardens, greenhouses, arboreta, and the organizations that support them (Member Organizations) into a global network to preserve plant genomic diversity in an efficient and coordinated way. Member Organizations agree to cooperate as part of an international collaboration of institutions and organizations to contribute to the mission of GGI–Gardens. Visions and goals will be developed collaboratively.

2.2. This MOC provides a legally non-binding foundation for Member Organizations to work together, under mutual consent, on issues of common interest.

2.3. By entering into the MOC, Member Organizations express their mutual interest in GGI–Gardens and intent to facilitate GGI–Gardens partnerships through advocacy, communication, education, and research in support of the GGI–Gardens mission.

2.4. GGI–Gardens as a matter of best practices seeks to comply with relevant national and international laws and conventions governing the use and transfer of biological samples where applicable. Examples include, but are not limited to: the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD), the [Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization](#) (ABS), and the [Global Strategy for Plant Conservation](#) (GSPC). GGI–Gardens reserves the right to revoke collaborator status (by vote of the Steering Committee, see Section 3.2, below) if a Member Organization is found to be violating any applicable national or international laws and conventions regarding the use and transfer of biological samples.

2.5. GGI–Gardens and Member Organizations agree that membership of GGI–Gardens is to be open to all institutions and organizations that have programs and resources relevant to the mission of GGI–Gardens (see 1.3, above) and that sign this MOC.

2.6. GGI–Gardens and Member Organizations agree not to use each other’s names or logos without permission for any purpose including, but not limited to, advertising, marketing, promotion, publicity, solicitation or fund-raising.

3. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

3.1. **Operations Committee** membership will include at least the GGI–Gardens Director and program coordinator. The Operations Committee maintains official records (i.e., partner agreements and lists of taxa), conducts day-to-day operations, and provides administrative support and communication services to GGI–Gardens.

3.2. **Advisory Committee** membership will draw from MOC signatories, by invitation or recommendation, and any other organizations that the Operations and existing Advisory Committee may approve. Members of the Advisory Committee may, by majority vote, set annual and long-term GGI-Gardens goals, invite and recommend new Advisory Committee members, and revise the language of GGI-Gardens guidance documentation, including this MOC.

3.3. **Contributing Organization** membership includes organizations that actively collect voucher specimens from their living collections and contribute this material to a GGBN Member biorepository and recognized herbarium.

3.4. **Supporting Organization** membership includes organizations that support the GGI–Gardens mission as a signatory party (Member Organization) to this MOC, but do not actively provide voucher material from their living collection. These members are part of the GGI–Gardens Cooperative and have access to all benefits of GGI–Gardens partnership, as outlined in the GGI-Gardens Partner Benefits Portfolio.

4. EFFECTIVE DATES, RENEWAL, AMENDMENTS, AND TERMINATION

4.1. This MOC becomes effective on the date of the first signatures. Its initial duration will be for a period of five full calendar years.

4.2. The Advisory Committee may, by majority consent in writing, modify any provisions of this MOC. Amendments, once approved, will become part of this MOC.

4.3. Any Member Organization may terminate their participation in this MOC by written resignation, with 60 days notice.

5. MISCELLANEOUS

5.1. This MOC is not intended to be a legally binding document.

5.2. This agreement serves only as a framework of co-operation. All Parties are free to arrange more detailed co-operations and/or supporting or subsidiary projects.

5.3. Member Organizations may withhold or withdraw information from GGI–Gardens or GGI–Gardens affiliates at the Member Organization’s discretion.

6. Signature

___ Operations Committee

___ Advisory Committee

___ Contributing Organization

___ Supporting Organization

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Position: _____

On behalf of: _____

Name of Organization

Address: _____

City/Country: _____

Date: _____

Contact person: _____

Tel.: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____