

# Natural Disaster Planning Template for use in Plant Collections Management

*This template was developed during M.S. thesis research by Jackie Bergquist Salas. To contact Jackie please email [jackie.b.salas@gmail.com](mailto:jackie.b.salas@gmail.com). Thank you for your interest; may your collections benefit (and never see disaster to begin with!).*

## Phase 1. Organize Resources

- Get support for the project: build a team to work with, and engage employees.
- Create and distribute a staff contact list to verify safety and location after a disaster.
- Create a “clean-up effort” resource list of contractors/vendors to utilize after a disaster.
- List local emergency responders and horticultural contacts (both in and outside of the region) to call for help/aid after an event.

## Phase 2. Assess Risks

- Identify Hazards
  - Floods, High Winds, Ice Storms, Hurricanes, Fires, Drought, ect..
  - Look into local historical and climatological records of past damage.
- Evaluate collections and/or plants of high value or worth
  - Speak with section gardeners about their most valued plants.
  - Speak with curators about specially designated plants (ex. rare plants or champion trees).
  - Speak with volunteers and other stakeholders about plants that they value in the collections.
- Prioritize Salvage
  - Is the plant or collection important to the organizational mission?
  - Assess monetary replacement value for plants.
  - Assess historical/social significance of plants.

## Phase 3. Develop a Mitigation Plan

- Decide what plants to focus on
  - What designates a plant’s priority level in your collection, and how are different priority levels dealt with during disasters?
- What will it take to keep highest priority plants safe
  - Site specific: will you need to use sandbags, berms, shelters, move plants indoors, take cuttings to alternate sites, pot up or ball and burlap to move?
  - Organize safety/salvage supplies and place them in a kit or area that staff will keep on hand and easily accessible.

### Phase 3. Develop a Mitigation Plan continued...

- Assign team-based responsibilities
  - Who initiates disaster preparation before an imminent disaster?
  - Who will be responsible for safeguarding the highest priorities?
  - Will the responsibilities be different for different scenarios?
  - Who will be the first person back on scene; designate an initial recovery person or group that will immediately document damage and assess safety of the damaged area before others (especially volunteers) are let back in.
  - Who will contact the emergency response and security or police forces?

### Phase 4. Implement the Plan and Monitor its Progress

- Write the plan
  - Keep it in a safe place (balance accessibility with security).
- Interagency coordination
  - Agreements with local, regional and out-of-region organizations and businesses that could help the garden prepare or recover if necessary.
  - Contact local university extension offices, and county agencies to find regional disaster research and planning materials for horticulture/arboriculture.
- Updates (performed annually at minimum)
  - Review staff contact lists and responsibility designations.
  - Account for priority plants that were acquired or died.
  - Have annual review during the same week every year so that it becomes routine.
    - Do a “walk through” with local emergency responders, and or horticultural contacts to build relationships during this week.
  - Test the plan and adjust accordingly.
  - Evaluate the effectiveness of the plan after a disaster event.
  - Communicate the disaster plan to new staff members.