

Cuttings

Botanic Gardens Conservation International Quarterly Newsletter

Plant conservation in a changing world **Botanic gardens take lead in climate change talks**



The world's climate is presently changing more rapidly than at any time in human history. Such climatic changes are intimately connected with plants, which harness the energy of the sun through photosynthesis and maintain ecosystems for all life on earth. According to recent estimates, more than 100,000 plant species are currently threatened with extinction. However, the rate of extinction is expected to increase further as global temperatures continue to rise, and as many as half of the estimated 400,000 plant species in existence today may be under threat.

Recognising the urgent need for action, BGCI, together with the Botanic Garden 'Veira y Clavijo', convened a meeting of the Gran Canaria Group* in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain on the 10-11th of April 2006. As a result of the meeting the Group formulated "**The Gran Canaria Declaration on Climate Change and Plant Conservation**". The Declaration calls upon governments to take urgent action to increase protection for the world's plants and strongly recommends the preparation of an action plan correlative to the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation on climate change and plants.



While recognizing that the need for protection of the world's plant diversity in the wild, the Group also agreed that *ex situ* collections have a key role to play in securing the conservation of wild plant species as an insurance policy for the future and as support for the adaptation of livelihoods to climate change. Furthermore, the Group considered that with over 200 million visitors annually worldwide, botanic gardens have the capacity to play a leading role in heightening public awareness of climate change and plant conservation.

For copies of the Gran Canaria Declaration, contact BGCI or visit www.bgci.org

* The Gran Canaria Group is an *ad hoc* group drawn from major national and international organisations, institutions and other bodies involved in biodiversity conservation. The first meeting of a Gran Canaria Group was held in April 2000, a meeting which led ultimately to the development and adoption of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation.

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A garden for the 21st century • Launching "Planet Plant" • Mexican gardens celebrate



BGCI

Plants for the Planet



oxygen levels in the air. A network of sensors sends real-time environmental data to an interactive website.

Schools can log in to see realtime environmental data from the glasshouses and relate this to plant habitats, morphology and function. They are also able to download the environmental data and compare it with the environments in their own classrooms and greenhouses. The website provides botanical information about the plants at the botanic garden and allows users to take a themed tour through the glasshouses.

Further information:
www.ecosensorweb.dcu.ie

Bogor Botanic Garden hosts ASEAN-China workshop

The targets of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation were under discussion at a recent workshop held to mark the launch of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Year of the Environment. The workshop also considered ways to strengthen ASEAN-China collaboration in the areas of environmental resource conservation.

Funded by the Chinese government, the workshop at the Bogor Botanic Gardens in Indonesia was attended by



representatives from all the ASEAN member countries and China (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines and Vietnam).

The workshop provided a valuable opportunity for BGCI to raise awareness about the GSPC and the alliances and connections established during the workshop will form the basis for continued collaboration among and within ASEAN countries and China in efforts to protect plants and the environment

Native crop demonstration gardens

Demonstration gardens highlighting native crop diversity are being planned as part of community-based agro-tourism initiatives underway in Ecuador and Peru. These countries form part of the Andean cradle of agriculture and center of domestication for numerous crop species, many of which are scarcely known outside the region and whose diversity is currently being lost through neglect and disuse. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI), together with national partners, are collaborating on community-based projects that promote agro-tourism to achieve on-farm conservation of underutilized native crops.

The initiative will give visitors the unique opportunity of seeing and tasting a representative sample of native crop diversity. The crop



demonstration gardens will showcase the impressive diversity of local crop varieties, while cookbooks and local restaurants will feature regional dishes and heirloom recipes. Crops on show will include local maize varieties, Andean roots and tubers, pseudo-cereals such as quinoa and amaranth; tropical fruits such as tree tomatoes and giant Andean raspberries, native legumes including ice cream beans and scarlet runner beans, unusual squashes, hot peppers and a long list of other intriguing and obscure crop species that are the legacy of the pre-Hispanic civilizations that arose here.

Left: The Curvilinear Glasshouse range at Glasnevin Botanic Garden (Peter Wyse Jackson)

Below: Examples of maize diversity (Marieni Ramirez)



For more information, contact:
David E. Williams,
USDA Foreign Agricultural Service,

david.williams@fas.usda.gov
Marieni Ramirez, IPGRI Regional Office for the Americas,
m.ramirez@cgiar.org

Left: Andean food garden (Marieni Ramirez)

Botanic gardens of the Baltic States

A workshop "Goals for the Baltic Botanical Gardens in Biodiversity Conservation" was held in Riga on February 17, 2006, hosted by the Botanical Garden of the University of Latvia. Representatives from seven botanic gardens of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania discussed two main topics:

- Baltic botanic gardens and the 2010 targets for botanic gardens,
- Cooperation among the Baltic botanic gardens.

Left: Participants at the ASEAN-China workshop (Bian Tan, BGCI)

Right:
Gurukula
Botanical
Sanctuary
(Suprabha
Seshan)



Since 2004, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia have become members of the European Botanic Gardens Consortium. As a result, the Baltic botanic gardens are now recognising the need to take on new obligations and tasks regarding the implementation of international biodiversity legislation and the 2010 Targets for Botanic Gardens.

During the workshop, discussions focused around:

- 2010 Targets for Botanic Gardens and the Baltic botanical gardens' possible contributions towards reaching these goals;
- The IPEN mechanism and issues related to plant exchange;
- *Ex situ* conservation of plant diversity and contributing data to BGCI's PlantSearch Database.

Below:
Representatives
of Baltic botanic
gardens (Signe
Tomson)

Further information:
**Signe Tomson, Botanic Garden of
the University of Latvia,**
e-mail: signe.tomson@lu.lv

UK supports plant conservation in India

Two of BGCI's Indian plant conservation partners have recently secured additional funding for their work.

The Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary in India has won a Whitley Award for plant conservation, habitat restoration and community education in the Western Ghats of India, while the NGO Pragya is to receive a grant of over £500,000 (over \$900,000) from the UK's Big Lottery Fund to target the needs of vulnerable communities in the Himalayan cold deserts.

In 2005 the Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary received a small grant from BGCI for work on the *ex situ* conservation of rare and threatened terrestrial orchids, balsams and ferns. BGCI is also supporting the work of Pragya on the conservation of endangered medicinal and aromatic plants of the high altitude belt in both the Eastern and Western Himalayas through the Investing in Nature programme.

Further information:
www.whitleyaward.org

SABONET – a triumph of regional collaboration

The final report of the SABONET (Southern African Botanical Diversity Network) project has recently been published. This report documents the many achievements of SABONET, a functional and highly successful botanical network which operated between 1998 and 2005, especially in relation to building botanical capacity in the participating countries (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe).

As a result of SABONET, there is now a strong group of dedicated plant scientists available to ensure the conservation of the region's plant diversity. Amongst the key achievements of the project, the report highlights the following:

- A total of 22 regional training courses held covering a range of topics, including red listing criteria and the identification of Important Plant Areas;
- Networking within the 17 regional herbaria and 22 botanic gardens in the 10 participating countries strengthened;
- High quality regional and national technical publications produced;



This publication is supported through
Investing in Nature

A partnership between BGCI, Earthwatch,
HSBC and WWF

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**Botanic Gardens
Conservation International**

Descanso House, 199 Kew Road,
Richmond, Surrey, TW9 3BW, U.K.

Tel: +44 (0)20 8332 5953
Fax: +44 (0)20 8332 5956
E-mail: info@bgci.org
Internet: www.bgci.org

Printed on 100% recycled paper

ISSN 1811-1467



BGCI at the Convention on Biological Diversity meeting, Curitiba, Brazil

The BGCI stand at the recent Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) meeting in Brazil proved popular with delegates and visitors alike. Posters and a video presentation highlighted the important role that botanic gardens are playing in implementing the CBD, with a focus on the three key main areas of the convention – conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of genetic resources and access and benefit sharing.

Visitors to the stand were provided with Global Strategy for Plant Conservation bookmarks produced by BGCI in a range of languages – Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese or Spanish.

The BGCI stand was located next to that of the Brazilian Botanic Garden Network where activities supported by BGCI's Investing in Nature programme in Brazil were highlighted.