

## ESD Workshop: Practice in Russia's Botanic Gardens

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### **Aims of the workshop:**

- On the basis of experience gained in Moscow University's "Apothecary Garden" and the Botanic Garden of Tver University, introduce participants to interactive game models and techniques for organizing theme trail games and lessons for schoolchildren in the garden or in the natural urban environment;
- Run a training session on planning and developing games;
- Assess the games' effectiveness and relevance.

### **The workshop will involve the following:**

- *Short illustrated presentations on how such lessons are planned and run in the above-mentioned gardens;*
- *Use of specific examples to describe in detail how to organize games and lessons (stage-by-stage), demonstrating actual materials and analyzing both positive and negative experience;*
- *A group session to train participants in planning, theme selection and design of games and lessons;*
- *Discussion with participants of the relevance and effectiveness of these techniques;*
- *Workshop evaluation.*

*The specific lessons and games to be used are summarized below:*

### **Experiential thematic trail games in Moscow State University's "Apothecary Garden": "Flower of Happiness", "Land of Hayawatha", "Magic Stone of the Druids", "Recipe for Health and Beauty".**

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These games are designed to introduce players in an entertaining way to the diversity of plants in the botanic garden's collection and to help them discover the relationship between plants and man in various spheres of human life and activity.

The games are based on ethno-botanic themes and have a strong culturological element. They can be played over a large area by a large number of participants working either in teams or individually. Being experiential and competitive in nature, the games require the participants to actively seek answers to the tasks and questions set. Special preparations are required (development of theme, task setting and design of clues) and an information space needs to be created in the garden (preparation and installation of additional signs, task setting, printing and distribution of individual task sheets). Members of the garden's young ecologists' club are usually enlisted to help design the game. The Apothecary Garden has had 8 years of experience in developing these games.

Below is a summary of lessons developed and run in the Tver Botanic Botanic Garden during a one-week ecological camp entitled "Seven Days for Sustainable Development" that was run for a target group of schoolchildren.

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### **Multi-faceted lesson entitled “Introduction and Us”.**

Objective: to identify introduced plants and animals in your locality and illustrate the repercussions of their introduction. Various plants and animals in our area were used by way of example, including *Trapa natans*, *Elodea canadensis*, *Heracleum sosnowskyi* and *Helix pomatia*. Basic techniques employed: an excursion including study of displays in the botanic garden, trips to a river bank, to thermal power station pools, and around the city streets, research, experiment and discussion.

### **Lesson entitled “The Botanic Garden and Society”.**

Objective: to identify the relationship between the botanic garden and the local community. The lesson helps to give students a realistic picture of the existing network of interactions between the botanic garden and various social groups and institutions, to illustrate the role of the botanic garden in the local community, and to model new forms of interaction and collaboration. The game module is based on the concept of a “relationship network” – participants are allocated card roles and each is given a bunch of threads.