

AFRICAN BOTANIC GARDEN NETWORK

BULLETIN NO. 1

October, 2000

World Botanic Garden Congress - Asheville, USA

At the Regional meeting for Africa there was a call for a new African Botanic Garden Network to be established. The Network would have a membership from all countries south of the Sahara Desert and would be open to botanical institutions in the region. It was requested that Botanic Gardens Conservation International should manage the Network and provide logistical support for the production of an African Bulletin. The aim of the Bulletin is to provide a forum in which African Botanic Gardens can demonstrate the activities and the achievements of their Gardens. It is to be a forum for discussion and for debate on the current topics affecting the Gardens in common. Above all it is planned that the Bulletin will be a show place to advertise new projects in need of funding and support. So now is your chance to take part and to set the agenda for the new African Botanic Garden Network!

Tropical Africa – A Botanic Garden Network in the Making

Conclusions:

There is a need to draw together existing African biological networks as a means of linkages for biological information from Africa. This could be implemented through the development of a web site and through hard copy publications. Request that the BGCI, to help facilitate an African Botanic Garden Network by producing the African Bulletin (previously trailed).

- *Explore and establish linkages and partners world-wide.*
- *Develop a strategic planning approach at local, national, regional and international level.*
- *Establish a mailing list (both post and e-mail).*

To achieve these aims we need to:

Gather baseline information on botanic gardens and existing partnerships, look at problems and the possible means of addressing them.

Detail existing and potential projects and include an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats(SWOT).

Questionnaire: to assess baseline state of gardens and collections to identify needs and gaps in the effectiveness of the institutes to achieve their aims

Action – National Botanical Institute to facilitate the African Botanic Gardens needs assessment and consultation process.

Plan **1st Africa Network Meeting 2001** at Limbe Botanic Garden, Cameroon to prepare for Africa meeting in 2002 to be called “Partnerships and Linkages”.

Action – All partners to actively lobby for funding to make this meeting possible and enable participation of as many staff as possible from Africa’s botanic gardens.

AABGA meeting May 2001: target sponsorship opportunities for 1st African Network meeting.

Action - Each garden to organise **promotional materials** for distribution to possible funders.

African Botanic Garden contact details to be sent to all partners by BGCI (Done).

Preparation of African Botanic Gardens meeting at Limbe in 2002

Nouhou Ndam
Limbe Botanic Gardens

A meeting in London between myself and Fiona Dennis (BGCI) on 05/09/00 developed plans for fund raising for the African Botanic Gardens Network meeting in Limbe in 2002.

A funding proposal was developed for submission to the Commonwealth Secretariat. The proposal was focussed on bringing the representatives of the West African Commonwealth Botanic Garden and Herbaria community (WACBio i.e biodiversity) together. The countries involved would be Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and The Gambia. A three day meeting is proposed during which the current status of the WACBoGaC botanic gardens and herbaria would be assessed, options for capacity building considered and strategic planning for networking activities for the future .

New Project Funding, Ghana

George Owusu Afriyie
Aburi Botanic Gardens

Following a double whammy of funding for the new Medicinal plant cultivation project in Ghana, Aburi have now successfully received a modest amount of funding from the Whitely Award scheme to establish a West African Botanic Garden Network. The Garden is delighted at the prospect of hosting a meeting for the West African Botanic Gardens and will be extending invitations throughout the region. A word of warning - there is only limited funding available so if you are interested in attending, you had better start looking for sponsorship locally. George hopes to start preparations for this meeting in early 2001.

Special thank you to all of those people who contributed to this edition.

From Arboretum to Botanic Garden: background, & some thoughts on an African Network.

Mark Mattson & Chris Dalzell
Durban Botanic Gardens

The purpose of this article is firstly to share the DBG's experience in this endeavour. Also, it will hopefully generate discussion about how African gardens may best distill the Agenda's message so that measurable African compliance, with the support of BGCI, is easier to aim for.

The Durban Botanic Gardens (DBG) was founded in 1849 is now part of the Durban Parks Department, a member of the Parks, Recreation, Culture and Service Unit of the Durban Metropolitan Council and is the only Municipal garden in South Africa. The garden is 14,5 ha in a suburban setting and it is visited by some 400 000 people annually, including many foreign tourists. The gardens are supported by the Durban Botanic Gardens Trust consisting of members of the public and incorporates 'Friends of the Durban Botanic Gardens'. Which support the Gardens service to the community. The Gardens are further aided by 25 volunteer guides, trained by the education officer, who conduct guided tours.

The Gardens were represented at the World Botanic Gardens Congress and the Africa Regional meeting which led to the new African Botanic Gardens Network. Following the congress, the DBG has resolved to continue in its efforts to conform with the 'shared rationale' for botanic gardens in conservation as described in the International Agenda, BGCI May, 2000. The Agenda highlights the safeguarding of the World's botanical heritage as a priority for the botanic gardens community. It is our intention to appraise both our strengths and weaknesses in terms of what the Agenda recommends, and to subscribe as fully as we are able to the shared agenda for conservation practice that it reflects.

The Agenda is clearly an important guiding framework for the botanic gardens community – an instructive, perhaps crucial overview of the level of concern to which we must aspire. In an African context however, we pose the following

question - how might individual African gardens engage with the Agenda without feeling overwhelmed by the multidimensional challenges which it elaborates ?

The Agenda, which emphasises what gardens “should” do, remains intimidating unless gardens can be helped to take manageable steps, enabling them to gain a sense of their own progress and purpose, in a tangible manner. In this way, the vision, skills and resources required for meaningful participation are developed. For African gardens with limited means, being alerted to what we “should” do is necessary, but not sufficient for progress. An African alliance of gardens could perhaps discuss approaches which take cognisance of our individual, local contexts, in order to optimise the deployment of scarce resources, and create the platform from which compliance with the agenda is feasible.

In conclusion, the Agenda states that “Strengthening the global network of botanic gardens and linking it closely to others working to safeguard the biodiversity of our planet must be our most important and urgent task” The DBG looks forward to working with other African gardens in attempting to make this a reality.

Also from Chris:

The Unilever Foundation for Education and Development has recently donated R600 00.00 to the Durban Botanic Gardens in Durban South Africa for a 5 year project to develop its plant database. This allows the gardens the opportunity to employ an individual to spend the next 5 years mapping and consolidating all the plants that have been collected over the gardens 150 years of its existence as well as new collections that will be collected as part of the collection policy of the gardens.

Contributions for next edition please!

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**Medicinal Plant Garden & Community
Education Programme
Bas Congo, Central Republic of Congo**

In September this year the Kisantu Botanic Garden will celebrate its centenary. The Garden is currently seeking funding to encourage a closer link between the local community and the conservation aims of the garden.

Introduction

This proposal developed in collaboration with Kembelo Kibungu, the Director of the Kisantu Botanic Garden, Paul Latham, personal advisor to the garden and Fiona Dennis BGCI to address the problem of the over-harvesting of wild medicinal plant species.

The role of the community is key for the long term sustainability of wild harvesting and the planning for cultivation and marketing of medicinal plant species. The success of this proposal is entirely dependent on the co-operation and the collaboration of the local people of Kisantu.

Women will play a key role in this process and much of the project. The team working on this project will be targeting women's organisations and interest groups in order to ensure the full involvement of women. The team will be encouraging the contribution of women's ideas on the future management of the natural resources of the region and will be promoting conservation awareness-raising with their children.

History of the Kisantu Botanic Garden

There are only two botanic gardens in this country one in the equatorial region and one on the plains of the lower Zaire region at Kisantu. The Kisantu Botanic Garden lies 120 kilometers outside the capital city of Kinshasa and close to the urban center of Kisantu. The Garden was established by the Jesuit priest, Father Justin Gillet (1866-1943), in 1900 with financial support from the State.

The garden has an area of 255 hectares with over 2,500-3000 species in the living collections. There is an economic botany collection which contains representatives of Banana, citrus, coffee and Mangosteen as well as a vast array of medicinal, aromatic and decorative plant species.

There is an active programme of conservation at the botanic garden and the management of the garden are actively involved in working with the local community, the other national botanic garden and the protected areas networks of the country.

Background

In Bas Congo it is common to find a variety of medicinal plants growing along side the vegetables in gardens surrounding homes in most villages. The continued popularity of the traditional methods of healing is partly because of the cost and difficulty of obtaining modern "Western" medicine in the country. Although many medicinal plants are grown in home gardens there are a significant number of species that are exclusively collected from the wild. These are becoming increasingly scarce and more difficult to locate in the field. Forest on the outskirts of urban areas such as the highly populated centres of Kisantu - Inkisi for example, are under particular high pressure from over-collection. Local residents often visit the Garden itself and strip the bark of trees that are growing in the living collection. This frequently results in the death of those trees.

Aims

- Draw together the community and its traditional healers to address the problems of over harvesting
- Establish a medicinal plant demonstration garden
- Develop a conservation awareness-raising program for schools and villages
- Reduce the pressure on wild medicinal plant species

Objectives

- Develop a demonstration medicinal plant garden
- Identify target species under threat from over-collection
- Establish a propagation program for target species
- Supply and sale of planting material (seeds, cuttings and plants) to farmers and villagers via a comprehensive distribution programme
- Train a medicinal plant conservation outreach team at the Kisantu Botanic Garden

- Develop teaching materials for use in local conservation programmes and schools.

"Nine out of ten herbalists in Africa may be women, although men are traditionally the organisers of associations of traditional medicine" (Gifts of Health Reports, 1996).

Methodology

- *Participation of the community*
- *Establishing a herbarium reference collection.*
Planting a living collection at Kisantu
- *Testing methods of propagation for each species.*
- *Community Education Programme*

This project is currently looking for a funder and will be delighted to hear from anyone interested in helping to conserve the rare medicinal plants of Bas Congo.

An Important Reminder:

From Dr. David Jones NHZ

The ultimate aim of the Africa Botanic Gardens Network is to find resources from the World's Zoo and Botanic community for the Botanic Gardens in Africa; perhaps by twinning, perhaps by project activities. This will require information about your garden: video material, brochures, project outlines, anything which can be used to market these important institutions to prospective backers. Many gardens will not have these materials, in this case we need to see if we can get agencies *in the countries* to help us to get the facilities to make this possible e.g. get your local NGO's and Embassies involved.

For promotion of your Garden in the USA, please send all your promotional materials to:

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