



AFRICAN BOTANIC GARDEN NETWORK
BULLETIN NO. 4
March, 2002

Network Meeting : ABURI BOTANIC GARDENS, GHANA

A follow-up meeting to the African Botanic Garden Network inaugural meeting in Asheville was held at the Aburi Botanic Gardens, Ghana in June 2001. Hosted by Director, George Owusu Afriyie, the meeting was attended by representatives from Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, South Africa, Togo, and BGCI. Discussion focused on the possibility of holding an All African Botanic Garden Congress and the logistics of making this dream come true.

AFRICAN BOTANIC GARDENS CONGRESS ANNOUNCEMENT

Venue: Durban Botanic Garden in South Africa Date: November 2002

The conclusion of this meeting was an agreement to hold the first African Botanic Gardens Congress in 2002. A plan of action based on dividing the Africa continent into six administrative regions (north, central, south, east and central) was developed. Each region has an elected Co-ordinator. Each Co-ordinator will identify and work with garden representatives from their region to win financial support for their participation at the Congress. Regional Co-ordinators were appointed and it is to that person that your enquiries about participating in the congress should be addressed (see enclosed flyer for details). It is hoped that representatives will contact their regional co-ordinator and work with them to source funds (estimated \$1,500), for them to attend. It is anticipated that 150 representatives of African botanic gardens will attend the Congress, whether self-funded or sponsored, and that they will form the nucleus of the continents emerging regional botanic garden networks.

The Network is greatly indebted to Durban Botanic Gardens, South Africa for kindly offering to host this Congress. The prospect of organising and holding a major continental Congress in a very short space of time is extremely challenging. The Congress Committee and Co-ordinators will keep the Network informed of all developments through their regional Co-ordinators, the email network list (apply Fiona Dennis BGCI) or in the next edition of the Bulletin (June 2002).

Add your name to the African Botanic Garden Network: If you would like to be included on the mailing list for the *African Botanic Garden Network Bulletin* please contact: Fiona Dennis at BGCI: Descanso House, 199 Kew Road, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3BW
Fax: +44 (0)20 8332 5956. Email: frd@bgci.rbgekew.org.uk

CENTENARY OF THE KISANTU BOTANIC GARDEN, DRC

Commemorative Centenary Booklet

Kembelo Kibungu
Curator Kisantu Botanic Garden, Kinshasa,
Democratic Republic of Congo

Kisantu Botanic Gardens has produced a commemorative booklet to mark the centenary of their Garden. With the difficulties and uncertainties that this country has suffered over many years the centenary also commemorates the determination and steadfastness of the Curator Kibungu Kembelo, and his staff. The booklet is a proud reminder of an important garden that persists in the face of adversity and has faith in the future of its collections and the work of its staff. The booklet is available in French from Justin Gillet et le Jardin Botanique de Kisantu: Édition spéciale à l'occasion du centenaire du Jardin Botanique de Kisantu (Bas-Congo - R.D.C.) by André Rosier s.j. - CMS., Éditions jeune Chretien. Édite à Kisantu le 28th October 2000. C.J.C.D.I. - Kisantu-Kinshasa or contact Fiona Dennis at BGCI to facilitate purchase.

ACTION PLAN: SOUTHERN AFRICAN BOTANIC GARDENS PUBLISHED

Christopher K. Willis and Sharon Turner (eds). 2001 Southern African Botanical Diversity Network Report No. 12. SABONET, Pretoria, South Africa. 35 pp. ISBN 1-919795-61-8. Soft cover. This report is available free of charge from the SABONET Secretariat, and will also be added to the project's web site, <http://www.sabonet.org> in due course.

To order a free hard copy of this report, contact The Project Coordinator, Southern African Botanical Diversity Network, c/o National Botanical Institute, Private Bag X101, Pretoria 0001 SOUTH AFRICA. Tel.: (27) 12 804 3200 Fax: (27) 12 804 5979 E-mail: nrm@nbipre.nbi.ac.za.

**This edition of the African Bulletin was published
and distributed by Botanic Gardens Conservation
International (BGCI)**

NURTURE YOUR GARDEN STAFF AS WELL AS YOUR PLANTS

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Introduction

Botanic gardens require a continuum of skills in different disciplines and it is increasingly difficult to find trained personnel to care for specialised living collections and to deliver the conservation message. At Nairobi Botanic Garden (NBG) the staffing level is almost optimal, but still has not acquired all the skills required to fulfil her obligations. This is a continuing process and includes staff overseas experience at two gardens in the United Kingdom, Oxford University Botanic Garden and Cambridge University Botanic Garden. These Gardens were chosen because they are of similar size to NBG with similar roles and are long-term collaborative partners to NBG. This article is based on questions, discussions and readings that were part of the fieldwork completed during the Kew international diploma course, 2000.

• Staff Structure

By developing an organogram we detailed staff duties, responsibilities and objectives.

It was found that the gardens, generally tend toward the optimal staff structure, but rarely attain it. Few institutions actually achieve this and even then, for limited periods. In most cases, it is the sum total of the desired teamwork, rather than staff for each job description, that ensures the garden accomplishes its tasks. Therefore, a staff structure is a condition, but not sufficient for the garden to succeed in its endeavour.

• Staffing policy

A staffing policy should lay down adequate guidelines on how people will be recruited and placed to enable an organisation to fulfil its obligations. It also sets the growth path for the organisations' staff should the organisation grow or expand its activities.

• Recruitment

Staffing policies are the force behind change. It is important to set minimum qualifications for staff recruitment. Preference should be given to motivated, pre-trained staff from the plant sciences. Practice a clear commitment to staff career development.

• Skills

A deliberate sustained effort to evaluate work accomplishment of individual staff echoes the need to set performance standards for tasks. Fill in gaps through mentoring, and in-house training.

- **Evaluate**

Evaluate all training undertaken by the staff to see how well it was learnt. Besides written reports and presentations, demonstrations of skills learnt should be staggered over a period of time and repeated if necessary when sharing with other staff.

- **Involve the community**

Members of the local community are often willing to help worthy causes such as botanic gardens. The garden should find out if it can gain through any of these inputs.

- **Engage Friends and Volunteers**

The gardens studied were found to engage to some extent, communal services in the form of volunteers or friends organisations. They are a garden's foremost advocates. They are helpful at events, ticketing, fundraising and festivals etc.

- **Internships and Staff Exchange**

Gardens benefit from fostering a collective responsibility. This can be achieved through staff exchange programs and continuing student internships.

Staff invest time, skill, commitment and enthusiasm in the organisation. These should not be taken for granted, but be given back in good measure. It is clear that training unlocks creativity in problem-solving processes; ignore it and you will have insufficiently trained, poorly motivated staff. Therefore, develop your garden and your staff too.

CELEBRATING A CENTENARY OF BOTANICAL ACHIEVEMENT The Victoria Botanical Garden, Seychelles

Mr Denis Matatiken
Victoria Botanical Garden, Mahe, Seychelles.

When a botanical station was first conceived in the mid 1890's it was determined that such a station should be able to finance itself by producing sufficient agricultural products for export. Mr. R.V. Scott, then the Director of Forest and Gardens based in Mauritius, visited Seychelles in 1894. He suggested to Governor Mr Riseley Griffith, that the station be built near Victoria, where the community would have easy access to the various trial grounds, and learn cultivation techniques for crop introductions. He believed providing access to plant novelties and improved farming techniques would increase production and revenue.

In 1901 Mr. Paul Dupont, first Director of the Botanical Station and six gardeners converted Scott's ideas into reality. That year the first agricultural show was held within the grounds of the botanical station making the first link between the community and the

gardens. There was formal training in agricultural and horticultural techniques and the grounds of the garden were laid out. Between 1902 and 1912, he made two collecting missions to Singapore, India and Sri Lanka which introduced a variety of food crops and economic plants. Countless plant specimens were sent to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew for identification. Several of those collected in the upper Cascade and Mont Sebert areas have received type specimen status.

Today the Garden boasts one of the best well kept tropical plant collections in the world. With rapid developments in biotechnology, and the enormous erosion of plant genetic resources, such collections are important sources of new genes for the development of novelties for the horticultural, pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries. The Garden is a valuable site for environmental education and illustrates our dependence on the various environmental services nature renders to us. More and more teachers become aware of these opportunities through better co-ordination between the Ministry of Education and the management of the Botanical Garden.

The Garden is one of the most important sites for ecotourism in Seychelles with an estimated 40 000 tourists per year. Many of the visitors are impressed by the sheer size of the mature palms and trees nicely planted between the huge granite boulders scattered irregularly on the edges of the manicured lawns. Another attraction are the land birds, bats and other wildlife that have either found themselves a cosy place to live or are attracted by the wide varieties of fruits always available in the garden. Perhaps the most remarkable contribution the garden has made in our lives is that it has always been there for the simple purpose of passive recreation. For over a century the Garden has provided that link between people and plants, nurturing that bond which is fundamental in the development of appreciation and respect for the natural treasures around us.

BEE KEEPING OR HONEY HUNTING? The importance of forage plants in Africa

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In much of Africa the loss of forest cover, and changing patterns of land use have had a major effect on the forage plants used by bees. This also affects the quantity and quality of honey produced. Much indigenous forest cover has been cleared for cultivation and many of the remaining forest reserves are under threat. Because of the shortage of woodland, farmers now plant *Eucalyptus* sp.,

Cupressus lusitanica and *Pinus patula* for their timber and firewood needs. Both the quantity and variety of bee forage and the overall honey production have been thereby reduced.

In the lower Congo the main source of forage is now *Chromolaena odorata*, an introduced weed from Central America and the West Indies. Traditionally, areas of bush/savannah were protected from fire until the forest had regenerated and, after a certain number of years decided by the village chief, these were allocated to families for their field crops. These patches of forest (called Nkuunku locally in Kongo) were normally left for between 15 and 20 years, but are now more likely to be cut down after 5 or 6 years, because of the shortage of good fallow land. This has led to the invasion of coarse grass species together with *Chromolaena odorata* (Siam weed), which are generally burnt during the dry season and thus prevent any return to forest fallow. Again the composition of honey will have been affected. Bee-keeping, in contrast to honey hunting, is a relatively recent activity here and it is not known whether the quantity of honey has been reduced as a result. However, there are many other indigenous and introduced plants, filling a variety of ecological niches, which provide useful amounts of pollen and nectar to bees. Particularly during dearth periods they are important for maintaining colony strength and brood production. For example in southern Tanzania where maize is now planted over vast areas, *Bidens steppia* is a common weed and an important source of both nectar and pollen.

Resource manuals have been prepared to encourage beekeepers and development workers in these two areas to conserve the important bee forage plants. They include plants used for hedging around village homes, medicines, vegetables, plants used for soap or toothbrushes and food plants for edible caterpillars etc. The manuals bring together some knowledge of their uses and how, if appropriate, they can be propagated. It is hoped that beekeepers will be encouraged to plant bee forage plants around their homes and fields. The production of the manuals has been part financed by DFID through Natural Resources International. Photos rather than detailed

botanical descriptions are given to help with recognition. The manuals are being produced in French and Kongo for lower Congo and in Swahili for the southern Tanzanian region. However, copies can be made available in English on request to the author.

NB. The author would be particularly interested to hear from others who have studied bee forage in Africa, particularly in the humid and high altitude zones.

**African Botanic Gardens Bulletin
A Rotating Editorial**

The African Botanic Garden Bulletin has a changing editorialship. This means that you can have the opportunity to produce the Bulletin should you be interested to do so. Please contact the current Editors or BGCi directly, to express your interest.

Chris Dalzell & Mark Mattson have kindly agreed to edit the next edition, No. 5 edition due to be produced in June 2002. Please send your contributions to Chris and Mark:

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The Bulletin is published and distributed free by Botanic Gardens Conservation International. The Bulletin reaches 114 botanic gardens in Africa and is entirely dependant on the voluntary contribution of staff from these institutions.



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