

BGCI-KADOORIE FARM AND BOTANIC GARDEN TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

Celebrating a decade of collaboration for capacity building in plant conservation

Introduction

As part of its endeavour to foster capacity building for plant conservation worldwide, BGCI initiated in 2003 a new, advanced training opportunity for junior and mid-level staff from mainland China and Hong Kong SAR-based botanic gardens. Funded through the HSBC Investing in Nature initiative from 2003 until 2007, BGCI's scholarship exchange programme grew to offer training in a wide range of botanical disciplines at institutions in the People's Republic of China, including the

Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) associated botanic gardens in Guangzhou, Xishuangbanna, Beijing and Kunming as well as Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden (KFBG), Hong Kong SAR.

Following the tremendous success of this capacity building opportunity, KFBG decided in 2007 to continue with awarding travel scholarships for botanic garden personnel from mainland China. To date, some 60 participants have benefited from this training programme, which is held every year over a period of two to three weeks.



Organic farm (Huang Xiaofeng)



Studying the anatomy of Orchids (Sun Guofeng)

Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden (KFBG)

Located on the northern slopes of Hong Kong's highest mountain – Tai Mo Shan, Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden (KFBG) extends over 148 hectares of land with deep-set valleys and streams, woodlands and vegetable terraces. Established in 1956 to provide agricultural aid to farmers in need of support to help them lead independent lives, today, KFBG plays an active role in promoting biodiversity conservation in Hong Kong and South China, through the promotion of sustainable agriculture, scientific research, capacity building and creative nature education. With its mission to harmonise our relationship with the environment, KFBG aims to demonstrate how people can live sustainable lifestyles with respect for nature and each other.

The BGCI-KFBG Travel Scholarship Programme

Designed to support closer working relations and linkages between botanic gardens of the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong SAR, the BGCI-KFBG Travel Scholarship Programme has been influential at various levels. While the focus of this capacity building endeavour has been on developing individual competence and skills in various botanical disciplines, including horti- and arboriculture, native plant conservation, botanic garden management and urban greening, it has also nurtured new collaborative initiatives. For instance, as a direct result of the training, joint research activities were initiated between KFBG and Beijing Botanic Garden to enhance the *ex situ* conservation of threatened pteridophytes. In another example, following their participation in the training, staff from Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden developed *Sound of Nature*, an environmental travelling exhibition calling for people to



Organic farming (KFBG)

care for their environment, appreciate traditional cultures and protect biological and cultural diversity. The exhibition was eventually viewed by over 50,000 visitors.

Since the inception of the exchange training programme, the feedback from the trainees has been overwhelmingly positive. A selection of individual statements illustrates both the participants' personal gain, as well as the broader influence on strengthening relationships between botanic gardens as a result of new contacts established.



I established connections with many botanic garden staff. This training not only gave me the opportunity to initiate partnerships with specialists in Hong Kong, but also helped me build very good relations with staff from seven other botanic gardens in China. Fostering connections is one of the major gains from this training. Since plant conservation work needs also a macro-level perspective, reinforcing regional exchange and cooperation is really essential.

Han Gui-jun, Xi'an Botanical Garden, attended the course in 2006.

I learned a lot from the orchid conservation programme regarding the distribution, characteristics, key reference points in taxonomy, growth habit, propagation and conservation methods of Orchidaceae. This has helped me to significantly improve my knowledge, which will be a good foundation for orchid research and conservation at my botanical garden.

Liao Ju-yang, Hunan Province Forest Botanical Garden, attended the course in 2006.

Left: KFBG landscape in the past (above) and present day (below) (KFBG)

The professional skills, advanced management ideas, rich experience in plant conservation and various types of public education tools [taught and available at KFBG] will be very helpful for my work at Hangzhou Botanic Garden. This is an excellent capacity building opportunity. I hope it will continue to provide training in plant conservation for many more people in the future.

Lu Yijun, Hangzhou Botanical Garden, attended the course in 2008.

I gratefully acknowledge BGCI and KFBG for giving me this opportunity to learn in Hong Kong. The core of the training I received was on concepts and techniques for tree management and native tree conservation. I will share and apply what I have learned from this training in my garden, such as tree risk assessment and skills in tree climbing, chainsaw operation and tree pruning. Over the next two years I will undertake a tree risk assessment and review the actual situation of the trees in my garden.

Yu Zhishui from Beijing Teaching Botanical Garden attended the course in 2009.



Training in tree climbing (Yu Zhishui)



Seed bank (KFBG)

I learned a lot from this training. I not only understand tree management, including tree climbing, tree pruning and risk assessment, but I also now have a greater understanding of the functions of botanical gardens especially in the area of public education. I shared what I have learnt from this training with my colleagues. The director of my garden (Kunming Botanical Garden) was most impressed, and now wants to train all our staff in tree management and upgrade the equipment that we have at our garden.

Dr. Han Chunyan from Kunming Botanical Garden attended the course in 2010.

In 2013, from 20 January – 3 February, the BGCI-KFBG Travel Scholarship training programme will focus on conservation genetics and implications for ex situ conservation collections.



Han Chunyan from Kunming Botanical Garden (KFBG)

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Model plot demonstrating fruit-forest inter-planting (Huang Xiaofeng)