

# The work of BGCI in Asia



## Plants – our natural capital



Plants in their global diversity feed, clothe, heal, inspire and delight us. They play a fundamental role in regulating carbon dioxide, off-setting the world's increasing carbon emissions. Plants are essential for all life on earth and yet one-third of all plant species are threatened with extinction.

The extinction of a single species is the loss of a unique combination of genes – a loss that is irreversible. But plant species extinction is not inevitable. The world's botanic gardens already cultivate two thirds of the world's known plant species. They have the skills and knowledge to save our threatened plants - we need to act urgently to ensure this happens.

BGCI is committed to saving the world's plant diversity for the benefit of people and the planet. We work with the only global network capable of delivering this ambitious goal - our worldwide membership of botanic gardens. We work in

partnership developing appropriate solutions for plant conservation and delivering these with governments, botanic gardens, businesses and local communities.

## Every species counts

Every species has a unique role to play and at BGCI we strive to ensure the survival of all plants on earth. Our starting point is to identify species at risk – for example our recent research has shown that half of all magnolia species face extinction – especially in their centre of diversity, South China. In the wild magnolias are a source of timber, food and medicines for local communities. We are therefore working with our Chinese partners to ensure that all endangered species of magnolia are secure in conservation collections in botanic gardens and arboreta. This provides an insurance policy against extinction and a basis for forest restoration. With your support we will do the same for all threatened tree species.



It is often the very plants that are most useful to people that are the most at risk. Over-exploitation is pushing many medicinal plants to the brink. BGCI's botanic garden partners can identify species in danger in their local area and have the skills and knowledge needed to save these plants. In Asia BGCI is using the horticultural skills of local botanic garden staff to set up propagation units and conservation collections of rare medicinal plants – helping to provide a welcome source of plant material to local communities who depend on these species for healthcare and income generation. Communities throughout the region need similar support and with your help, we will expand this work.



### Coordinated action

Restoration of damaged habitats and long term sustainable solutions require coordinated action across many different sectors. BGCI is highly regarded for the work it has done in the development of integrated plant conservation strategies at national and global levels. For example in China we brought together leading state agencies to create the Chinese Strategy for Plant Conservation which balances the China's development needs with conservation of natural resources. As 10% of all known plant species grow in China, action here is of global significance. BGCI is working with

China's growing network of botanic gardens and other conservation agencies to implement the strategy. As part of this we are restoring a range of tree species including magnolias, maples and oaks in their native habitats.

### Celebrating plants

Botanic gardens connect people with nature, providing a window onto the beauty and diversity of plants. They are leaders in environmental education and provide school teachers with unbeatable outdoor classrooms. Educating the public about the importance of plants the threats



they face, and how we all need to look after the environment, is a vital role for botanic gardens. BGCI has already made significant progress in Asia, supporting public exhibitions and displays in countries from Cambodia to Singapore. With your support we will reach out to all garden visitors highlighting how their actions can help save the planet.

We also plan to demonstrate to the world's governments the successes we have achieved in conserving plants, when they gather in Japan to celebrate the 2010 Biodiversity Target of the Convention on Biological Diversity. With your support we will ensure that plants have a high profile – as the foundation for all life on earth. We will ensure that a strong policy focus is retained for the world's plants with measurable targets addressing the impacts of climate change.

### Our gardens- our future

The world's botanic gardens are an immense force for plant conservation – but it is essential that the total global network continues to be more valuable than the sum of its parts. Maintaining coherence within the network and building the capacity of our members to take action where and when it is needed is therefore of major importance for BGCI. We do this by providing information resources, sharing methodologies and organizing workshops, training courses and conferences.

*“I always come back from BGCI conferences re-charged with hope and enthusiasm - I can look into the eyes of the people that we teach, not with despair and defeat but with a conviction that together we are changing the world for the better.”* Timothy Walker, Director of the Oxford Botanic Garden, UK



In Southeast Asia we are developing an international diploma course for aspiring botanic garden staff to be run from Singapore Botanic Garden, with support from our colleagues in Australia. With your support we will train the next generation of plant conservationists – essential for ensuring the security of the region's unique flora.

For more information on how you can support and work with BGCI, please visit [www.bgci.org](http://www.bgci.org), or contact [lauren.evans@bgci.org](mailto:lauren.evans@bgci.org); tel:+44 (0)208 332 5953