

## The education activities for students of primary and secondary schools in Prague Botanic Garden

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Prague Botanical Garden is one of the youngest botanical gardens in the Czech Republic. Our botanical garden was founded in 1969, but in fact its development started in the nineties of the past century. The first air open exposition was open to public in the summer of 1992. Other expositions followed in 1995- Japanese garden, in 1997 Mediterranean exposition, in 2002 vineyard exposition and last but not the least tropical greenhouse *Fata Morgana* in botanical garden.

Throughout its existence Prague botanical garden staff have been prepared special educational programs for our visitors. The first educational programs for public focused on occasional visitors to the botanical garden mainly at weekends, in the afternoon and evening. The environmental education consisted of regular lectures, workshops, special exhibitions and demonstrations of different examples of environmental activities in the field of nature protection using natural materials, plant and landscape protection, environmental-friendly behavior.

Following the openings of new expositions the number of visitors to the Prague botanical garden and participants of our educational courses increased. The problem we were facing, was that the garden was constantly overcrowded during the spring weekends. our first step in solving the problem was to increase promotion and launch an advertising campaign in the media. The effect was an ever increasing number of visitors in autumn months but the number of visits in winter and summer months remained unchanged.

To ensure a great number of visits throughout the year we prepared special and attractive exhibitions during the low season such as exhibition of palms, exhibition of tropical butterflies, exhibitions of tropical and subtropical fruit, sculpture exhibitions etc. The mentioned activities improved the popularity of our botanical garden during low season, but only at weekends and in the afternoon. At the present time the situation is the following- the garden is overcrowded at weekends and afternoons, but nearly empty in the morning. The cooperation with primary and secondary schools in field of biology, botany, plant physiology, ecology and nature protection may be possible way how to increase attendance of botanical garden during morning hours and improve environmental education in botanical garden on higher level, where visiting of the garden is part of educational programs for students of primary and secondary schools.

The staff of Prague Botanical Garden prepares special education projects for support and improvement botanical and ecological teaching programs on the primary and secondary schools. This educational projects are preparing in cooperation with teachers of biology, botany and ecology of primary and secondary schools in Prague and other towns in for better connection between theoretical teaching in school classes and demonstration of subjects of lectures (plants, ecology and physiology of plants, practice of plant protections, cultivations of plants etc.) directly in environment of Prague Botanical Garden. The education projects usually consist from practical part under leading of scientific staff of botanical garden, autonomous working of pupils and students with use of working sheets and final testing of knowledge of participants of projects. One education project can take two or three hours and can be run on outside expositions of Prague Botanical Garden, in the greenhouse or in protected field closed to botanical garden.

The experience based on project in our botanical garden was start similar project under direction of Union of Botanical Gardens of Czech Republic.

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