

South East Asia Botanic Gardens Network (SEABG)

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SEABG was formed at the Singapore Botanic Gardens in January, 2004, when BGCI invited representatives of eleven botanic institutions from ten countries to meet and discuss joint projects such as staff training workshops. The countries included Cambodia, China (Yunnan), Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

This meeting marked the first official gathering of botanic gardens in the region, and resulted in the formation of SEABG. The initial aims of the network were to assist member gardens: in capacity building; to make use of the resources in the region; and to improve their overall standards.

The meeting was welcomed by the attendees as an opportunity to give voice to their institutional needs and to share their problems in an informal, supportive and collegiate atmosphere, something that had not occurred in the past.

In 2007, the Singapore Botanic Gardens once again played host to a meeting of the SEABG network. A total of 35 attendees from twenty institutions representing eleven countries attended the meeting which was to decide the future direction of the network.

Outcomes of the discussions were:

1. Review and evaluation of past SEABG activities
2. Refinement of SEABG's aims and objectives and crafting of mission statement
3. Formulation of concept project proposals that can be used to seek funding from donors.

Networking, followed by capacity building, was overwhelmingly seen as the most valuable outcome of the SEABG network. Also appreciated were the technical advice and resources given during BGCI site visits. The SEABG Mission Statement was crafted and Aims and Objectives refined as follows:

SEABG Network Mission statement

Facilitate and enhance the conservation and sustainable use of indigenous flora of the South East Asian region, through the activities of Botanic Gardens and related institutions.

Aims & Objectives

SEABG aims to:

1. improve members' overall standards through capacity building in the areas of plant conservation, horticulture, environmental education, and curation of collections, in support of the Global Strategy

for Plant Conservation (GSPC) targets and International Agenda for Botanic Gardens In Conservation (IABG).

2. Facilitate communication between members and with other BG communities worldwide.
3. Prepare & develop Codes of Conduct for collection and exchange of plant materials.
4. Facilitate the coordination and assist in the development of collaborative plant conservation programmes among members.
5. Facilitate the use of resources from beyond the region for the benefit of SEABG network.
6. Provide a fund raising platform for SEABG activities.

Meetings such as these are essential for strengthening the network links, growing a sense of network ownership by members, increasing commitment to its mission and aims, and for SEABG to evolve into a community of individuals as well as institutions.

Since its inception until 2007, BGCI has organized three staff training workshops for SEABG, as well as assisted in developing plant conservation exhibitions in 6 countries. SEABG is open to joint collaborative projects with institutions outside of South East Asia, and welcomes all enquiries and proposals. Please contact BGCI Programme Coordinator for SE Asia, Bian Tan: bian.tan@bgci.org