



PLANTS PEOPLE
POSSIBILITIES

Press information: September 2010

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew's contribution to global biodiversity conservation initiatives

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is leading international efforts to protect plant diversity worldwide (<http://www.kew.org/breathing-planet/>) and is contributing to a number of global initiatives aimed at ensuring the conservation of biodiversity – a task never more important in the United Nations International Year of Biodiversity.

COP10 – the global biodiversity conference

COP10 stands for the tenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It is being held in Nagoya, Japan from 18 to 29 October 2010 and over 10,000 delegates are expected to attend – including scientists from Kew.

The CBD was set up after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. In 2002 the countries that signed up to the convention promised to reduce the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010. The COP10 conference is when members of the CBD meet again to report back on progress, discuss why the original target has not been met and to make decisions on how to manage biodiversity for the future.

Thanks to their expertise in taxonomy and systematics, horticulture and other areas of plant science botanic gardens, such as Kew, have a vital contribution to make to biodiversity conservation around the world. With increasing rates of biodiversity loss around the world, the need for data to inform conservation that botanic gardens can provide has never been greater. However, it is vital that appropriate funding is directed towards taxonomy and systematics in order to deliver effective conservation.

Global Strategy for Plant Conservation

The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) is a cross-cutting conservation initiative of the United Nations CBD. The GSPC highlights the importance of plants and the ecosystem services they provide for all life on earth, and aims to ensure their conservation. It was first proposed in April 2000, following an *ad hoc* meeting of leading botanists and conservationists representing international and national organisations and other bodies from 14 countries. That meeting produced the Gran Canaria Declaration outlining the major elements of a Global Strategy for Plant Conservation. Subsequently it was adopted by the Parties to the CBD in April 2002 and fed into government policy around the world. The GSPC has 16 outcome-oriented targets under 5 main themes; for more information see <http://www.cbd.int/gspc/intro.shtml> or <http://www.bgci.org/worldwide/gspc/>

In October 2010, a proposal for the update of the GSPC and new plant conservation targets for the period 2011-2020 will be agreed at COP10. The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is working towards all of the 16 targets of the GSPC, with a particular emphasis on Targets 1, 2, 8 and 14. More information about Kew and the GSPC is available here [please note we will insert link here to the comprehensive Kew GSPC fact sheet that has recently been written]

United Nations Summit on the Millennium Development Goals

A month before COP10 world leaders are meeting in New York (20 to 22 September 2010) to discuss progress of the Millennium Development Goals (the Millennium Development Goals delivery date is 2015).

To improve human welfare, especially of some of the world's poorest people, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and its global partners are contributing to plant-based solutions in conservation, seed banking, habitat restoration and improved sustainable use of plants that are aligned with the Millennium Development Goals.

The work of the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership, founded and led by Kew, was designed with the Millennium Development Goals in mind. For example, one strand of the work is the Useful Plants Project (UPP). In Kenya the UPP programme has trained local farmer groups to collect, process and propagate indigenous tree species, which are sold back to the forestry department for planting programmes. The project is an example of conservation impacting positively on both rural livelihoods and the wider natural environment.

Kew's Africulture project in South Africa's Eastern Cape is another example of Kew enabling local people to better care for useful biodiversity (plants used for medicinal purposes) which is under ever increasing threat.

<http://www.kew.org/science/directory/projects/AfricultureCentre.html>

Additional case studies illustrating how Kew is addressing the Millennium Development Goals, specifically goals 1, 6 and 7, are available from the Kew press office.

For more information:

Millennium Declaration <http://www.un.org/en/development/devagenda/millennium.shtml>

2010 Millennium Development Goal Summit <http://www.undp.org/mdg/summit.shtml>

The Millennium Seed Bank Partnership

http://www.kew.org/ucm/groups/public/documents/document/ppcont_016023.pdf

Useful Plants Project <http://www.kew.org/science-conservation/conservation-climate-change/millennium-seed-bank/using-our-seeds/helping-communities-worldwide/>

The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB)

TEEB is a United Nations backed study that aims to put a monetary value on natural capital and loss of biodiversity. The study is evaluating the costs of the loss of biodiversity and the associated decline in ecosystem services worldwide, and compares them with the costs of effective conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew brings together 250 years of botanical expertise, unrivalled plant reference collections and international partnerships to deliver a conservation programme that supports the aim of TEEB "to accelerate, scale up and embed investments in the management and restoration of ecosystems".

Plants will provide the answers to many of the big environmental challenges we face: food security, deforestation, water availability and climate change. The TEEB study explains this, suggests to policy makers how we can protect and enhance natural capital, and reaches the inescapable conclusion that we must invest in this resource now before we lose it altogether.

Says Professor Stephen Hopper, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: "A change in values and in behaviour towards our natural capital is essential to stem the tide of ever increasing destruction of wild vegetation and massive biodiversity loss.

"TEEB is hugely significant in showing that this is inextricably linked with a sustainable worldwide economy and we warmly welcome the call upon policymakers to accelerate, scale-up and embed investments in the management and restoration of ecosystems."

The final results of the TEEB study will be presented at COP10. For more information <http://www.teebweb.org/>

The United Nations REDD and REDD+ Programmes

Maintaining forests is vital to increasing resilience to climate change – nearly one-fifth of CO₂ emissions come from deforestation.

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) is an effort to create a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development. REDD+ goes beyond deforestation and forest degradation, and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

Kew is committed to accelerating the science of restoration ecology, a relatively new science focused on repairing and reinstating damaged or destroyed wild vegetation. Restoring the world's plant cover is critical for moderating climate change, reducing global warming and averting extinction of plants and animals. It is also vital for enhancing the future options and quality of human life.

Says Professor Stephen Hopper, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: "At no other point in history have plant diversity and restored habitats been more important for human welfare. This is why the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is focussed on making a significant contribution with its partners around the world towards helping repair and restore the rapidly disappearing plant diversity on which all our lives depend.

"With its leadership in plant knowledge and expertise in plant diversity Kew is uniquely positioned to be the world's partner for plant conservation, ensuring plant communities are resilient moderators of climate change."

Kew's Huarango forest restoration programme in Peru is a strong example of achieving conservation goals through helping local communities to value their natural capital. More information <http://www.kew.org/science/tropamerica/peru/>

More information www.un-redd.org/

Ends

For more information please contact the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew press office on +44 (0)20 8332 5607 or email pr@kew.org