

Community projects benefit from RHS Bursaries support



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Development of a community garden on a disused allotment site near Ipswich

In August 2008, the Bursaries Advisory Committee awarded a bursary from the RHS Coke Trust Awards towards the cost of *The People's Community Garden* being developed by the Ipswich and District Council for Voluntary Service (ICVS) at the disused Maidenhall Allotments in Ipswich. The award was specifically granted as financial support towards the purchase of trees for the orchard garden.

The grand opening of the community garden and orchard planting took place on 18 October and a commemorative plaque has since been erected in recognition of the financial support given by the RHS.



Dan Wheals

Alison Findlay with the new plaque

The community garden project will provide an excellent outdoor centre for the local community to learn about the environment and wildlife in the area and how to grow fruit, vegetables, plants and herbs. The garden is for people of all ages and will encourage active participation and learning, being particularly aimed at people that live in two deprived areas of Ipswich. The project aims to encourage people to become more active through horticultural activities, eat more healthily and raise awareness about health issues.

There are also plans to run some teacher training sessions on school gardening this spring, in liaison with Alison Findlay, the RHS Regional Campaign for School Gardening Advisor in eastern England.

Another community project awarded a bursary in recent years was the *Auchindrain Trust* in Argyll, Scotland. Here the aim was to restore the historic communal gardens and "kailyards" for growing fruit, herbs and vegetables. The development of skills by local people was actively encouraged and the aim was to develop the site as an educational centre for the study of horticulture. This now happens on a regular basis and is frequently used for school and community groups.

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Observing the natural habitats of Vireya Rhododendrons

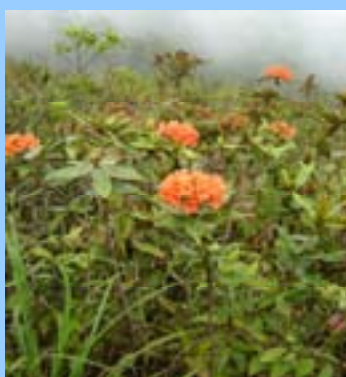
In his present job as a horticulturist in the Indoor Department at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE), Tony Conlon is responsible for the day to day upkeep and development of the largest known vireya Rhododendron collection in the world. He became increasingly aware that, in order to fully understand their growing conditions, it was essential to see them in their natural habitat in the wild and therefore gain a better understanding of the cultivation techniques needed in the glasshouse.

Rhododendron durionifolium subsp. *sabahense*



Tony Conlon

Tony was fortunate in gaining bursary assistance to undertake a study trip to the top of Mount Kinabalu in Malaysian Borneo (Sabah), accompanied by two RBGE associates and later by Tony Lamb who works at Mesilau Nature Centre within Kinabalu Park. This area is one of the hotspots of vireyas with a variety of habitats and vegetation types, and the group also aimed to visit the swampy heath forest (kerangas) near to Long Pa Sia. Before visiting Mount Kinabalu they made a trip up to Mount Alab where the first vireya in habitat was encountered, namely *Rhododendron suaveolens*, unfortunately not in flower, but happily setting seed. Other vireyas on the mountain were a possible *Rhododendron acuminatum* hybrid and an amazing example of *R. crassifolium* in full flower. However, it was on Mount Kinabalu itself that a plethora of plants were seen, including orchids, gingers, begonia, *Sonerila* and *Impatiens platypetala* as well as various other Rhododendrons. Bad weather and bad roads proved to be a problem throughout the trip, so not all the hoped for aims and objectives were achieved, but a large number of Rhododendrons were seen and a greater appreciation of their habitats was gained. It is hoped that a return trip can be undertaken in the not too distant future.



Tony Conlon

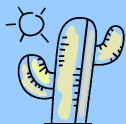
Rhododendron fallacinum on Mount Alab

The search for other funders

Searching for additional funding????? A website address giving details of other awarding bodies giving grants to horticulturists is: www.grantsforhorticulturists.org.uk, giving details of organisations such as The Alpine Garden Society, Merlin Trust, the Historic and Botanic Garden Bursary Scheme, amongst many others.

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Funding for a voluntary placement in Mexico

Voluntary practical placements at botanical gardens around the world are a popular means to not only experience different environments to that found in the UK, but also to widen horticultural knowledge and practical skills.

One such placement was undertaken by Yoke van der Meer at Oaxaca in Mexico in September/October last year, for which she was part funded by an RHS Coke Trust bursary award. Yoke had worked for the previous 10 years as Head Gardener for Rodbaston College., where she looked after a National Collection of salvias and was keen to undertake some research work to improve her personal knowledge. She had already undertaken a salvia plant hunting tour to Mexico in 2006, for which she had been awarded an RHS Blaxall Valentine bursary. Following on from this, she was keen to learn about the practical application of taxonomy, the main vegetation types found in Oaxaca and locate the distribution of salvias in relation to these vegetation types.

Yoke spent several weeks working at the *Sociedad para el Estudio de los Recursos Bioticos de Oaxaca* (SERBO), and an average of 3 days each week working at the *Jardin Etnobotanico*, concentrating on improving her propagation techniques of the endangered plants of Oaxaca. In addition, she made several field trips to areas outside SERBO such as the Sierra Sur, Pacific Coast, Monte Alban and Herve el Aqua where several different salvias were seen namely *S. lasiantha*, *S. amarissima*, *S. tiliifolia* and *S. melissodora*.



Oaxaca regions where salvias are found

Yoke at Herve el Aqua,

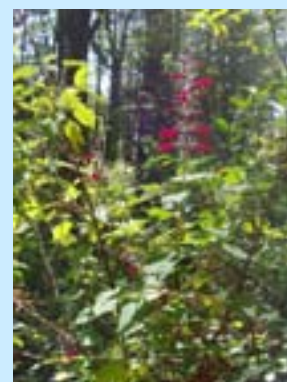


One of Yoke's favourite areas was the Sierra Norte where salvias were in abundance and where she was fortunate in being able to join a study group of eight people (predominantly American) for a two-day hike climbing up to 3000 metres. The last field trip was to Santa Cruz Itundujia in the Mixteca region, which had many vegetation types and where many salvias were found such as *S. tricuspidata*, *S. elegans*, *S. mexicana*, *S. polystachya* Bianco and an unknown salvia which was a beautiful tall magenta coloured flowering plant.

Salvia tricuspidata in pine habitat above Itundujia



Salvia lasiantha at Monte Alban



Unknown 'new' salvia

Yoke's trip has fired her enthusiasm for doing a practical taxonomy course to enable her to be comfortable in dissecting salvias to group them into species, and she now has this as a long term objective for the future. However, she does not rule out a return trip to Oaxaca in the meantime to continue with her research work and the taxonomy of the salvias that grow in the Oaxaca region.

What goes around comes around



Andrea Fowler, trained to be a gardener by the RHS between 1992 - 1995, is now back with the RHS helping to train young gardeners of the future.

Whilst working with orchids and the quarantine facilities at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Andrea was fortunate to have gained three travel bursaries from the Society. The first to the Marie Selby Botanic garden in Florida in 1999, the second to Sarawak and the World Orchid Conference in Malaysia in 2002 and then the most recent was to study the plants of Macae de Cima, in the Organ Mountains, Brazil in 2005.



Andrea Fowler

Andrea with the dog "Scooby" who belonged to local people at the village of Macae de Cima, Brazil, accompanied by another keen orchidist—March 2005.

Andrea with students from the local Howard of Effingham School at the royal opening of the new Glasshouse—July 2007.



Her current role as a Horticultural Technician sees Andrea helping children at the Clore Learning Centre at Wisley. One of the most popular of the Wisley programmes is 'Plant Explorers'. Andrea starts the session talking about how the RHS has sponsored plant collecting trips for over two hundred years, which techniques plant collectors used both then and now and how, as plant explorers, people might need to adapt what is worn 'in the field' to cope with any environmental conditions that might be encountered.

"Little did I know that my RHS funded travels would be so interesting to school children, when I made those applications for bursary support all those years ago" says Andrea "and this information means the children are being prepared with the knowledge they need to become keen plant explorers themselves in the future in our new RHS Bicentenary Glasshouse at Wisley!" .

RECENT BURSARY AWARDS

24 applications were received for the November 2008 Bursaries Advisory Meeting, for which **16** awards were made totalling **£29,825**

25 applications were received for the February 2009 Bursaries Advisory Meeting, for which **17** awards were made totalling **£15,150**.

Bursary applications: Closing dates 2009/2010

A bursary application should be submitted before one of the following closing dates, to ensure it is eligible for consideration by the RHS Bursaries Advisory Committee:

31 March 2009
30 June 2009
30 September 2009
15 December 2009

The completed form should be submitted by e-mail to: bursaries@rhs.org.uk

or by post to

Secretary of the RHS Bursaries Advisory Committee
RHS Garden Wisley
Woking, Surrey, GU23 6QB

"Even the richest soil, if left uncultivated, will produce the rankest weeds"

Leonardo da Vinci

