

Education and community engagement towards conservation and sustainable use of endangered and economically useful medicinal plants of Western Ghats through urban healing herbal gardens

G. Raviraja Shetty^{1,*}, and P.E. Rajasekharan²

¹University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences, Shivamogga, India

²ICAR- Indian Institute of Horticultural Research, Hessaraghatta, Bangalore, India

*Corresponding author email: ravirajshettyg@uahs.edu.in

Keywords: conservation, education, healing garden, medicinal plants, sustainable use

Medicinal plants are a globally valuable source of herbal products and they are disappearing at a high speed. There is a global need to conserve and cultivate medicinal plants. At the same time, it is our responsibility to make fast growing cities greener and healthier. It is likely that the modern allopathic system of medicine will suffer a serious setback if certain medicinal plant species go completely extinct. Education towards conservation and ecological responsibility plays a very important role in building awareness about endangered medicinal plants and their traditional uses, helping people of all generations reconnect with their local environment, understanding its inherent value and gaining an ecological sense of place. This sense of belonging fosters ecological responsibility and encourages joyful interaction with the natural world. This was achieved through the establishment of Healing Gardens in the city of Mangalore which served as a source of inspiration and information towards plant conservation and health of urban dwellers. Books and literature about the conservation and use of medicinal plants have been published and widely circulated. In the training programmes and workshops, we focused on how to make both students and the general public aware that they are using a lot of different plant species every day, and different parts of the plants. They were made aware of the traditional uses of medicinal plants, how to harvest, how to use them and how to propagate them for commercial cultivation. Through this exercise, we motivated and promoted schools and urban communities to develop herbal gardens in their respective homes and places which resulted in greenery in cities and engagement of communities in conservation