

Championing climate change resilience – a novel role of botanic gardens in Africa

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Climate change is threatening the livelihoods of families in Africa. High direct dependence on natural resources for day-to-day living leads to climate change impacts and associated gross consequences to be directly felt. For instance, medicinal plants play a vital role in the primary health care of the community where households first administer a herbal concoction to the sick and further medical attention is only sought if the sickness persists. Unfortunately, such medicinal plants can no longer be accessed easily due to climate change and other factors. The increasing incidence of pests and diseases necessitate more resistant crop varieties, a trait that is available in most indigenous traditional foods which, unfortunately, have been neglected for decades. The increased demand for cooking energy/fuels (charcoal and firewood) is also threatening the remaining forestry resources. Nature Palace botanic garden, Uganda, is responding to the challenges through a community collaborative program that includes promotion of home-herbal gardens that assure sustainable access to medical plants by the household; indigenous foods and wild crop relatives conservation to ensure their conservation and access to planting materials by community members; and the promotion of the waste-to-energy program to conserve forestry resources. A combination of such community collaborative engagements is resulting in a more resilient community.