

Horticultural training in Southeast Asia

The delivery of RBGE's Certificate in Practical Horticulture (CPH) course has recently extended to Southeast Asia and RBGE's Head of Education Leigh Morris and CPH Coordinator Laura Cohen reveal how RBGE have delivered the course in Laos and Thailand.

In 2010 RBGE signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Pha Tad Ke (PTK) Botanic Garden in Luang Prabang, northern Laos and in December 2010 we spent two weeks delivering the CPH programme at PTK. We taught eight staff as well as eight environmental managers from gold and copper mines in the south of Laos who wanted to acquire the skills needed to assist with their reforestation work.

PTK had constructed a classroom, complete with all the necessary teaching equipment, and had erected a large bench in their nursery for the propagation and potting classes. We each took it in turns to lead on the eight days of the CPH, ably assisted by Albin Duzer, the French Head Gardener, Bon (Metha Namsai), a Thai translator, and Thongkhoun Saykason, a horticultural lecturer from the Luang Prabang Agricultural College. At the end of the course all students passed the practical exam and were presented with a certificate, and feedback was excellent.

The vision for the CPH is that it becomes the benchmark globally for practical horticultural training,

Below: Laura Cohen (third from left) teaching cutting propagation in Laos, with translator Bon looking on.



Above: Staff and students on the CPH Train the Trainers course at Queen Sirikit BG, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

particularly within botanic gardens. One of our aims is to get more gardens delivering the course (which is already at the Eden Project and Nezahat Gökyiğit Botanic Garden in Istanbul) and to enable this RBGE have planned a series of 'CPH Train the Trainers' programmes. The first of these was delivered at the Queen Sirikit Botanic Garden (QSBG), Chiang Mai, northern Thailand in January 2011. This was promoted by Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) and supported by QSBG, who provided tremendous support, course facilities, accommodation and delicious Thai food for staff and students, all free of charge.

Fifteen people took the course and in addition to three QSBG staff, we had students from botanic gardens in China, India (2), the Philippines, Oman (3), the UK (2), the USA and Laos (2). Mark Paterson and Steve Burrell from the Eden Project jointly delivered the programme with us. It was a very

intensive two weeks, and as well as the ten days of training and the practical exam for the CPH, there were evening sessions focusing on teacher training, with the students all delivering microteach sessions. They also developed their teaching skills in the horticultural classes by demonstrating to each other.

The expectation is that most of the students will now deliver the CPH programme, with RBGE validating and providing support. One of the students was from Longwood Gardens, Pennsylvania, USA and discussions are now taking place with a view to Longwood becoming the USA Partner for the CPH. The delegates from Laos are both lecturers at the Northern Agricultural and Forestry College, Luang Prabang and intend to add the CPH to their curriculum. The delegates from China, India and the Philippines are also planning to deliver the CPH at their gardens in 2011. The global impact of our education is widening!

