

Promoting the use of plant resources through horticultural knowledge communication

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Dissemination of horticultural knowledge accumulated through the long-term maintenance of living plant collections in botanic gardens increases public interest in plants and provides an incentive to create greener spaces that benefit both people and nature. Three notable ways, each with its own aim, duration and impact, in which the University of Latvia Botanical Garden has been sharing its horticultural knowledge are a training course, ongoing trial demonstration, and long-term promotion of a particular genus. The first story concerns tropical and subtropical plants. The 12-hour training course “Maintenance of indoor plants” provides hands-on experience, practical tips, and a theoretical part that focuses on species biology and consequently on biodiversity conservation, thus addressing the issue that many species from Cactaceae, Orchidaceae and other “indoor plant” families are threatened in the wild. The second story discusses grassland habitat conservation through the observation of plant diversity and species composition dynamics in a model area. Since 2021, sample plots with six different management types have been monitored for the purpose of demonstrating (re)creation of a semi-natural grassland. Visitors can view the trial on site and read the observation diary on the Botanical Garden’s website. This transfer of experience aims to encourage people to apply the best practices in their own gardens and similar anthropogenic areas, thus contributing to the increase of plant diversity as natural grasslands now cover less than 1% of the territory of Latvia. The third story represents nearly 70 years of communication experience focusing exclusively on the genus *Rhododendron*. Throughout the creation of the collection, information about rhododendrons and their cultivation has been disseminated through publications, interviews, workshops etc., resulting in a substantial increase in the popularity of rhododendrons, which are now widely used as ornamental plants in Latvia.