

The Botanical Garden of the University of Vienna

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Abstract

The University of Vienna's historic Botanical Garden is an important resource for biological research, education, and conservation with a long-standing historical tradition, and a popular public venue, attracting 100,000 visitors each year.

In 1754 Empress Maria Theresia of Austria founded a pharmaceutical garden in the baroque style for the



Fig. 1 - Baroque Garden © R. Hrominiak



Fig. 2 - Botanical Garden Alpinum © R. Hrominiak

Medical Faculty of the University of Vienna. This is the basis for today's Botanical Garden (Hortus Botanicus Vindobonensis), which until today is located at its original site in Vienna's third district. The garden is dedicated to research, academic and public education, conservation, horticulture and recreation. It is part of the Department of Biogeography of the Faculty of Life Sciences at the University of Vienna.

The Botanical Garden today covers an area of approximately 8 hectares and represents a combination of a 19th century landscape garden and a park-like display of plants in systematic and geographical arrangements. More than 9,500 species are cultivated, including around 900 trees representing more than 500 woody species. The collections and displays of the HBV are an important base for research and education in plant sciences. Each year, up to 10,000 parts of c. 400 different species are used for lectures and courses in biology.

Several areas in the Botanical Garden are devoted to special topics, such as useful plants,

succulents, alpine flora, dry area grasslands of Austria, plant genetics and evolution. The greenhouses, originally built between 1890 and 1893, were last renovated during the 1980s. Plants in the greenhouses are mainly cultivated for scientific and education purposes and include well-documented collections of subtropical and tropical plant groups, such as Annonaceae, Rubiaceae, Gesneriaceae, Bromeliaceae, Liliaceae s.l. and the orchid genus *Bulbophyllum*. The research greenhouses are not open to the public, but a small tropical plant exhibition, freely accessible for visitors and students, has been arranged in the central greenhouse.

A special commitment of the Botanical Garden is to contribute to the global goals of the Convention on Biodiversity and the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation, through the cultivation and preservation of endangered species from Austria and the tropics.

More than 100,000 people visit the Botanical Garden each year, and one of its great challenges is therefore to create an informative and fascinating environment for all its visitors, encouraging curiosity for the green world and its conservation. A successful “green school” project has been established, to



link research and teaching at the university with public outreach.

The garden is open to the public every day at 9.30 am, closing half an hour before dusk. There is no entrance fee. Visitors to the garden are also offered free public tours (every Wednesday in May and September and every second and fourth Wednesday between July and August). Special exhibitions on various topics are regularly presented.

Fig. 3 - Succulent group © R. Hrominiak

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