

The Ecotourism Society of Seychelles

*For the Community & by the Community
The Process...*

“Turning Possibilities into Realities”

2011 “WINNING FOR SEYCHELLES”

Tourism - Linking Cultures

Horticulture...Our Culture

“Flower Power”



In an age of fast changing information technology and innovation when we can enjoy endless forms of entertainment in our homes, we still can't live without being in touch with the natural world.

It is therefore important that we continue to find ways to experience and be a part of nature, especially when so much time can be spent away from it.

Flowers have been an important part of culture throughout history: when a loved one passes away, flowers are usually offered; for happy occasions, flowers are presented to dear friends.

The Art of flower arrangement is to listen to the spirit of flowers and plants. It is how to make the voice or sentiments of the flower a visual continuation with your feelings. It allows the heart of the arranger to touch the heart of the viewer, for enhanced peace and tranquillity.

Horticulture:

The science, skill, or occupation of cultivating plants, especially flowers, fruits and vegetables, in gardens or green houses.



Exotic Tropicals

The Learning Curve
A la découverte

“**Tropicals**” is the new word crossing people’s lips all across the globe.

With their ravishing elegance, sparkling colours, bold geometric lines and symmetrical perfection, the flower heads of exotic tropicals cater for the ultimate in floral brilliance.

Tropicals include heliconias, gingers, anthuriums and miscellaneous ornamentals such as calatheas, musa bananas, costus and fanciful jungle “foliage”.

The word exotic, “meaning from elsewhere” also include common **Tropicals** such as hibiscus and bougainvillea.

My passion of collecting Tropicals began after seeing inflorescences of **Heliconia and Gingers** in Hawaii in 1988.

After amassing about 200 varieties of Heliconias, orchids, musa bananas, gingers, calatheas, costus and other rare varieties of Tropicals over the intervening years, the urge to collect such symmetrical natural works of art, has intensified whereby I remain in a continuous quest for new varieties.

And my desire to learn about its distribution has broadened, whereby enhancing my knowledge of such flowering plants.

After nurturing such precious gifts of life, for eight years, Kot Man-Ya Exotic Flower Garden, my dream, opened its doors to the public on 31st August 2008. Since then I have been able to share this love of mine with both the local community and our cherished visitors alike. Today I feel contented that I have been able to assist in enticing one and all concerned to develop a liking **for such flowers** (and others of course) which were relatively unknown in the Seychelles Islands before then, for the betterment of the Local Horticultural Industry.

Through this process, related products for the benefit of the Local Community and of the Tourism Industry as a whole have broadened and intensified. The industry has grown leaps and bounds, for its healthy therapeutic benefits, related knowledge, and the economic benefits generated by Kot Man-Ya Garden have enabled TESS to set a firm foundation, in the discharge of its Mission, in a manner conducive to good thinking, for the benefit of the Local Community.





Heliconia

The Flower of the “Gods”

The name **HELICONIA** honours MT. Helicon, home of the ancient Greek Gods.

An ancient legend tells of the sacred Mountain of Helicon in southern Greece the home of the Muses. The nine mythological divinities were the daughters of Zeus, the king of the gods, and Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. They presided over the arts and sciences and inspired artists, poets, philosophers and musicians. They also sang songs about the origins of the world and its inhabitants. This is the origin of the close relationship between the colourful heliconias and the genus *Musa*, the bananas and plantains.

Varieties of Heliconias – where do they come from?

There are now about 400 species and cultivars of Heliconia, 98% of which are native to Tropical America. Their strikingly elegant flower heads arise within banana-like clumps of oval leaves that range from two to 20 feet high. Formerly classified as bananas, heliconias are now in a separate family, Heliconiaceae. Traditionally their leaves are used in food storage, cooking and house construction, and obviously the blooms were used for decoration.

Heliconia are remarkable plants not only for the beauty of the flowers but also for the fact that very little is known about them. Although they are native only to Central and South America and some of the islands of the South Pacific, their easy growth and brilliant show have made them favourite garden subjects throughout the tropics of the world.

In 1985, the Heliconia Society International was founded. In recent years heliconias have finally come into their own horticulturally. Since then, enthusiasts for all aspects of heliconia interest have been exchanging information, whereby becoming increasingly popular as landscaping in the tropics and tropical regions of the world, as potted plants or cut flowers. With this new popularity, the need to identify the many species and cultivars which one may encounter has also been seen, since their study has been sparse, so has the literature about them.

Indeed the dramatic colour and form of a heliconia bloom is not due to its flowers, but rather to highly modified leaves called **bracts**.

Each “floral boat” houses the heliconia’s true flower, rather inconspicuous, curved tubes of white, yellow, pink, orange, or green hue. The flowers may curve up or down. Hence we cannot call the heliconia a flower; rather it is a flower head... a cluster of many bracts, each containing flowers. The same principle applies to artichokes, proteas, and banksias.

We now have the pleasure in introducing five heliconias which have been organised into large, medium, and small erect flower heads and pendant flower heads.



As suggested by its scientific name, Heliconia Caribaea is native to the Caribbean Antilles Islands. Its natural distribution stretches from the southern most point in Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, St Lucia, La Martinique, Dominican, La Guadeloupe, Montserrat, Antigua and Barbuda, Puerto Rico, Hispaniola and Cuba. It is Montserrat’s National Flower and the endemic endangered bird, the Montserrat Oriole (*Icterus Oberi*) depends on the Heliconia leaves to hang its woven nest.

Heliconia Red Caribaea cv. Purpurea



The giant Red Caribaea, an exceptional in terms of colour, shape and size is one of the largest. Like the Yellow Caribaea, its flowers measure up to 8 inches wide and 16 inches long, while its leaves may attain a length of 20 feet. Its bracts, each 5 inches long and tipped with green are arranged in two dimensions. Their broad, curvaceous bases overlap like shingles, producing a very compact symmetrical appearance. This Caribbean Beauty blooms through the year.

Other names: Sexy Pink, Hanging Pink Flamingos.

Bedecked in erotic pink and apple green, this flamboyant Heliconia epitomizes the tropics. Emerging from its rose-colored axis are up to more than two dozen bracts edged with fragile membranes, from which the name **chartacea** meaning “**membranous**” is derived.

Heliconia Chartacea ‘Sexy Pink’



From beneath each bract’s lower surface, delicate matching florets peek out shyly. A few months after planting, her glorious, two-foot-long (plus) pendants brings much delight to flower farmers and enthusiasts alike. “Sexy Pink” as befits her name ranges naturally from Guyana to Peru.

The bright greenish-yellow bracts of Rainbow Heliconia, daubed with sizable rouge “cheeks” are a visual feast. Its long-pointed bracts arch with a particular pleasing curvature. Its fan-shaped clumps, up to 12 feet high, thrive well in Seychelles as in its native Costa Rica and Panama.

Heliconia Wagneriana cv. ‘Rainbow’ & ‘Easter’ Pink - spotted Lobster Claw



Rainbow Heliconia blooms from April to September with peak in April to July.

Current research is aimed at expanding its period of availability.

Full sun, ample water, warm air, high humidity and good soil are all it needs.

Other names: firecracker, dwarf hanging heliconia, parrot’s beak and ‘Twirl’.

Resplendent in tri-coloured glory, the hanging lobster claw is simply dazzling: its vibrant colours glow – almost iridesce – with an intensity rare even in the tropics. This beauty is a native of Argentina and Peru.

Its two-foot-long flowerheads dangle, around eye-level amidst 6 to 10 foot high foliage.

Heliconia Rostrata ‘Hanging Lobster Claw’



Indeed where the effect is so overwhelming in parts of Hawaii, it is advisable that flower lovers hand the driver’s wheel to someone else!

Rostrata means “beaked”. That red and green of hanging lobster claw spell “*Christmas*” to market specialists. The University of Hawaii researchers are **attempting to initiate blooming in December.**

Heliconia Psittacorum is primarily lowland species native to Columbia, Venezuela, Trinidad, Surinam and Brazil.

They are the most common cut flower heliconia and also most popular as potted plants or in landscaping.

Relatively small size, abundant year round flowering, sun and heat tolerance and a wide diversity of colours, make an attractive heliconia for many uses.

Heliconia Psittacorum Parrot’s Beak, Parakeet Flower, False Bird of Paradise St. Vincent Red



Bright to deep red over most of bracts shading the orange proximally, **St. Vincent Red** originates of the Islands of the Commonwealth of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Caribbean Islands

Blooming all year with peak March to October, other new gay varieties and cultivars include Lady Di, Shamrock, Sassy, Golden Torch, Adrian, Lillian and Parakeet.

Environmental Benefits of Tropicals

In addition to the economic and health benefits they generate, such plants are useful for the protection and enhancement of the hillside environment of Kot Man-Ya Garden. They include:

- Eradication of invasive creepers and weeds
- Prevention of hillside erosion
- Effective against sedimentation of streams and water ways
- Purification of runoffs
- Excellent habitat for frogs, lizards and geckos
- High water retention capabilities
- Easy to grow organically
- Protection of the water table
- Food for garden pets
- Production of compost and manure
- Ideal home for birds especially sun birds
- And the eco-cycle continues...

Tourism – Linking Cultures Let's Do It with Flowers

The Cut Flower Industry Today

Since its widespread availability in the 1980's Tropicals are one of the fastest – growing segments of Hawaii diversified agriculture. Appealing primarily to sophisticated corporate, professional and private buyers between the age of 30 and 45, Tropical are capturing in larger audience each year. In response, the cut flower industry of Hawaii accounted to over US\$100 million in 2007.

Today in New York City, sales of tropicals accounts for over 35% of the floral market. Kenya, the second world exporter of cut flowers has for the last decade also been growing **tropicals** on the humid coast to satisfy the European and Middle East markets. Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, China and other Asian countries are also major producers.

Can Seychelles Tap into this global phenomenon?

Built on an estimated cost of US\$300 million, the **Dubai Flower Centre** is presently a state-of-the-art facility that caters to cut flowers in transit through the Middle East. With over a dozen Emirates weekly flights to and from Dubai, it is without doubt that Seychelles can in the **Long Run** tap into this lucrative cut flower market, provided that the **supply side** can be assured. First and foremost there is still the need for us to satisfy the local market, while aiming for a “small” share of the Global Market over time.

Rest assured that TESS will spare no effort for some “**home grown solutions**” in this direction for the benefit of the Local Community.