

GUIDED TOUR OF THE ENTEBBE BOTANIC GARDENS

WELCOME AGAIN FOR YET ANOTHER EDUCATIVE TOUR

Botanic Gardens Offices

Introduction

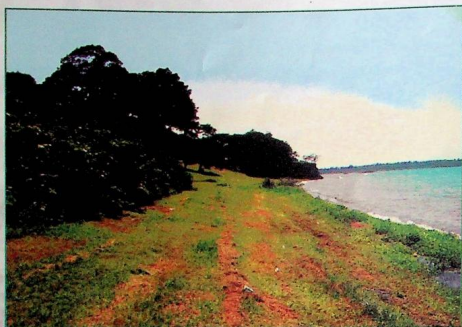
The Gardens are strategically located at the entrance into the country, a 5 minutes drive from Entebbe International Airport and 34 km away from Kampala.



One of the entrances to Entebbe Botanic Garden

They cover an area of 40 ha of gently undulating hills, stunning flat views for picnicking, biodiversity rich wetlands and 1.5 km Lake Victoria shoreline. The variety of scenic views is enriched by the great diversity of plant and animal life. Among these are the red tailed, the vervet and the beautiful Colobus monkeys soaring high in the branches above the natural, cool, ever-flowing forest springs. Over 40,000 visitors per year come to relax, picnic, hold year-end parties, enjoy the view of still waters of Lake Victoria, fish, study among other things.

The gardens are also home to over 30 bird species, a good number of reptiles, monkeys and other living organisms.



Entebbe Botanic Gardens was founded in 1898, with the main aim objective of studying plants of potential value to Uganda. The cash crops that we have today such as coffee, tea and cocoa were first studied here. Later this research aspect was taken over by the research institutes at Kawanda, Namulonge and Serere. However, the original plants have remained to date, including those, such as rubber, which never took off on commercial scale.

The gardens also contain other tropical and warm temperate plants. Thus it has an untapped wealth of plants from other parts of the world in addition to our indigenous ones.

Entebbe Botanic Gardens suffered during the period of political turmoil. In 1995 the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) reached an understanding with the mother Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) to have the Gardens transferred to NARO to help revamp the unit.

In 1999 the Plant Genetic Resources Programme (PGRP) was established under the Forestry Resources Research Institute (FORRI) and that programme is stationed at the Entebbe Botanic Gardens. PGRP is in advanced stages of establishing a central Genebank to conserve the germplasm of Uganda.

At Traveler's Palm Site.

The traveler's palm (*Ravenala madagascariensis*) was introduced from Madagascar. The leaf sheath stores water which can assist long distance travelers, hence the name. It is also a beautiful ornamental plant.

From this point you can also have a general view of the neat lawn of the undulating hills of the Botanic gardens.



One of the sceneries in Entebbe Botanical Garden

Cannon Ball tree.

The Cannon ball tree (*Couroupita guianensis*) was obtained from Trinidad. Note the flowering pattern along the trunk.

Nearby are rubber trees (*Hevea brasiliensis*), which was introduced from the Amazon valley of Tropical America. Its latex is tapped for rubber production. In Uganda this industry did not grow.

The Lakeside

Many visitors enjoy themselves here in by swimming, holding picnics and prayers. Along the beach are pebbles washed ashore when the gale is strong. A visit to a fascinating cliff is also worthwhile to those not too scared of heights. Note the cool breeze.

Cocoa and Coffee

Cocoa (*Theobroma cacao*) was obtained from Tropical Africa. It is still productive here but it is very difficult to get ripe pods due to our friends, the monkeys!

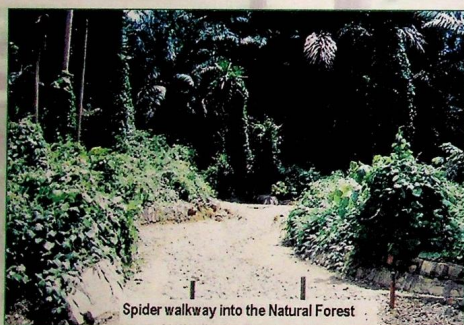
As for Robusta coffee several species from Tropical Africa were introduced e.g *Coffea canephora*, *Coffea congensis*, *Coffea liberica* and *Coffea stenophylla*. All these can be seen, depicting

interesting characteristics. Robusta coffee, indigenous to Uganda was originally grown for ritual purposes, but gained commercial importance in the 1920s. Arabica coffee was first introduced in the Botanic Gardens in 1900 and it too gained commercial importance in cooler areas of Bugisu.



Tropical Forest via Rock Garden.

The rock garden was established to grow plants that normally grow in rocky and dry areas. The clove (*Syzygium aromaticum*), for which Zanzibar has been famous for, stands in close proximity to the rock gardens.



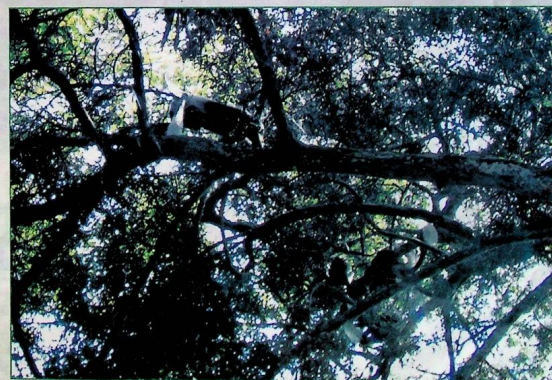
At the time of establishing the gardens, a small portion of the original vegetation was left intact for purpose of educating people on what a tropical rainforest looks like. It formed a complete canopy though old age has killed some trees. The natural spring flowing through the forest, also imparting a cool feeling, used to assist the Entebbe Municipality residents in times of water crisis. A walk through the forest 'along the stone-walk way' reveals friendly spider types with a marvel of their 'hi-tech' cobwebs. Note the cool and fresh air.



A walk through the tropical forest in Entebbe Botanic Garden:

At the forest edge one of the fruit species you are likely to bump into and enjoy, if lucky is the Mangosteen (*Garcinia mangostana*), probably one of the tastiest fruits in the world. It is an extremely slow growing tree. These trees were imported all the way from Malaysia. There is always a big competition for the fruits from children, adults and the troop of monkeys, which live in the gardens.

Nearby is the famous tree *Prunus africana*, which has medicinal properties in treating cancer. This tree is endangered as its bark is now shipped overseas in huge quantities!

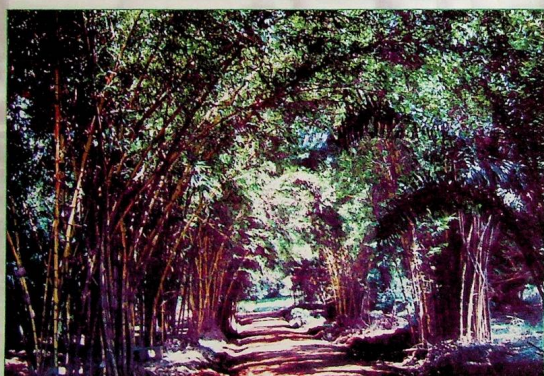


The Plant Nursery.

The plant diversity in the gardens will take you through ornamentals, most of which are available for sale if you cannot resist the temptation of owning beauty. Garden staff trained in propagation techniques are ready to take up the challenge to raise requested planting material. Most popular are ornamentals and improved fruit trees. Plants at different propagation stages are on display in the screenhouse and on the spot purchases can also be made.

A drive via Orchards and Crop Demonstration Plots.

Note the beautiful bamboo walkway. The crops such as coffee, tea, bananas, mangos, avocado, oranges among others sustain the Uganda's economy and ensure balanced diets. Plots of these are maintained for educational purposes for farmers and students.



Bamboo walkway.

Medicinal Plot.

When it comes to disease, plants are the mother of all cures. In fact more than half of the medicines of the world come from plants. This medicinal plants garden holds the important herbs Ugandans use to treat all manner of ailments.



The Fruit Block

This block was specifically meant for fruit trees, but now a few non-fruit trees have been added. Among the fruit trees here are the *Casimiroa edulis* from Asia, *Jambolan* (*Syzygium cumini*) from South Asia. Emphasis is now being placed on indigenous trees and we have started with two species, namely *Nyonza* (*Carissa edulis*) and *Nsali* (*Garcinia burchananii*). The *Cinnamomum* spice tree is under threat from our neighbours. How do you suggest we can conserve this crop?

At this spot one can appreciate the beauty of the gardens



*Thank you for your interest in
Entebbe Botanical Gardens.*

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