

Botanic Garden as an Environment for Informal Education: Experience of Kaunas Botanical Garden

Jurkonis, Nerijus¹

¹*Kaunas Botanical Garden of Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania*

According to Willison (1994), botanic gardens have an obvious and vital role to play in conserving plants, but conservation cannot succeed without education. Kaunas botanical garden (KBG) of Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania has experience in a diverse range of education activities: from traditional guided excursions which present botanical collections, to informal education for preschoolers and schoolchildren. KBG is a partner in the Lithuanian Academy of Science's project for the 'Development of a National Science Communication System in Lithuania'. This project provides funding for the NSO laboratory, which began in 2009. The NSO laboratory provides an informal education programme for young explorers who join the project individually or through their school, when carrying out specific experiments as part of the curriculum (Mildažiene and Štuopytė, 2016). At present, KBG offers a curriculum-focused informal education programs for nurseries and secondary schools. Education programs include indoor and outdoor interactive and multiple activities: green classes, summer field expeditions, summer camps, mini research projects, and presentations of experiments during science festivals among other activities. To spread our way of working further, in collaboration with the Lithuanian Centre of Non-formal Youth Education, we also started organising a national level competition 'Lithuanian Naturalist' for secondary schools.