

Caribbean Chapter of the Society for Economic Botany

PLANTS AND HERITAGE

Islands of the World Conference XII 2012

The Islands of the World Conference XII will be held during May 29th to June 1st, 2012 in the British Virgin Islands. The organizers, The International Small Islands Association, (ISISA) holds this biennial conference to encourage scholarly discussion on small island related matters. This has been valuable in engendering knowledge sharing amongst stake holders facing similar developmental challenges of the modern era.

The broad objective of the conference is to stimulate discourse regarding issues of relevance to adaptation to globalization in the 21st century. Areas of focus include agriculture, education, alternative energy, climate change and society. Participants from islands across the globe, especially the Caribbean and host islands, are invited to join this strategic forum which will encompass themes such as Health and Social Development, History and Culture, Education and Literature, Entrepreneurship and Information Technology.



Dr. Karl Dawson, President of the H. Laverty Scott Community College, host institution, holds the ISISA plaque while flanked by members of the organizing committee. Seated in front are Premier Hon. Ralph T. ONeal and Chairman of the HLSCC's Board of Governors, Dr. Charles Wheatley.

Keynote speakers include Ms Judith Towle, Vice president of the Island Resources Foundation, Sir Dwight Venner, Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and Ms Elizabeth Thompson, UN Assistant Secretary General and Executive Coordinator Rio 2012.

The importance of preserving the heritage associated with the interrelationship between plants and people of the islands will undoubtedly come into focus as an issue of concern. The rich biodiversity of the BVI will also provide a plat-

form for discussion and shared experiences.

The conference organizers have kindly afforded The Caribbean Chapter of the Society for Economic Botany the opportunity to host a session and hold its first meeting at the conference. The session is entitled 'Plants Heritage and Development' and the call for papers has been extended to October 31st, 2011. Abstracts should be submitted to the following email address with identification of the CCSEB session. islandsxii-call@hlsccl.edu.vg Registration can be completed at <http://www.hlsccl.edu.vg/islandsxii/>

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Special points of interest:

- Islands of the World Conference 2012
- Meet Professor John Rashford
- Youth and Indigo
- Aloe use in Barbados
- Caribbean Chapter meeting update

Inside this issue:

Terrel Gonzalves, a budding ethnobotanist	2
Aloe use in a rural community	2
A Caribbean anthology	3
Greater participation anticipated for first CCSEB meeting	3
Baobab images	4

Two Medicinal Asteraceae Species



ASTERACEAE medicinal plants of Barbados.
(l) *Pluchea carolinensis* (Jacq.) G. Don. (Cure for all) and
(r) *Chromolaena odorata* L. King & H. E. Robins (Christmas bush). Used mainly for colds, flu and cooling teas.

The Importance of Aloe Vera in Rural Barbados

Aloe vera (L.) Burm. f., previously ***Aloe barbadensis***, is a medicinal plant of great significance in the practice of traditional therapies in rural communities and some urban villages in Barbados. Aloe is a common garden plant grown not for decorative value but as a pharmaceutical resource.

The aloe gel is a staple in the medicinal pantry being selected for a myriad of health challenges including burns, diabetes, hypertension, colds, flu, constipation, glaucoma, cataract, bronchitis and menstrual cramps. Aloe is also considered essential for removal of toxins from the blood in a health and wellness management strategy.

ment strategy.

The aloe gel is often used in the pure form as a cube, extracted from the leaf, or blended to improve palatability. In one community, it is claimed that aloes can be used to cure asthma if taken on mornings blended with juice, for seven mornings, followed by a glass of milk. This therapy is said to lead to effusive release of mucous from the lungs for seven days at the end of which the cure is achieved.

Aloes use is documented as early as the seventeenth century, during the period of slavery and colonial occupation in Barbados. **(Remedy not scientifically vali-**

dated, and not recommended)



Aloe vera (L.) Burm. f.

Youth and Indigo—Resurgence in Barbados

Indigo agriculture was once thriving on the island of Barbados but was gradually replaced by sugar cultivation as an economic crop. Small areas of naturally growing *Indigofera tinctoria* L. can be found scattered across the island but systematic cultivation of the species has not been a feature of the agricultural landscape for many centuries.

The students of the Department of Agriculture, Barbados Community College, under the guidance of the Head of Department, Marcia Marville, have been experimenting with small trials of the indigo plant to scientifically assess the best habitat and growing conditions required for organic production. This activity is a sub-unit of the Mood Indigo Caribbean Project, conceptualized by the Barbados Fashion Alliance, and funded by GEF/SGP UNDP, who are attempting to introduce environmental stewardship into the local industry by providing alternatives to synthetic dyes.

Terrel Gonzalves, one of the students who has been most visible in the project and has put many hours into monitoring the trial plot, shared his perspective on being

involved in the activity.

Q—Terrel, how did you become involved in the project?

I met the Project Manager, Lucille Junkere, at a crop production class, where she was in attendance as a guest speaker, and became very interested in the idea of reintroducing indigo to the island.

Q—How do you see this project as having relevance to young people in terms of stimulating their interests?

Firstly, students generally do not gravitate to agriculture as a subject and I think that making them aware of the scope of the application for agri-products, and the many skills involved, would give a dimension they probably would not have realized on their own, and stimulate their interest more.

Q—What have you personally gained from being involved?

I have learnt more about organic management of plots and also about the generation of the indigo dye, which is a very fascinating process. Also, the use of the Neem tree as a source of natural pesticide was very fulfilling.

Q—What do you see as the scope of the project?

I believe that the use of natural dyes will add value to the fashions so produced and will attract the attention of persons who are environmentally conscious. I also see the project as a model that can attract young people looking for alternative career paths.

Q—Do you think it would be useful to incorporate elements of the project in the curriculum at your college?

Most certainly. The elements of the project include perspectives of environmental science, biology, chemistry, agriculture and even history. I am sure students would be interested in a course either as part of their major or as an elective.



Terrel Gonzalves inspecting the indigo .

John Rashford, Anthropologist and Scholar of the Caribbean Diaspora



**Professor of Anthropology
John H. Rashford**

Jamaican, world citizen, anthropologist, ethnobotanist, humanitarian are but a few descriptors applicable to the life journey of the social scientist, Professor John Rashford. He has travelled widely on leaving his homeland to observe the peoples of the world, on a personal search for the ethos of our being. He has shared his personal anthology with those who have engaged in casual conversation or have been privileged to be sitting in his global classrooms.

John emigrated from Jamaica to begin his academic journey with a study of anthro-

pology and music for which he received a Bachelors of Arts degree in 1969. Always in connection with his roots, John then studied the dynamics of his home communities in his exploration of "Social Class and Intercropping in Jamaica—Roots and fruits", for his doctoral thesis, and in such articles as "Those that do not smile will kill me: the ethnobotany of ackee in Jamaica", "Evidence of seasonal hunger in the oral traditions of Jamaica" and "The past and present use of bamboo in Jamaica".

This desire to delineate the threads of the social fabric of in the varied cultures of the world continued as he sojourned through the United States, Europe, Japan, Brazil, Latin America and the Caribbean. His findings have contributed to our understanding of cultural parameters and demonstrated that all humans share the same need for religious guidance, a history woven by the interrelationship with plants and a desire for personal expression via art, music and written thought.

John, who is currently in the post of Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, The College of Charleston, South Carolina, has heightened the perspective of many young minds regarding respect for human variance. Some of his courses taught include 'Rasta, Reggae and Jamaican Culture', 'Peoples and Cultures of the Caribbean', 'Peasants

and Complex Cultures', 'Anthropological Perspectives on Time' and 'World View and Social Change in an Interdependent World'.

Scholarly analysis of the cultural and historical importance of the African Baobab is signature in many of John's publications including "An Explanation for Tamarind and Baobab Trees Growing Together in Africa and in the Caribbean", "The Baobab as a Source of Food" and "The Baobab and seasonal Hunger in Africa—The Case of the San". His stint as President of the Society for Economic Botany was highlighted by the 50th Annual Meeting in 2009 which had the theme of African Ethnobotany in the Americas. The varied symposia gave participants a portal into the scholarly effort to document the cultural impact of peoples of the African Diaspora and their use of plants for food, shelter, craft and medicine. It is evident that John has made a significant contribution to the study of the human dynamic and his journey continues.....

"Those that do not smile will kill me: the ethnobotany of ackee in Jamaica" by John Rashford.

CCSEB - First Meeting Update

The first meeting of the Caribbean Chapter of the Society for Economic Botany, CCSEB, is being planned to coincide with the Islands of the World Conference 2012. The CCSEB will also host a session at the conference under the theme, 'Plants Heritage and Development'.

A few papers have been submitted to the session but greater participation is being solicited from other Caribbean scientists working in the field of ethnobotany, natural

products chemistry, anthropology, agriculture or medicinal chemistry.

The objective of the meeting and symposium session is to establish a network of regional scientists and to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing in these areas. The deadline for abstract submission has been extended to October 31st, 2011. Submissions should clearly state the title of the session and guidelines are provided at the website www.hlscc.edu.vg/islandsxii/



**Argemone Mexicana L.
(yellow hock)**

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Mission Statement — CCSEB

To promote the conservation of heritage knowledge and tradition related to the use of Caribbean plants by indigenous and diasporic peoples and to encourage research for heritage validation, conservation through education and sustainable utilization of the natural resources



Images



Baobab tree in bloom adjacent to the new Baobab Towers.



Location—Warrens, St. Michael, Barbados.