

Background to the Illustrated Checklist of the Flora of Qatar

The illustrated ***Plant Species Checklist of the Flora of Qatar*** has been produced in the overall framework of a major project linking biodiversity conservation with cultural heritage, namely the Quranic Botanic Garden (QBG) in Qatar. The guidelines for the QBG have been developed under the guidance of Qatar Foundation, and with the international and inter-disciplinary support and expert advice of Mr. Abdulaziz Al Midfa (United Arab Emirates), Prof. Dr. Abdulrahman Al Muftah (Qatar), Prof. Dr. Kamal Batanouny (Qatar Foundation), Dr. Benno Böer (UNESCO), Dr. Gary Brown (Kuwait), Dr. Uwe Herpin (Brazil), Prof. Dr. Fareed Krupp (Germany), Dr. Guido Licciardi (UNESCO), and Ms. Narjes Yedder (Tunisia). They developed the over-arching vision to ***“Provide the people of Qatar and the Gulf Region with a Centre of Excellence for Research and Education, promoting the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, emphasising the teachings of the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith. This will also function as a prime recreational destination”***.

It was John Norton who suggested to UNESCO Doha to develop a comprehensive plant species checklist, and this found positive feedback from UNESCO, Qatar Foundation & Maersk. This volume was necessary in order to allow for the collection and cultivation of the plants that occur naturally in Qatar.

We suggested to John Norton to invite additional specialists, which he did, including a Qatari national Mohammed Al Safran Al Marri - this is real capacity building on the expert level.

A lot has been achieved in a short time, since October 2007, when UNESCO and Qatar Foundation embarked on this joint initiative, which received generous support by Maersk Oil Qatar, and which was assisted by Ralf Oliver of London (Sharjah), and Botanic Gardens Conservation International (London). The International Advisory Committee met, guidelines were developed based on expert recommendations, the master plan was developed, reviewed, revised and produced, and an external evaluation report was compiled. These were all essential steps towards the establishment of the Quranic Botanic Garden.

This volume is a new and essential contribution, and it contains a comprehensive listing of species that occur in the country, as well as providing important eco-geographical information about these species. It is an important science-based source of information about, and education into, the understanding of the flora of Qatar.

Dr. Benno Böer (UNESCO)