

THE MAGICAL GARDENS OF
ASEAN



MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CULTURE
MALAYSIA

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Message from
Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz
Minister of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia



On the occasion of the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) 2014 in Kuching, hosted by Malaysia, I am indeed pleased to launch this book, *The Magical Gardens of ASEAN*. This is part of Malaysia's contribution to the joint-promotion of ASEAN as a must-visit tourist destination under the tagline "ASEAN – Feel the Warmth".

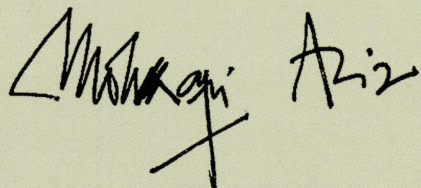
Gardens are works of art, hence this coffee-table book, produced by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia with contributions from the respective ASEAN Members States, will be a joy to read page by page. I wish to record my appreciation to the National Tourism Organisations of ASEAN Members States for their close collaboration and strong support towards making the publication of this coffee-table book a reality. To my predecessor Dato' Sri Dr. Ng Yen Yen, I wish to express my sincere thanks for inspiring this book.

Of course, gardens are not just pictures in a book. They are pictures designed to be walked into and to be viewed from different angles, even from above in the case of sunken gardens and from below in the case of trellis gardens. Do visit these breath-taking gardens to fully enjoy the beauty, the floral fragrances, the music of running water and birds, and the taste of herbs and spices.

As ASEAN straddles the equator between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, the ASEAN climate is consistently summer in the lowlands and spring in the highlands. Plants grow throughout the year and skilled plantsmen are able to make gardens attractive at all times. Many gardens have become centres of continuing innovation, incorporating advances in plant science, engineering and design to an extent never thought possible before.

Gardens in ASEAN are always ready for visitors. This is our promise and invitation to everyone. Do visit and experience these awesome gardens for yourselves.

Welcome to the magical gardens of ASEAN.



Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz
Minister of Tourism and Culture, Malaysia



The national flowers of ASEAN

Introduction

This pictorial tour of the magical gardens of ASEAN features two gardens from each of the 10 countries of ASEAN to represent the wide range of gardens in the region. Among them are botanic gardens, city parks, temple gardens, resort gardens, air-cooled conservatories, a palace garden and a rooftop garden. They range from below 1 ha to over 1000 ha, from sea coasts to mountains, and from ancient temple complexes to modern marvels of advanced engineering.

Garden designs may be characterised as formal or naturalistic. In a formal garden, geometrical symmetry plays the dominant role in the design, but in a naturalistic garden, geometrical symmetry is avoided and naturalistic curves are preferred. Gardens may also combine formal and naturalistic features.

Gardening is the most ephemeral of all the arts. A garden changes from hour to hour as the light changes and as flowers bloom, peak and fade. Plants have to be replaced as they age and weaken, and regardless of design, all gardens have to be clipped, pruned and mowed regularly to keep their outlines sharp and their designs clear. A flower garden in ASEAN has to be in flower always, for there is no winter in ASEAN for rest and recuperation. A garden has to appeal to people of all ages and at all times. Each garden has to be unique, not a copy of another garden. When we get to see a garden it will not be exactly the version in our book. It will be different and should be better. A great garden is a living work of art, created by a designer-composer and kept vibrant by a director-conductor orchestrating the efforts of many. Without design, direction and renewal, a garden soon loses its lustre.

With affordable air travel and simplification of travel requirements, ASEAN nationals can now pack an overnight bag and visit a garden in a neighbouring country at low cost and with little formality. For visitors from afar, ASEAN gardens, being tropical, offer new and exotic experiences very different from the gardens of temperate regions.

The National Flowers of ASEAN

The 10 countries of ASEAN share a common 2500-year heritage in garden plants. The first written record of an ASEAN flower was of the lotus, *Nelumbo nucifera*, now the national flower of Vietnam. It was mentioned in the Sanskrit scriptures and revered for the purity of its flowers despite the muddy water in which it grows. The lotus holds the record for seed longevity. Seeds that got buried 1300 years ago, according to radiocarbon evidence, have been successfully revived and grown.



Nelumbo nucifera
Vietnam





Hibiscus rosa-sinensis
Malaysia

The single red form of the hibiscus *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*, national flower of Malaysia, was first described in Chinese by Chi Han in his book *Nan-Fang Ts'ao Mu Chuang* (Plants of the Southern Region) in AD 304, over 1700 years ago. It was noted as a shrub growing to 2m tall, with flowers scarlet in colour, in parts of five, with a single stalk protruding beyond the petals and bearing golden freckles (anthers); on a single bush. Many flowers would bloom every day, opening in the morning and fading at nightfall.

The hibiscus was redescribed in Latin by Georg Everard Rumpf (1628-1702), a German employed by the Dutch East India Company. Posted to Ambon, which was at that time the centre of the spice trade and one of the most important commercial hubs of Southeast Asia, Rumph (better known by his Latin name of Rumphius) took it upon himself to document the plants of Ambon and Southeast Asia. Rumphius noted that the hibiscus existed in four flower forms – single red, double red, single white and double white and they were known as *bunga raya*, which is still its common name in Malaysia. He translated the name literally into Latin as *flos festalis* (feast-flower or festival-flower), noting that it was used to decorate festive arches, walls and garlands for wedding and feasts, and worn in the hair of youths.



Jasminum sambac
Indonesia, Philippines

Photo credit: F. Ng

Chi Han also described the Arabian jasmine, *Jasminum sambac*, now the national flower of the Philippines and one of the three national flowers of Indonesia. In the Philippines the name of the flower is *sampaguita*, while in Indonesia it is *bunga melur* or *bunga melati*. Chi Han noted that the plant, with flowers resembling white roses, had been introduced from ‘western countries’ by ‘foreigners’ (i.e. from India or West Asia by Indian or Arab traders) and planted in the ‘South Seas’ area, where the people were fond of their fragrance and cultivated them enthusiastically. The women would string the flowers with coloured silk for use as hair ornaments. The Arabian jasmine was also known to Rumphius who recorded two flower forms – single and double.



Phalaenopsis amabilis
Indonesia

The other two national flowers of Indonesia are the rare *Rafflesia arnoldii* which holds the record as the largest flower (by diameter) in the world, named after Stamford Raffles who was from 1811-1816 the British Governor of Java; and the orchid *anggrek bulan*, *Phalaenopsis amabilis* (pictured here) first discovered by Rumphius in 1653 in an island near New Guinea, now known to occur naturally over a wide area including Borneo, Sumatra and Java.



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