

Cinchona Botanical Garden

Perhaps the closest place to 'heaven', paradise on a mountain top, a rare high elevation botanic garden in the tropics (approximately 4800-5200 ft above sea level), and the only such institution in the Caribbean, is Cinchona Botanical Gardens.

Cinchona Gardens nestled in the cool, moist hills of east rural St. Andrew was established in 1868 by then Governor, Sir John Peter Grant. It was once a wonderland for many European researchers seeking to explore the many species of plants and their medicinal properties. In the early 1870's several species of cinchona seedlings were planted on seven hectares of a ten hectare property. Thus the Garden was called Cinchona Garden. The bark of the cinchona plant produces an extract called quinine, which is of great medicinal value as it is utilized in the treatment of diseases like malaria.

By 1874, Cinchona became the centre for experimental botanical work within the island. Along with cinchona, other plant species were introduced by Mr. Nock from Kew Gardens to give Cinchona a wide variety of plant species. These were mainly European vegetation, although other economic plants to the garden were cultivated, for example, Assam tree used for making tea. The European vegetables included cork oak, jalop, camphor, mulberry, rubber, green peas, carrots, Irish potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, citrus and some fibre plants among other plant species.

Cinchona still exhibits beauty and grandeur. The splendour and glory of its unique orchids along with many other plant species still attract attention. The ambiance created by the spectacular view of the east side of the Blue Mountains, Strawberry Hills and Kingston leaves an ecstatic feeling to be cherished forever.

At present the garden buildings are in a dilapidated condition. However, Tourism Enhancement Funds (TEF) of approximately J\$13 million was secured to facilitate the restoration of all the buildings, establishment of a Plant Nursery, development of a camp site and rehabilitation of hiking trails to the garden.