

Hortus Malabaricus Botanical Garden inaugurated in Thrissur

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THE HINDU BUREAU



Hortus Malabaricus Botanical Garden at Nedumpura, near Cheruthuruthi, in Thrissur. | Photo Credit: SPL

Hortus Malabaricus Botanical Garden, a garden for nature enthusiasts, history buffs, and conservationists, has been inaugurated at Nedumpura near Cheruthuruthi. Minister M.B. Rajesh, Minister for Local Self-Governments, inaugurated the botanical garden on Monday.

The 27-acre botanical garden offers a journey back in time to 17th-century Kerala — a time when Dutch Governor Hendrik Van Rheeде collaborating with local expert Itty

Achuthan Vaidya meticulously documented the region's rich flora and medicinal plants in the iconic book *Hortus Malabaricus* (Garden of Malabar).

“This garden is more than a tribute to Hendrik van Rheedee's work—it is a living, breathing archive of Kerala's past, present, and future. It is a centre for learning, conservation, and cultural celebration,” said Minister Rajesh.

The opening ceremony was presided over by U.R. Pradeep, MLA. Dr. Robin Coningham, UNESCO Chair in Archaeological Ethics and Practice in Cultural Heritage and Professor at Durham University, U.K.; Sam Santhosh, founder and chairman of the SciGenom Research Foundation; P.K. Biju, former MP; and others were present.

With over 1,200 plant species, including 721 meticulously documented in van Rheedee's treatise *Hortus Malabaricus* (HM Plants), the garden is a testament to Kerala's rich biodiversity and the enduring legacy of its medicinal flora. The garden also serves as a beacon for conservation and study, preserving an additional 700 rare species endemic to the Western Ghats.

The project is spearheaded by the SciGenom Research Foundation, led by U.S.-based Malayali entrepreneur Sam Santhosh. Since 2016, his team has painstakingly searched across Kerala and beyond to recreate the plant legacy immortalised in van Rheedee's book.

“This garden would not have been possible without the contributions of the late Dr. K.S. Manilal, who translated *Hortus Malabaricus* into English and Malayalam, making the treasure trove of knowledge accessible,” said Mr. Santhosh. In honour of Dr. Manilal's monumental work, the garden features a dedicated Manilal Street, celebrating his legacy in taxonomy and conservation.

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