

## **Workshop on ‘Greening Sri Lanka’**

The workshop on ‘Greening Sri Lanka’ was held on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2019 with the participation of 31 people representing universities, municipal councils, plantation sector, non-governmental organisations and schools.

Prof. H.M.T.G.A. Pitawala (Director, PGIS) welcomed the participants to the workshop and highlighted the importance of greening activities in Sri Lanka. The first lecture of the workshop was conducted by Dr. Thilanka Gunaratne on ‘Ecological Restoration: Principals and Practice’, which was followed by another presentation on ‘Restoring the Soil’ by Prof. Sumedha Madawala. The last lecture in the morning session was conducted by Prof. Gehan Jayasuriya, who discussed about ‘Nursery Management for Restoration’. Afternoon session focused mainly on ‘Urban Greening’, where the participants were taken to the National Agriculture and Communication Centre at Gannoruwa to show them ‘greening techniques used in buildings’. Prof. Kapila Yakandawala concluded the afternoon session in the day 1 by delivering a lecture on ‘Urban Greening’ at the Postgraduate Institute of Science.

On the second day, the participants were taken on a field visit to Riverstone area in Knuckles Forest Reserve. During this visit, they gained awareness on ‘Effects of Restoration on Fauna’ where they got the opportunity to walk through a lower montane forest to observe endemic lizards. This part of the field trip was conducted by Dr. Priyanka de Silva. Next, the participants visited the research plots established by the Department of Botany, where Dr. Thilanka Gunaratne briefed them the importance of conducting restoration research to gain preliminary information including species selection before implementing large scale reforestation projects in reserves. They also visited the restoration site close to Pitawala Patana established under the outreach program ‘Saving the Next Generation: Restoration of Degraded Lands at Knuckles Forest Reserve conducted by the Botanical Society of UoP, Noritake Lanka Porcelain (Pvt) Ltd., Forest Department and the local community. A discussion on the importance of respective contribution of different stakeholders for restoration activities was held at this site.

After lunch, Mr. K. Illukumbura of the Forest Department briefed the participants about their role in reforestation activities and outreach programs such as ‘Saving the Next Generation’. Afterwards, Prof. Deepthi Yakandawala (Chairperson, Board of Study in Plant Sciences of PGIS) handed over the certificates to the participants at the Forest Department Auditorium at Pitawala Patana. The workshop was concluded after visiting the Forest Department nursery at Imbuldandawa where participants were briefed on ‘Nursery Management Practices’ by Forest officers.

According to the feedback of the participants, the workshop has provided them sufficient information on ‘Ecological Restoration’ and ‘Urban Greening’. They appreciated the generation of new ideas by providing theoretical and practical applications on restoration and urban greening techniques, and also providing knowledge and skills to plan restoration and landscaping projects. It was evident from their feedback that their attitudes towards ‘Greening Sri Lanka’ have been greatly improved as they will be using the knowledge gained at the workshop to choose suitable plants for urban areas, plan green spaces, establish roof top gardens and green facades in homes and work places, engage undergraduates in restoration programs, start societies to grow native plants, initiate restoration programs, design more sustainable models and initiate research activities.

Participants greatly appreciated the non-use of single use plastics/polythene for the workshop.