

Artists and botanic gardens creating and developing educational innovation – ABCDE

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An international collaborative project, sponsored by Erasmus, was developed over a three year period between the education departments of the Reykjavik Botanical gardens in Iceland, National Botanic Gardens of Ireland and Vilnius University Botanical Garden, Lithuania. The purpose of the project was to integrate experiential learning, participatory pedagogy and develop educational resources based in the botanic gardens fusing art and science and exploring ways to deliver and explain three central themes; the importance of biodiversity, soil and water in our lives. This is an innovative collaboration between Botanic Garden Educators, Teachers, Artists and Scientists providing an opportunity to develop resources for teachers, and botanic garden educators alike. Each country nominated a scientist, artist and botanic garden educator to work on the project. A school was selected in each city and these teachers partnered in the project travelling with the experts to each of the countries and participating in the weeklong workshops in each of the botanic gardens. The workshops aimed to combine creativity and in-depth analysis of the natural world providing teachers with tools to increase student engagement and interest in natural sciences and the environment and the importance of sustainability in everyday living. Using experiential learning in the Botanic Gardens as a pedagogical tool results in more engaged students, creating diverse learning opportunities for both the indoor and outdoor classroom. The resulting nine activities and lesson plans developed during the courses are inspired by the UN SDG providing teachers with tools to increase student engagement and interest in natural sciences and sustainability and are presented on the project website available for free access to all. Deepening the reach of the project each country also hosted a wider conference for teachers sharing the findings of the project with over a hundred teachers in each country.