

Days in Jerusalem Botanical Gardens

Ruilan Huang (Emily) - there in 2007



Ruilan in the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens

I am very proud that I am the first Chinese scholar in Jerusalem botanical gardens. I worked there from Nov 2007 through May 2008. This is one of my greatest experiences abroad. I came to JBG with Filipe-my classmate of Reading University in UK. And since we have a background of botany, so we both worked on the mapping and plant identification program, and most of our daily job is pruning, weeding, cleaning, supervised by Eli and Ori, and worked with other staffs. We also get the chance to collect seeds in the wild with Ori,

Jerusalem botanical garden has a great collection of plants from all over the world and with pretty native flora collection in the garden too. That is my first formal experience to work in a garden which benefits a lot for my later career to work in gardens. I learnt so many different plants there, and basic gardening skill, as well as the unique landscape display in the garden. My favorite section is the Australia and South Africa section, and I especially love the native flora blooming in spring time, such as Anemone, Lupinus, Grape Hyacinths, Snapdragon etc.

And the nice collections of books in library as well as the education programs running for kids and adults all impressed me a lot. I believe as all these efforts will bring more and more people to concern on horticulture, nature, botany, conservation. That is one of the biggest functions as a botanical garden.

I also have to mentioned about the people there, which is the most important and unforgettable part of my experience in JBG, they are very nice and hospitable to us; we got a lot of help from them.



Fellow gardeners:

Left to right: Filipe, Eli, Ruilan, Batshava, Ben, Ofri



*In the Conservatory:
Ruilan with social helpers*

A little information about myself: after I left JBG, I worked in Longwood Gardens in US for one year as an international gardener intern, and I came back to China in 2009 to work for South China botanical garden and am now Assistant Manager in the conservatory.

.....and from Filipe de Souza from Portugal, who was a JBG scholarship recipient in 2007, seen in Ruilan's photograph above...

I had the privilege of working at the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens for six months, and I must say it was one of the most outstanding experiences of my life. Every moment and every day were special. Mornings started with many “boker tov” gladly distributed to workers and visitors on the way to the tool-shed. After a hard morning's work, I replenished myself with energy with the unique combination of humus and fresh bread or bagels, a simple and unforgettable taste. Walking across the Garden is a sort of round-the-world trip, as the vegetation of most continents is well represented, but if I had to chose a favourite plant that would be the wild *Cyclamen* which grow secretly in various spots: each plant seems to have a different leaf pattern and flower colour. At the end of the day I could not leave before lying on the lawn overlooking the lake and watching the birds of various species which came to feed in the Garden. Then came the weekend, and my weekly pilgrimage to the Old City. Fridays are the most special days in Jerusalem, since Muslims have their prayers during the day and, just before sunset, Jewish families migrate towards the Wall: an elderly Arab man walks up the narrow Via Dolorosa and meets an Hasidic Jew coming down; they seem to courteously nod to each other; behind them a Franciscan friar hurries into a small chapel door... In Jerusalem one is left with the impression that all shall be well after all.