



THE NATIONAL TRUST – SRI LANKA

Cultivating Biodiversity: Harnessing Sri Lanka's Plant Wealth

**By
Dr. Siril Wijesundara**

The Monthly Lecture Series No: 179 of the National Trust

Tuesday 23rd June 2026 at 6.00 pm

at the Auditorium of the College of Surgeons of Sri Lanka

No. 6, Independence Avenue, Colombo 7

(For those who join online: <https://www.youtube.com/live/NKM0BW2c4us>)

Sri Lanka is widely recognized as one of the world's most biologically rich countries. Despite its relatively small land area, the island supports an extraordinary diversity of plant life. More than 3,000 species of flowering plants have been recorded, and nearly 900 of these are endemic to Sri Lanka. This remarkable concentration of unique plant species developed over millions of years through the island's diverse climate, complex topography, and long geological isolation. From the wet evergreen rainforests of the southwest to the montane forests of the central highlands and the dry-zone landscapes, Sri Lanka's ecosystems provide habitats for a rich and distinctive flora. According to the National Red List of Sri Lanka (2020), nearly 48% of the country's endemic flowering plants are now categorized as threatened. This alarming statistic highlights the urgent need for stronger and more diversified conservation strategies. The establishment of national parks, forest reserves, and conservation forests has played a crucial role in safeguarding ecosystems and biodiversity. Botanic gardens serve as living repositories of plant diversity, maintaining collections of rare and threatened species while supporting research, education, and public awareness.



Dr. Siril Wijesundara is the Acting Director and Research Professor, **National Institute of Fundamental Studies (NIFS)** in Kandy, Sri Lanka. A botanist from the **University of Peradeniya** and **City University of New York**, previously served as Director General, **Department of National Botanic Gardens**. He has produced several journal publications, conference papers, and books, with an H-index of 25. Contributed nationally to establishing new botanic gardens in Mirijjawila and Illukowita, founded a floriculture school and development program, and served on numerous scientific and environmental committees. Actively involved in Sri Lanka's university system through teaching, supervision of postgraduate research, and governance roles, and elected a Fellow of the **National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka** in 2006 while receiving multiple Presidential Research Awards.

The National Trust – Sri Lanka conducts monthly lectures generally on the last working Thursday of each month. The lectures are open to the members and the general public.

Further information can be obtained from the Trust Office Tel.0112682730/ 0719566929