

# RESTORING HONIARA'S BOTANICAL GARDEN

## *New Life for the Botanical Gardens*

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Newly established gravel trails in the botanical garden.

Many Solomon Island People will remember the Honiara Botanical Gardens as a well-kept and enjoyable place to visit. Unfortunately, following the times after the tensions, the gardens fell into a poor state of neglect. However, with the generosity of aid by several donors and organizations and the dedication of a hard working team, the Gardens are being restored back to their former eminence.

The restoration project has been initiated by Solo Enviro Beautification and through the Honiara Beautification Committee has formed a management committee with Honiara City Council Forestry. The Honiara City Council and Ministry of Forestry are owners and managers of the Gardens respectively. Restoration work is progressing well and visitors will see many changes taking place, including the recently rebuilt orchid house, the newly created picnic area, the restoration of walking tracks and numerous other improvements that enhance the beauty and utility of the Gardens. This natural haven within the city boundaries offers free and accessible opportunities for individual and education institutes alike to utilize the diversity of this special place as a living class room, now and into the future.

Transforming the orchid house from a pile of bricks into what it is today has been a major but rewarding task. This facility is designed to showcase native orchid specimens from the nine provinces of the Solomon Islands. Once assembled, this collection could arguably be the largest and most comprehensive collection of native Solomon Island orchids in any one place in the world. It is hoped this collection will attract interest from orchid enthusiasts the world over.

The orchid house also offers the opportunity for many Solomon Island orchid fanciers to establish an orchid society that would continue gathering and caring for these unique specimens. We are currently recruiting volunteers to donate orchid specimens and to assist in the further development of the orchid house and society and would be delighted to hear from you. Interested persons can contact Carmen Fernandes at [brasilholland@solomon.com.sb](mailto:brasilholland@solomon.com.sb) or 99499.



The botanical garden has taken a face lift. New plants have been planted (top), and staff have been working to improve footpaths (above right & left) and trails. The garden has also installed a new notice board which includes a map of the different trails to take in the park.

The newly developed picnic area is now available for use and is comprised of a generous grassy area offering picnic tables, wood fire BBQs, a children's swimming hole and playground and a canopy of mature trees that provide picnickers with ample natural shade.

Progress continues with the restoration of the many and varied eco-walking tracks. When completed these tracks will provide safe all-weather access and will lead visitors through unspoiled native forests. The construction of two new foot bridges (made with eco-friendly timber) is underway and when completed, these bridges will give easy and safe access across the stream and will provide a continuous link to all the eco walking tracks. This pristine area boasts many significant and magnificent species of flora. The forest also provides a sanctuary for a vast variety of fauna, reptiles, insects and native birds. Together they provide a vital balance to the eco-system of this hidden jewel within the city.

The Gardens are not only a natural treasure but they also hold an important link to the history of the area. During the great World War II Battle of Guadalcanal, both the Japanese and American forces set up bases in and around

the gardens, and some buildings from those times are still visible today. The Gardens also played gruesome host to capital punishment (hanging) during the 1940s and 1950s in the times when the Solomon Islands were a British protectorate. The remains of the hanging building area are a reminder of darker past. The area has an unusual quietness and instills a feeling of respect, perhaps as a memorial to the souls who perished at the hands of the executioner.

Marketing and promotion is also vital for the sustainability of the gardens, hence an information brochure has been produced which targets the tourist market but is equally available to the general public. The brochure will be available from various places throughout the Solomon Islands.

The Gardens are a precious resource worthy of preserving. Without the vision and energy of the pioneering people who first conceived the plan to create the Gardens, this asset would not exist. The dedication of those who have followed with similar enthusiasm will ensure that this wonderful place called the Honiara Botanical Gardens exists today, and for the enjoyment and pleasure of future generations.