

The Belipola Estate, Mirahawatte

The Belipola estate in Mirahawatte, Sri Lanka, was created to promote sustainable agriculture production and conserve biodiversity. Once a working tea estate, a group of environmentalists led by Systems Ecologist Dr. Ranil Senanayake, present Chairman of RRI, developed the principles of Analog Forestry – successfully restoring the ecosystem and its functions as well as the estate’s income generation potential.

Now managed by RRI the estate has a number of different functions as an organic farm, arboretum, training centre and ecotourist destination. Each of these link together to form a holistic environment in which people can work, study and relax, surrounded by Sri Lanka’s natural heritage.

Organic farm

The original estate tea bushes still remain in the forest area, now organically managed and sold on the local tea market.

In addition organic herbs are grown and sold to Colombo supermarkets and Maldivian hotels. Varieties include basil, thyme, oregano, peppermint, rosemary, chives, lemon balm, marjoram and other mint varieties such as spearmint, apple, and orange bergamot.

In 2007 the estate became Forest Garden Certified confirming its status as ‘beyond organic’. Not only are products organic in origin, they also comply with social, biodiversity, landscape and carbon criteria.

Ecotourism

The calm estate, off the beaten tourist trail, is a relaxing and welcoming environment for local and

foreign tourists alike. The gentle forest paths lead guests through the arboretum and take them on a journey of organic farming and Analog Forestry. It is also a bird-watcher’s paradise – a symphony of calls greeting visitors as they wake. Guests can also take a longer walk and picnic into the nearby village, learn to cook a traditional meal using ingredients picked from the estate, sample organic herbal teas including the delightfully sweet Stevia, or just relax and enjoy the atmosphere.

Research

What better place to research conduct forest and agricultural research than the very spot that Analog Forestry was first developed? The forest garden and arboretum provides a range of rich research opportunities, with both long and short term accommodation available.

Analog Forestry training centre

We believe for people to be able to learn effectively, students must feel secure and comfortable in their learning environment. The Belipola training centre is a safe and stimulating education hub, in close proximity to the arboretum and forest garden enabling students to study the practical applications of Analog forestry and organic farming techniques.

For the people who have attended our workshops from the east coast, a place where the civil war has put severe stress on the local population, Belipola provides a creative and calm learning atmosphere. As well as running training sessions for locals, we have hosted residential workshops for NGOs from Bangladesh, Cameroon, India and Togo.



Belipola arboretum



Biodiversity at Belipola - tiger butterfly on a tea leaf