

Abstract

The Montane Ethnobotanical Garden: Symbiosis on a Subtropical Island

Wuling Farm, located 1,740 meters above sea level in a valley of Taiwan's Snow Mountains, has been a fruitful producer of vegetables and fruits since its inception in 1963. While agricultural activities have enhanced the local economy, the long-term neglect of water and soil conservation raises concerns of environmental degradation. The increasing need for self-sufficiency and agritourism, combined with the urge for land restoration, necessitates a balanced relationship between humans and nature.

This project proposes the transformation of Wuling Farm into the Montane Ethnobotanical Garden, aiming to harmonize environmental restoration, agriculture, and recreation. The garden will serve as an active hub enhancing the area's ecological, productive, and touristic values, encompassing two primary components: the forest dikes and the botanical paths.

The forest dikes, created through terrain modifications, will address the region's landslide issues. By altering the landscape, the project plans to mitigate landslide risks, stabilize the soil structure, and prevent erosion. These terraced dikes will serve as buffers, absorbing water and slowing its downward flow to reduce soil displacement. Implementing agroforestry methods as part of this approach will act as a natural solution for regenerative agriculture, fostering rich, bio-diverse habitats and establishing a new, open forest edge.

The botanical paths will showcase Taiwan's remarkable montane plant diversity, reflecting the island's unique biodiversity and numerous microclimates that house many globally unique plant species. These paths will take visitors on a bio-geographical journey, exploring the historical distribution of life on Earth. Each plant in the garden tells a story, weaving together elements of human life, indigenous culture, and history.

The Montane Ethnobotanical Garden will serve as a confluence of learning and exploration, functioning as a Long-Term Ecological Research site. It will provide insights into agriculture, botany, and history while aligning food production with tourism and ecological restoration. As visitors interact with and learn about montane plants, they will gain a new understanding of nature, culture, and human life's interconnectedness, celebrating our mutual relationship with the living world.