



TRAINING ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT
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Farm women Breaking barriers

Nila garden

Passion leading to success

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Fierce determination to pursue one's passion can result in achieving spectacular success as an entrepreneur. This is a story of Ms. Subhadra Kumari, who nurtured her orchid enterprise to bloom and flourish.

Met Subhadra Kumari, a 63-year-old visionary behind Nila Garden, a flourishing enterprise nestled in the serene landscapes of Wayanad, Kerala embodying her passion and a deep-rooted love for orchids.

Originally hailing from Pathnamthitta, Subhadra's family settled in Wayanad district around 1975. Having completed SSLC and a Diploma in Telecommunication & Typewriting, Subhadra's fascination with plants blossomed from an early age. Seeing her enthusiasm

towards plants, especially flowering plants, the family supported her by sourcing planting materials from various regions to fuel her botanical pursuits.

Subhadra got enrolled as a member of the agri- horti society, a society of floriculture enthusiasts at Sulthan Bathery. The society is run by the agriculture department on cut flower business. It had members from all over Wayanad. Subhadra in fact started her floriculture

Smt. Subhadra Kumari's love for orchids has bloomed into Nila Garden.



journey with a training on *Anthurium* in 2003. The training was provided on collection, cultivation and processing of cut flowers of *Anthurium*. Marketing was done across Wayanad at the time through government wholesale market called as *Krishi Vipana Samithi*.

She reminisces how she went to learn accompanied by her sister-in-law using local bus. Despite having little money for the bus fare, she went because of her never ending love towards plants. Many of her colleagues who were once members in the society dropped off later as they faced economic hardships in managing the flowers as well as wild life attacks on the plants. She continued despite facing several challenges. Eventually, her interest got aligned towards the beautiful orchid flowers in 2008.

During a visit, the officials of agriculture department, Trivandrum introduced her to the idea of orchid cultivation. Initially, she started with a small purchase from a private nursery in Trivandrum which eventually proved to be a turning point in her floriculture journey. At that time, the general perception was that many orchid varieties won't survive well in the climate of hilly region of Wayanad. But, she still pursued and made her own orchid kingdom at her house. Her initial plan was to create her own orchid collection. As the plants propagated in large numbers, she turned to marketing the vast varieties of orchids she had in her collection. Recognising the untapped market potential for orchids state-wide, Subhadra intensified her efforts.

With the help of her business friend Reena, she imported exotic orchids from Thailand and Taiwan to add to her collection and scale up the business. In 2010, Subhadra officially launched her orchid marketing venture. The unwavering support of her family was crucial at every step. Beginning with sale of *Anthurium* and indoor plants, the venture got scaled up through her enormous orchid collection. Later, she also got subsidy from the horticulture department as they came and verified the scope of orchids in Wayanad. This helped her further in expanding the enterprise. Recently, she also availed a scheme of Horticulture department for Wayanad Orchid Farmers besides procuring orchids with the support from Regional Agricultural Research Station, Kerala Agricultural University at Ambalavayal, Wayanad.

Today, Nila Garden has a huge collection of orchids along with *Anthurium*, Ferns, *Begonia*, African violet,

Hoya and other indoor plants at her garden. Her orchid collection includes *Dendrobium* (over 100 varieties), *Phalaenopsis*, *Mokara*, *Oncidium*, *Cattleya*, *Vanda*, *Cymbidium*, *Grammatophyllum*, etc., to name a few notable ones, besides a good collection of native orchids.

In 2017, her journey was covered in the popular *Krishi Darshan* programme premiered on DD National television. She showcases her collection at various events, like the Bangalore Flower Show held every August, Agri fair of Agriculture Department (VAIGA), *Poopoli* flower festival of RARS, Kalpetta flower show and various other events.

Through her website and nationwide exhibitions, Subhadra's clientele spans the length and breadth of the country, with Kerala and Bangalore emerging as primary markets. Also, she has marketed to buyers from Maharashtra to Kolkata over the years. She manages the packaging of the plants with good care and quality to ensure good long term customer relationships.

Currently, she earns an average monthly profit of Rs. 50,000/- through the sales of plants alone. Beyond commercial success, Subhadra remains committed to nurturing a culture of botanical appreciation and knowledge-sharing. She warmly welcomes visitors at her garden and shares her passion towards flowers. She also provides training and advisory services to budding enthusiasts interested in orchid cultivation.

She adds that till now there is no full-fledged facility in Wayanad for processing and storage of cut flowers. She hopes that government can take initiatives to realize the business potential the cut flowers have, especially with bigger markets like Bangalore in the vicinity.

Subhadra's determination and love for plants shows how one can realise one's dreams through hard work and persistence. As she grows her garden, she inspires others with her creative ideas. She motivates the future generations that anyone can pursue their passion irrespective of age and gender.

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