

COURSE REPORT

Rainforestation Research & Monitoring Training

Baybay, Leyte, Philippines

April 26-29, 2011

A course jointly organized by:
Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative (ELTI)
Visayas State University (VSU)
Rain Forest Restoration Initiative (RFRI)



Background: Rainforestation is an effective approach to native species reforestation that was developed by VSU and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) on the island of Leyte starting in the 1990s. Rainforestation has since been adopted by an array of organizations and implemented in a large number of sites across the Philippines. While Rainforestation has been well-researched on Leyte and surrounding islands, the knowledge base regarding the propagation and growth characteristics of native trees in other regions of the country is less well-developed. This is of concern given the large variety of ecosystems found within the Philippine archipelago and the need to adapt Rainforestation to local ecological site conditions.

To begin addressing this limitation in technical knowledge and capacity, ELTI has included a small number of participants from some of the State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in previous Rainforestation Trainer's Training Programs. ELTI's ability to work with the SUCs was recently enhanced through our coordination with the Philippine Forestry Education Network (PFEN), a network of SUCs all over the country with forestry programs, regarding a proposal submitted to the Philippine Tropical Forest Conservation Foundation (PTFCF) to develop a native species nursery and Rainforestation demo site on each SUC campus. The project aims to mobilize research and development on the collection, production, and management of native tree seedlings and extend the technology to course curricula and outreach programs. Taking advantage of this opportunity to expand and strengthen the academic network of Rainforestation researchers and practitioners, ELTI developed a training program aligned with the objectives of the PFEN project.

The objective of the training was to provide the participants with an orientation to Rainforestation, as well as a standardized research and monitoring protocol. In developing this training, ELTI drew upon its existing relationship with the Forest Restoration Research Unit of Chiang Mai University (CMU-FORRU) in Thailand, which has developed a very systematic research approach to propagating and growing native species. The underlying goal of this training was to get the SUCs to develop a comprehensive research program on native species to generate the scientific data on which Rainforestation, as implemented in different parts of the country, needs to be based. Eventually, as these SUCs get more and more involved in native species reforestation, they will be able to provide extension to communities and other field practitioners, thus adding to the adaptability and sustainability of the approach.



Course Objectives:

1. To provide participants with a solid understanding of the importance and value of forest ecosystems and restoration activities, the theory and principles underlying Rainforestation, and its application to various land tenure and management regimes,
2. To teach participants through hands-on, experiential learning the process and practice of establishing native species nurseries and Rainforestation demonstration sites,
3. To provide a standardized research and monitoring approach that will be applied to the PFEN nurseries and Rainforestation demo sites,
4. To teach participants how to use and manage a centralized database of research findings.

Course Format: The four-day course took place on the VUS campus and was divided into two main sections. During the first two days of training, participants were provided with an orientation to Rainforestation. This included a half day of lectures, followed by hands-on activities to teach participants how to prepare proper soil medium, germinate native seeds, extract and manage wildlings, build a recovery chamber, design a nursery, and conduct soil and vegetation assessments. The participants' understanding of Rainforestation was further enriched by visits to a number of different types of Rainforestation sites. The second two days focused on teaching data collection techniques for phenology, germination, and survival and growth, as well as data entry, analysis, and management. Participants were taught how to manipulate their data

using Microsoft Excel and how to integrate the data into a species-oriented database using Microsoft Access. The training ended with a module on moving ahead, during which participants were taken through the steps that they would need to follow to develop their native species nursery and Rainforestation demonstration site. They were also introduced to the ELTI Leadership Program, RFRI, and the Rainforestation website (www.rainforestation.ph) and discussion group.



Coordinators and Resource People:The event was organized by Dr. David Neidel and Ms. Hazel Consunji of the ELTI-Asia Office, with significant input from the other members of RFRI and Dr. Steve Elliott of CMU-FORRU. Resource people for the training consisted of Dr. Paciencia Milan and Mr. Marlito Bande of VSU, Dr. Edwino Fernando of the University of Philippines- Los Baños, and Dr. Elliott and Dr. Greuk Pakkad of CMU-FORRU. The training was also attended by Ms. Metchie Arnaiz, the newly hired Secretariat for RFRI, who will help coordinate follow-up for this training.

Participants:Participants consisted of fifteen representatives from SUCs who will be directly involved in implementing the PFEN project. This core group was joined on the third and fourth days by four experienced Rainforestation project implementers who are interested in assisting with the data collection efforts.

Outcome and Course Follow-Up:The training went extremely well with the participants returning to their home institutions ready to initiate the development of their native species nurseries and Rainforestation demonstration plots. Although the final grant agreement between PFEN and PTFCF has yet to be signed, ELTI and RFRI are working to make sure that the research and monitoring protocols that were taught during the training will be made a requirement of the grant agreement. VSU will continue to play a critical role in the PFEN proposal being technical advisers to project activities and monitoring outcomes. An additional training might also need to be held in the future for the SUCs that were not represented at this training, as well as follow-up events for those who become deeply involved in native species research and community outreach.

There was a lot of interest among the participants to adopt a database similar to the FORRU database, which was introduced during the training. Dr. Elliott and Dr. Pakkad are open to the idea of the Philippine SUCs adopting their database, but decisions must first be made on how to adapt it to the Philippine context. Issues on standardization of terms and concepts, provision for socio-economic data, classification of forest types and Rainforestation typologies, as well as quality control of data were raised and need to be addressed. These issues will need to be worked out between ELTI, RFRI and PFEN before the changes to the database can be made. Ms. Arnaiz will take the lead in coordinating the refinement of the database and working with the SUCs to ensure that their data makes it into the database and their success stories are reported on the Rainforestation website.



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