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### **Efficacy of Native Plants in Residential Landscaping: A Case Study on the Perceptions of Urban Residents in Colombo District**

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A plant is considered native if it has occurred naturally in a particular region, ecosystem, or habitat without human introduction. Native plants can survive well with less water, fertilizer, and maintenance, if they are properly planted to match their growth requirements. Native plants support humans and the environment in multiple ways and are considered as a major segment of sustainable landscaping. Even though there is a wide variety of native plants in Sri Lanka, many lack a satisfactory level of knowledge regarding native plants and their use in landscaping. Therefore, the present study was conducted to evaluate the attitudes of the urban community in the Colombo District towards the use of native plants for landscaping. A pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect socio-demographic information and to evaluate the knowledge and attitudes of respondents on native plants. The Chi-square of association test was used to identify significant socio-economic factors that influence the attitudes of the respondents on native plants. According to the results, majority of the respondents were not familiar with the concept of native plants, where only 33% were aware about the native plants. However, the majority of respondents strongly agreed (71%) with the fact that native plants do not cause any harmful effects to the environment and native plants are having more benefits compared to non-native ornamentals. Further, it was noted that, *Azadirachta indica* ("Kohomba") was the most widely used (34%) native plant followed by *Murraya paniculata* ("Atteriya") (26%) and *Jasminum grandiflorum* ("Saman Pichcha") (24%) in the observed residential gardens. According to the results of the Chi-square test, the attitudes of the respondents were associated with the age and occupation. This study suggested that native plants receive a very limited attention in the landscaping context in Sri Lanka, mainly due to the limited knowledge. Hence it is required to enhance the awareness on the benefits of using them to increase the positive attitudes of the people on native plants.

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