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**Autor:** Boulos, Loutfy  
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Simultanément, des missions de récolte et d'étude étaient organisées dans diverses parties du bassin méditerranéen, dont deux dans le cadre des "Itinera Mediterranea" de l'association OPTIMA (Chypre et sud-est de l'Espagne) et plusieurs dans celui des études des plantes rares et menacées de France ("Livre Rouge") en coopération avec le Ministère de l'environnement français. Ici encore, c'est dès la création du Jardin botanique que des contacts avaient été pris dans le but de participer à la connaissance et la protection du patrimoine végétal, in situ puis ex situ.

Grâce à ces recherches sur le terrain, le Jardin botanique de la Ville de Nice est ainsi devenu un partenaire dans de nombreuses actions collectives destinées à la sauvegarde de la biodiversité et ayant pour cadre la France et le bassin méditerranéen.

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## Desert Parks as conservation sites in Arabia

Loutfy BOULOS

Faculty of Science, Kuwait University, P.O. Box 5969, Safat 13060, Kuwait

The Arabian peninsula covers about 2.700.000 km<sup>2</sup>, the major part of which is sandy and gravelly deserts. Most of the landscapes are arid with sparse plant cover or bare plains. After winter rains a good cover of annual herbs occurs during the spring. The density of the vegetation varies according to the amount of rain and the soil type. In wadis and water catchment areas the vegetation is usually denser with more perennials, including shrubs and trees, than on sandy plains.

"Desert Parks" should be protected desert habitats conserving the already existing floristic elements and introducing into them rare and endangered plant species from similar habitat types. These parks may also include substantial plantations of indigenous and carefully selected exotic trees and shrubs. Some native *Acacia* trees and shrubs of which 27 species occur in Arabia may be used for these plantations. Other indigenous and exotic arboreal species from similar arid regions may be cultivated in 500-1000 acres plots, especially in the vicinity of, or around, urban settlements or big cities. These could serve as protective cordons for inhabited areas and may initiate suitable habitats for birds. The re-introduction of previously indigenous antelopes such as Desert Gazelles and Arabian Oryx may also be taken into consideration when proper management is achieved.

Artificial lakes and dense palm plantations greatly add to the beauty of the parks and create landscapes similar to those in the oases of Arabia and the Sahara. The "Berhi" date palm is a suitable candidate especially because of its high quality dates and successful propagation by tissue culture.

Some annual species with conspicuous flowers or unusual vegetative growth could be used for creating seasonal flower beds in different parts of the parks. Native succulents such as *Aloe*, *Caraluma*, *Euphorbia* and others may be cultivated together with other suitable plants in "rock gardens".

The creation of desert parks in many parts of the Arabian peninsula will serve as both environmental monitors and educational/leisure facilities open to the indigenous people.