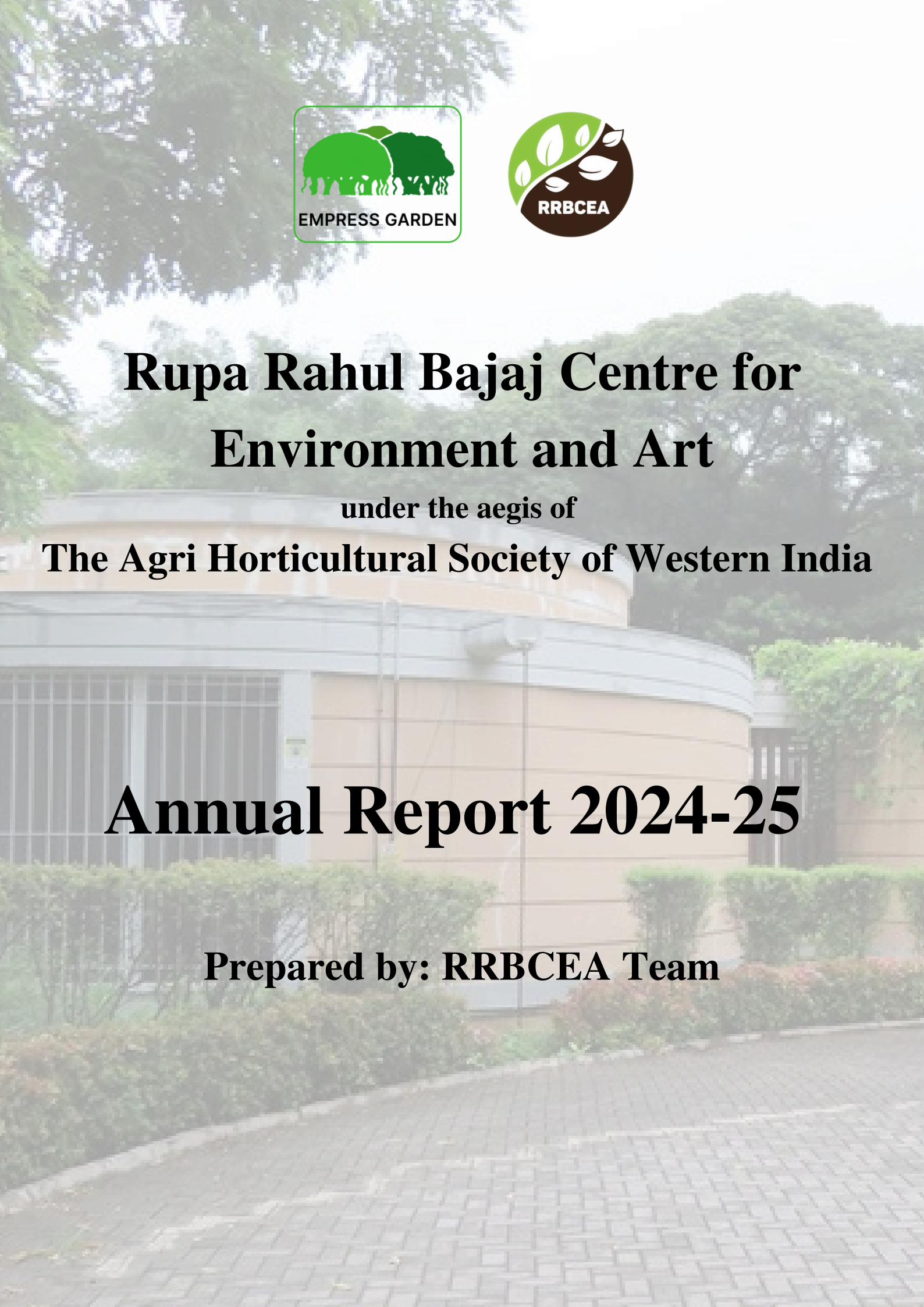


Rupa Rahul Bajaj Centre for Environment and Art

under the aegis of

The Agri Horticultural Society of Western India

Annual Report 2024-25

Prepared by: RRBCEA Team



From the Desk

Deepa Bajaj
Chair Person Sub-Committee RRBCEA

Every organization has an interesting story to tell- from the idea sprouting in someone's imagination to the form it takes in reality. The narrative is enhanced by numerous individuals through time in various aspects be it expertise, skills, social connections, etc.

We are happy to share the story of Rupa Rahul Bajaj Center for Environment and Art (RRBCEA) which has been of growth with expansion of our team organically during 2024-25. Our journey which is only 6 years old has reached far and wide touching many people of varying age groups through variety of interesting programs related to nature and art. The quality and diversity of programs ensures that there is something of interest for every person who walks inside the premises to participate, enjoy or simply explore. Many visitors are charmed by vibrancy the space offers and are enthused by the programs which kindles at times a long forgotten wish which they are connected to during their participation.

The multi-dimensional growth of RRBCEA's programs in this past year is the result of dedicated efforts of many contributors, mentors, well-wishers who share their ideas, valuable time, insights, expertise and shape the growth of the Centre.

We are happy to have undertaken few more initiatives during the last year with completion of a year-long survey on insects and mushroom in the botanical garden which culminated into two user friendly booklets. Besides we have installed weather station to monitor local weather parameters, which is much needed for understanding the biodiversity in the garden.

Kudos to the team and looking forward to yet another year with many more exciting programs and initiatives that will be enjoyed by the visitors and help appreciate nature.



A note from the Centre Head

Dr. Dhanashree Paranjpe
RRBCEA Head

The Rupa Rahul Bajaj Centre for Environment & Art (RRBCEA) is a pioneering organization dedicated to promoting environmental awareness and education through a unique blend of art and nature-based experiences. With a vision to create a world-class platform for learning, RRBCEA offers a dynamic range of programs designed to inspire curiosity and appreciation for the natural world.

At the heart of its initiatives are immersive nature awareness programs that encourage participants to engage deeply with their surroundings, understanding ecosystems firsthand. The centre also hosts thought-provoking workshops that weave together art and environmental themes, offering creative avenues to explore ecological concepts. Through interactive sessions on nature appreciation, science, climate change, and sustainability, RRBCEA strives to cultivate a sense of responsibility toward the environment among people of all ages.

Since its establishment in 2018, the centre has successfully organized over 300 programs, drawing more than 6,800 participants, including schoolchildren, youth, professionals, and nature enthusiasts. RRBCEA actively collaborates with schools, colleges, social organizations, and environmental groups, strengthening its mission to build a more environmentally conscious society.

Beyond education, RRBCEA provides hands-on engagement through its citizen scientist program, which offers valuable research and fieldwork opportunities for students and young professionals. The program has also attracted dedicated citizen volunteers who contribute to environmental conservation efforts, data collection, and ecological studies. With its commitment to experiential learning, community involvement, and meaningful collaborations, RRBCEA stands as a beacon of inspiration, proving that environmental education, when integrated with art and science, can create lasting and transformative change.

Meet Our Subcommittee members



DEEPA BAJAJ

Chair Person Sub-Committee RRBCEA

An Engineer by qualification, a nature enthusiast with passion for both environment and art with a heart of gold for animals. She has founded the NGO Canine Control and Care in 2015 with the sole objective of animal birth control to control the population of stray dogs and cats in a humane way. She has been the driving force and guide behind the activities at RRBCEA as the chairperson.



ADV. LOLITA KEWALRAMANI

Subcommittee member

She is a postgraduate in Economics from Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics and Law from Pune University. Has worked in the field of environment law and specializing in conveyancing. She provides consultation to corporates and is a trustee and sub-committee member on trusts relating to environment, animal protection and education of underprivileged girls and other social activities.



DHANASHREE BHISEY

Subcommittee member

She is an animal enthusiast. She has been working with Dr. J.A. Shaikh (one of Pune's senior vets) for over 20 years. She was also curator of the wild animal rescue and orphanage at Katraj for a few years. She had set up the first-ever ABC program for Pune, with the Blue Cross Society of Pune in 1995. She is also a subcommittee member and mentor overseeing activities at RRBCEA.

Meet Our Subcommittee members



MEGHA BUDRUK

Subcommittee member

She is the Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs at the Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions and an Associate Professor of Parks and Recreation Management at Arizona State University in the USA. She specializes in natural resource social science and focuses on incorporating stakeholder perspectives in natural resource management. Her research areas include human-nature relationships, visitor experience, impact management, and community development in parks, protected areas, and cultural monuments.



DR. DHANASHREE PARANJPE

Center Head

She has a PhD in animal behaviour and ecology. She is passionate about science outreach and environmental education. She spearheads the dynamic team of RRBCEA to conceptualize, plan and execute various programs related to nature and art as well as research at the center.

Outreach

2711
Participants

15
Art
Programs

15
Art & Nature
Fusion
Programs

2
Booklets
Prepared

21
Nature Walks

40
Environmental
Awareness and
Educational
Programs

3
Educational
Nature Themed
Exhibits

1500+
Citizens Visited

4
Research Activities

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Art Programs

The art programs at the organization flourished this year, serving as vibrant spaces for creativity, community, and self-expression. Highlights include the Baithak concert series, which captivated audiences with evenings of Santoor and immersive classical music, the lively Artful Sunday workshops that welcomed participants of all ages to explore painting, macramé, and pressed flower crafts, and large-scale events such as the PKF Samajmanch and summer art retreat, which drew impressive participation and enthusiasm. Dance performances, hands-on retreats, and collaborations with facilitators like Yazdan Tamboli further enriched the calendar. These programs not only provided artistic inspiration, but also fostered connections and joy among nearly 500 participants, showcasing the power of art to bring people together and energize the community

- **9 Art Workshop**
- **6 Art Performances**
- **4 Hosted Programs**
- **1 Kids Art Camp**

15 Art Programs 500+ Participants

Programs organized by RRBCEA

Artful Sunday

Summer Art Retreat















Programs in Collaboration with Baithak Foundation

- Evening Reflections
- Twilight Raagas











Programs in Collaboration with Baithak Foundation

- Paddati
- Waa Ghar ki Sudh
- Pune Kabir Festival (Samajmanch)













Environmental Programs

This year, the organisation's environmental outreach programs created powerful opportunities for people of all ages to connect with nature and learn about sustainability. Through more than twenty immersive nature walks including bird, tree, butterfly, and insect explorations- hundreds of participants gained firsthand knowledge of local biodiversity and conservation. Special day celebrations, such as World Heritage Day, Biodiversity Day, Foundation Day, Wildlife Week, and the Great Backyard Bird Count, brought the community together for meaningful learning and collective action. Corporate engagement sessions provided experiential learning for professional teams, while numerous visits from schools, colleges, and partner organisations turned the garden into a living classroom. These inclusive and well-organised programs not only strengthened environmental awareness but also built lasting relationships with educational institutions and social groups, furthering the organisation's mission of inspiring responsibility and care for nature throughout the city.



Nature walk	**21**	**430+ Participants**
Programs Hosted with other NGOs	7	**175+ Participants**
Workshops Curated for School, Colleges & Institutes		**190+ students Participants**
Environment Workshop	4	**70+ Participants**
Special days Celebration		**470+ Participants**



40 Environment related Programs 850+ Participants

- Nature Walk
- Expert Talk
- Sessions
- RRBCEA Foundation Day

















- **Workshops**
- **Programs with Other Organizations & Groups**
- **Special Day Celebration**

















- Session with School students
- Sessions with College Students
- Sessions with Students of other organizations



















Art & Environment Fusion Programs

Nature Inspires art, it stimulates creativity and imagination. Nature and Art are complementary to each other and they capture the interest of a diverse set of people. Therefore, some of our programs combine elements of both Nature and Art.

Empress Wild Explorer Program (EWEP) is a three-hour session designed for school-age children. It explores niche topics through indoor and outdoor activities. The EWEP engaged children and young learners via hands-on environmental education both onsite and offsite.Onsite sessions explore key modules such as biodiversity, plants, birds, and water, offering fun and memorable scientific learning experiences. Offsite programs extend the reach to partner schools with activities including nature observation, snake awareness workshops, and environmental film screenings. During the reporting period, over 200 children participated in onsite sessions, and more than 200 students attended offsite modules. EWEP emphasizes experiential learning that nurtures curiosity, ecological understanding, and a lasting connection with nature.

4 EWEP for Ghorpadi Village High School	**200+ Students Participated**
11 EWEP Session	**202 Participants**

15 fusion Programs 600+ Participants

EWEP Sessions with Ghorpadi Village High School

- Nature Observation Session
- Bee the Lead
- Snake Awareness
- Environmental Film Screening

















EWEP Sessions at RRBCEA

- Birds
- Plants
- Water
- Biodiveristy

















Research

Empress Botanical Garden is an important educational resource and a living laboratory for scientific research. RRBCEA believes that the research and data collected here can support our educational and outreach programs throughout the year. These research activities help us create useful learning materials that can be shared with the public and educators. RRBCEA also conducts small research projects and citizen science programs with the help of public participation.

Mushroom Survey



A mushroom diversity survey was conducted in the 39-acre Empress Botanical Garden from late July to October 2024, with observations made twice a week during the monsoon season. Identification was based on habitat and visible characteristics, with microscopic analysis and spore prints used for difficult species.

The survey recorded 50 fungal species across 17 orders, with Agaricales and Polyporales being the most abundant. Agaricales were especially diverse in undisturbed areas rich in leaf litter, soil, and dead logs, where moisture retention and minimal human activity created ideal conditions for growth.

Based on these findings, a “Mushrooms of Empress Botanical Garden” booklet has been developed to showcase this diversity and raise awareness about the ecological significance of fungi in urban green spaces.

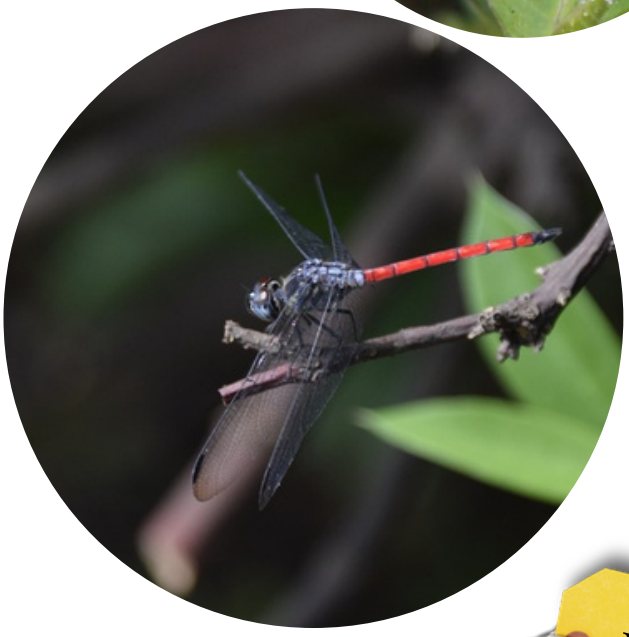






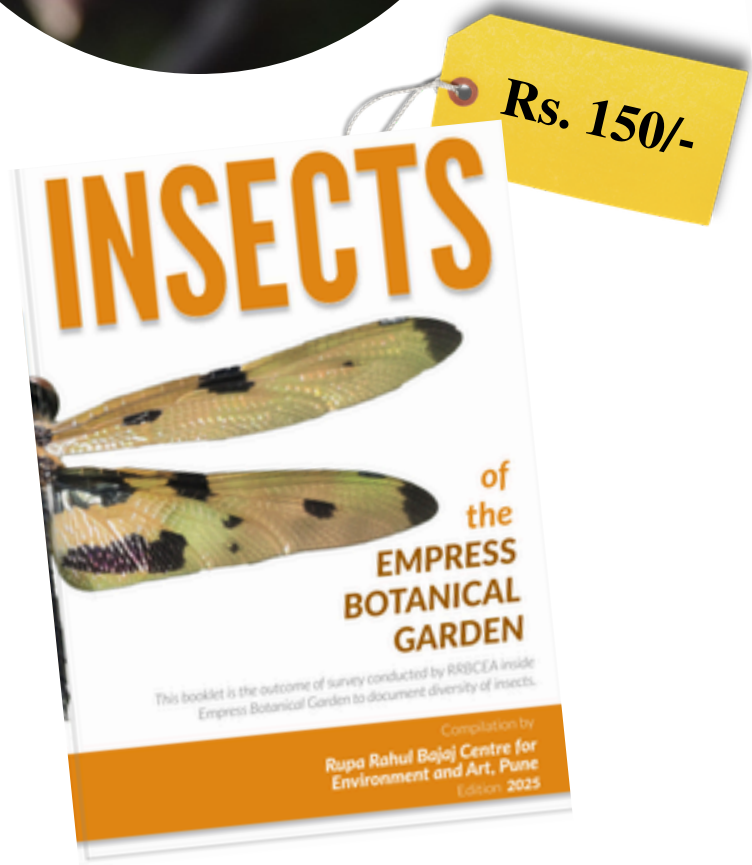
Insect Survey

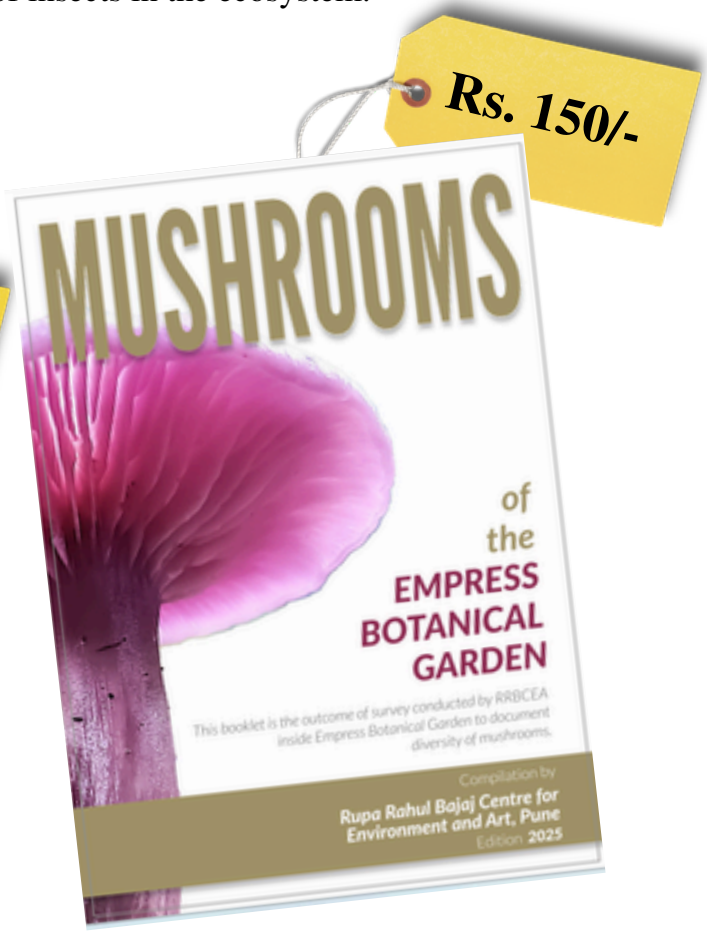
An insect diversity survey was carried out in the 39-acre Empress Botanical Garden from October 2023 to September 2024. The survey aimed to study insect diversity across three habitat patches representing different levels of disturbance: undisturbed, semi-disturbed, and disturbed areas. Observations were conducted twice a week between 8 am and 10 am using a non-invasive Visual Encounter Survey (VES) method, with photographic documentation. No insects were harmed or collected during the process.



The survey recorded 10 insect orders, with Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) being the most abundant, making up about 30% of the total observations. These findings highlight the importance of the garden as a thriving habitat for insect diversity across seasons.

Based on these results, a “Insects of Empress Botanical Garden” booklet has been developed to share this knowledge with the public and promote awareness about the role of insects in the ecosystem.





Urban Green Spaces and Biodiversity Study







Urban green spaces (UGS) such as gardens play a crucial role in supporting biodiversity within cities. However, with increasing urbanization and infrastructure development, bird and insect diversity in urban areas has been negatively impacted. Despite these challenges, urban parks provide valuable vegetation that supports wildlife and acts as a refuge for local bird communities.

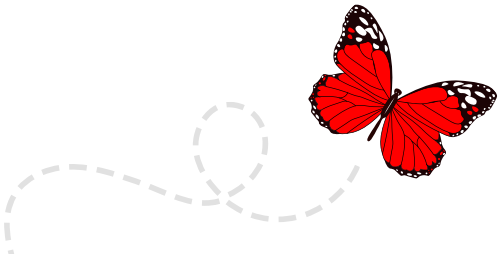
This study focuses on understanding the relationship between birds and native trees, documenting their use for feeding, nesting, perching, and roosting. Surveys are being conducted across five gardens: P.L. Deshpande Garden, Sambhaji Udyan, Chittaranjan Vatika, Gajanan Maharaj Udyan, and Empress Botanical Garden. In addition, insect diversity is being recorded using the Visual Encounter Survey (VES) method on predefined tracks.

The findings from this research aim to guide urban green space planners in developing biodiversity-rich gardens and enhancing our understanding of how different types of urban gardens from botanical gardens to public parks contribute to conservation, species interactions, and the overall urban ecosystem.

Carbon Sequestration Project

In collaboration with Green Concept, a carbon sequestration study is being carried out in the Empress Botanical Garden. The garden has been divided into 19 zones based on vegetation type and usage. Tree-by-tree measurements are being recorded, including species identification, location, girth at breast height, height, canopy spread, and phenological phases.

These parameters will be used to estimate the total amount of CO_2 sequestered within the garden, helping to assess its contribution to urban climate mitigation and ecological sustainability.





Resources

The Resources are an impressive repository of diverse range of materials that can aid in the process of learning. Our team has developed a variety of resources such as booklet, a collection of different plant species, educational games, exhibit materials, and landscaping features that aid our programs.

We have developed these resources for



- In house Educational & Outreach Programs
- Educators
- Citizens
- Students and Researchers

Games **Resource Building** **Library**

Landscaping **Outdoor Exhibits**

Nature Themed Exhibit **Booklets**



Library

The library boasts collection of books on nature and art, available in both English and Marathi languages. From encyclopedias and environmental story & activity books to field guides on plants and animals, the library caters to the needs and interests of all. Additionally, there is a dedicated section on gardening and a children's section that houses a diverse range of interesting books suitable for all ages above 3 years. The library also offers a cozy reading nook, where visitors can immerse themselves in the world of words while enjoying a quiet retreat from the hustle and bustle of daily life. Furthermore, the library hosts regular workshops and storytelling sessions, creating a vibrant community space where knowledge and creativity are celebrated.

668+ Books available in the Library





Resource Building

To make the exhibitions more interactive and engaging for visitors, two unique resources were developed, an innovative digital kiosk and a set of bamboo-based games. Both have added a playful dimension to the learning experience, encouraging participants to connect with nature in creative ways.

The kiosk, created in collaboration with the Jyotirgamay team, features digital games based on insects, plants, and other natural themes. Designed around different behaviours and characteristics from nature, these games have become a popular way for visitors to explore and learn. Complementing this digital experience, bamboo-based games handcrafted by volunteer Ayan Watave such as tic-tac-toe and a flower-sorting activity, offer a tactile, hands-on engagement using natural materials.

Adding to these interactive features, a weather station has also been installed at the centre. It collects real-time local data on humidity, rainfall, temperature, and other parameters, providing valuable insights for educational programs and research initiatives.

Together, these initiatives have been widely appreciated, making the exhibition space more dynamic, informative, and enjoyable for visitors of all ages.















Nature Themed Exhibits

RRBCEA's nature-themed exhibits have become an important part of its year-round educational initiatives, providing visitors of all ages with hands-on learning opportunities that combine science, art, and interactivity. These exhibits are designed to create an engaging experience that not only informs but also inspires curiosity and a deeper connection with nature.

- Water Exhibit: Visited by over 1,000 people, this exhibit used interactive panels, posters, and activity stations to explain water conservation and environmental science. Through games and visual demonstrations, visitors learned about the water cycle, sustainable usage, and the importance of protecting water resources.
- Insect Exhibit: This exhibit welcomed more than 250 visitors and showcased the fascinating world of insects. Detailed models, informative displays, and creative selfie spots allowed participants to explore insect diversity, their ecological roles, and the need for their conservation in an engaging way.
- Plant Exhibit: By incorporating games, posters, and easy-to-understand materials on native plant life, this exhibit provided insights into plant diversity, their importance in ecosystems, and their role in supporting biodiversity.

Each exhibit combined visual storytelling, interactive learning, and scientific content, making environmental education both fun and impactful. These thematic exhibits have strengthened RRBCEA's position as a hub for environmental learning, community engagement, and nature-based education.

RRBCEA has successfully created a dynamic learning environment that connects people with nature, raises awareness about ecological issues, and encourages sustainable practices in an engaging and memorable way

Story of Water Exhibit : 1050+ Visitors

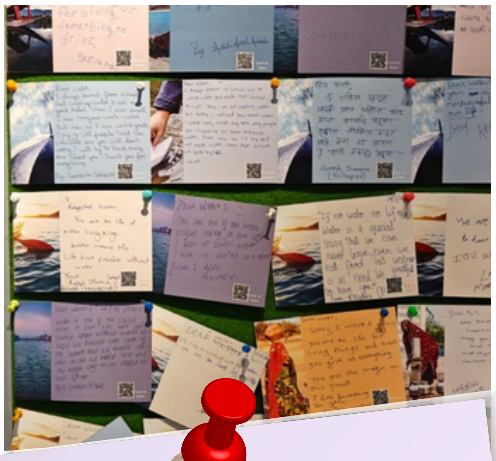
Unexplored World of Insect Exhibit : 250+ Visitors

People & Plants Exhibit : 100+ Visitors









Very nice and heart touching representation of an important entity/life. I realized today how important it is to conserve water. The games invented here gains a lot of attraction.

-Kahef H. Qazi
(Visitor, Water-themed Exhibit)

Very nice & informative. Match up was quite interesting activity and overall idea was very amazing. Something out of the box to think. Idea of this exhibition is quite good and informative

-Rutuja Bhoyar
(Visitor, Insect-themed Exhibit)

Feedback from Exhibit Visitors

RRBCEA Space made available for other Programs

- Iyengar Yoga Session
- Punaravartan Aabhar
- SSLA : Antigone Drama
- Blue Cross Meeting
- Book reading session
- Lantern Making Workshop
- Travelling Plants Exhibition: Inauguration
- All Living Things Environmental Film Festival (ALT EFF)
- A retreat for educators to contemplate the future of heart education in the times of AI
- Author keynote Dr. Elin Kelsey



Iyengar Yoga sessions



Lantern making workshop



Lantern making workshop



ALT EFF

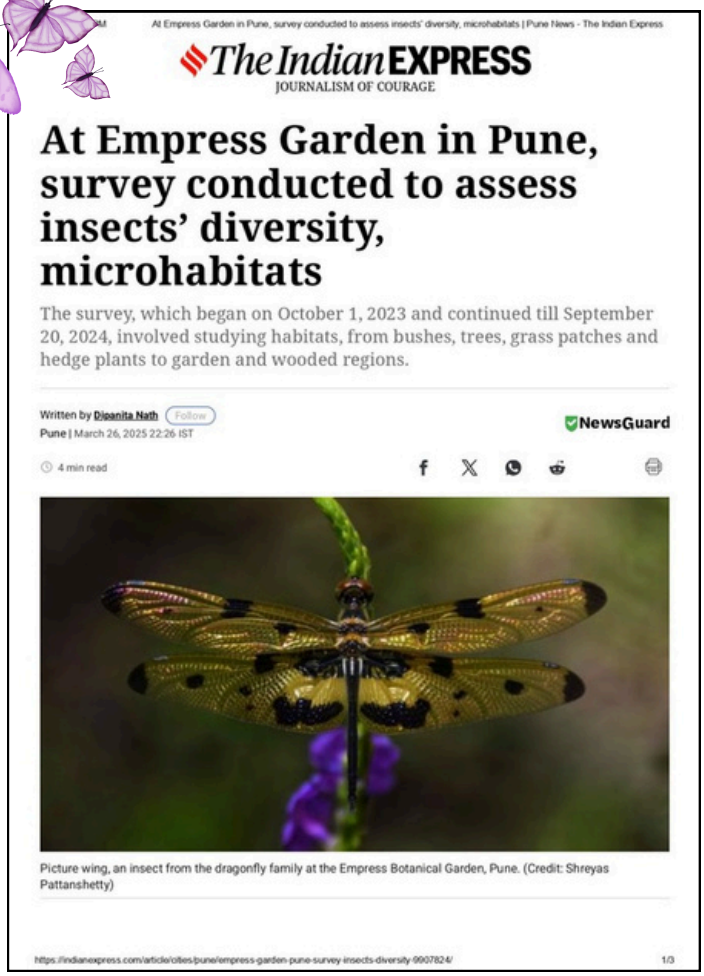


Travelling Plants Exhibition



Author keynote Dr. Elin Kelsey

RRBCEA in the News



At Empress Garden in Pune, survey conducted to assess insects' diversity, microhabitats | Pune News - The Indian Express

The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

At Empress Garden in Pune, survey conducted to assess insects' diversity, microhabitats

The survey, which began on October 1, 2023 and continued till September 20, 2024, involved studying habitats, from bushes, trees, grass patches and hedge plants to garden and wooded regions.

Written by Dipanita Nath Follow
Pune | March 26, 2025 22:26 IST

NewsGuard

4 min read

Picture wing, an insect from the dragonfly family at the Empress Botanical Garden, Pune. (Credit: Shreyas Pattanshetty)

https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/pune/empress-garden-pune-survey-insects-diversity-9907824/ 1/3



The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

This is an archive article published on March 22, 2024

Pune's Empress Garden conducts first systematic bird survey, records peculiar behaviours

The booklet — Birds of Empress Botanical Garden, launched on March 23 — shows that the area boasts of at least nine migratory species that visit the garden during the winter months only.

Written by Dipanita Nath Follow
Pune | Updated: March 23, 2024 22:33 IST

NewsGuard

3 min read

In 1884 the Botanical Gardens, formerly situated at Ganeshkhind, were amalgamated with the Soldiers' Gardens, and the name changed to Empress Botanical Gardens. (Express Photo by Pavan Khengre)



Hindustan Times

Empress Botanical Garden in Pune home to over 130 insect species: Survey

By Gayatri Vajpeyee

Published on: Mar 30, 2025 05:22 am IST

During the survey, the team documented around 60 species of butterflies and moths (Lepidoptera); 30 species of dragonflies and damselflies (Odonata); and more than 45 species of other orders of insects including bugs, flies, beetles, ants, wasps, hornets and others



The Indian EXPRESS
JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

Wish to know how much carbon dioxide is absorbed by the big trees at Pune's? Empress Garden This project will soon tell you

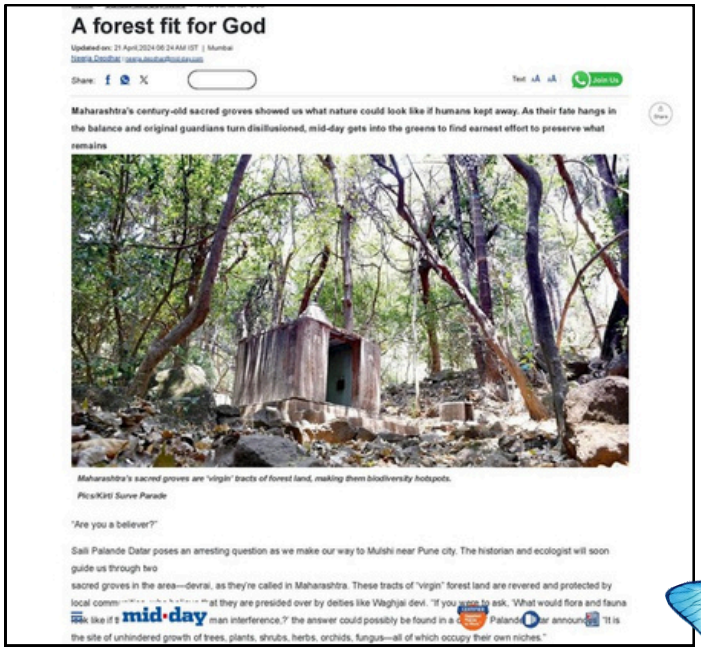
The exercise measures the sizes of the around 1,700 large trees at Empress Garden in Pune, besides other parameters, with the help of an app developed by The Green Concept which will then calculate the carbon sequestration.

Written by Dipanita Nath Follow
Pune | Updated: March 14, 2025 15:08 IST

NewsGuard

4 min read

Empress Garden is collaborating with The Green Concept, a company based in Pune and Berlin. (Wikimedia Commons)



A forest fit for God

Updated on: 21 April,2024 06:24 AM IST | Mumbai

Share: Text Join Us

Maharashtra's century-old sacred groves showed us what nature could look like if humans kept away. As their fate hangs in the balance and original guardians turn disillusioned, mid-day gets into the greens to find earnest effort to preserve what remains

Maharashtra's sacred groves are 'virgin' tracts of forest land, making them biodiversity hotspots.
Pics/Kirti Surve Parade

"Are you a believer?"

Sali Palande Datar poses an arresting question as we make our way to Mulshi near Pune city. The historian and ecologist will soon guide us through two sacred groves in the area—devrai, as they're called in Maharashtra. These tracts of "virgin" forest land are revered and protected by local comm... at they are presided over by deities like Waghjai devi. "If you were to ask, 'What would flora and fauna look like if t... mid-day man interference,?' the answer could possibly be found in a ... Palande Datar announces. "It is the site of unhindered growth of trees, plants, shrubs, herbs, orchids, fungus—all of which occupy their own niches."

RRBCEA Stalls





Chrismas Special Environement Awareness Stall at Bajaj Auto Campus, Akurdi







- **Painting Activity**
- **Nature Games**
- **Bird Booklets**
- **Souvenirs**

at Empree Botanical Garden Flower Show



Our Stakeholders

3000+ Participants

3700+ Visitors

3 Mentors

65+ Facilitators

9 Team Members

8 Educational Institutes

7 Interns

81 Programs

2500+ Social Media Followers

15+ Organizations

Partners & Collaborators

Our CSR Partners

Our Collaborators

Organizations we worked with

Our Team



Dr. Dhanashree Paranjpe
RRBCEA Head



Manashree Bapat
PR & Communication Coordinator



Dr. Prerana Chandak
Nature Education Coordinator



Mansi Sable
Nature Educator



Khushbu Husain
Nature Educator



Ketaki Godbole
Art Coordinator



Mahesh Junnarkar
Admin & Accounts Coordinator



Taraman Kunwar
Care taker and Gardener



Suresh Saste
Care taker and Gardener

Interns



Darshan Borkar
Bird Call Library



Kumudini Khandalkar
Bird Call Library



Srushtee Deshpande
Photography



Susmit Wadke
Phenology monitoring and Herbarium



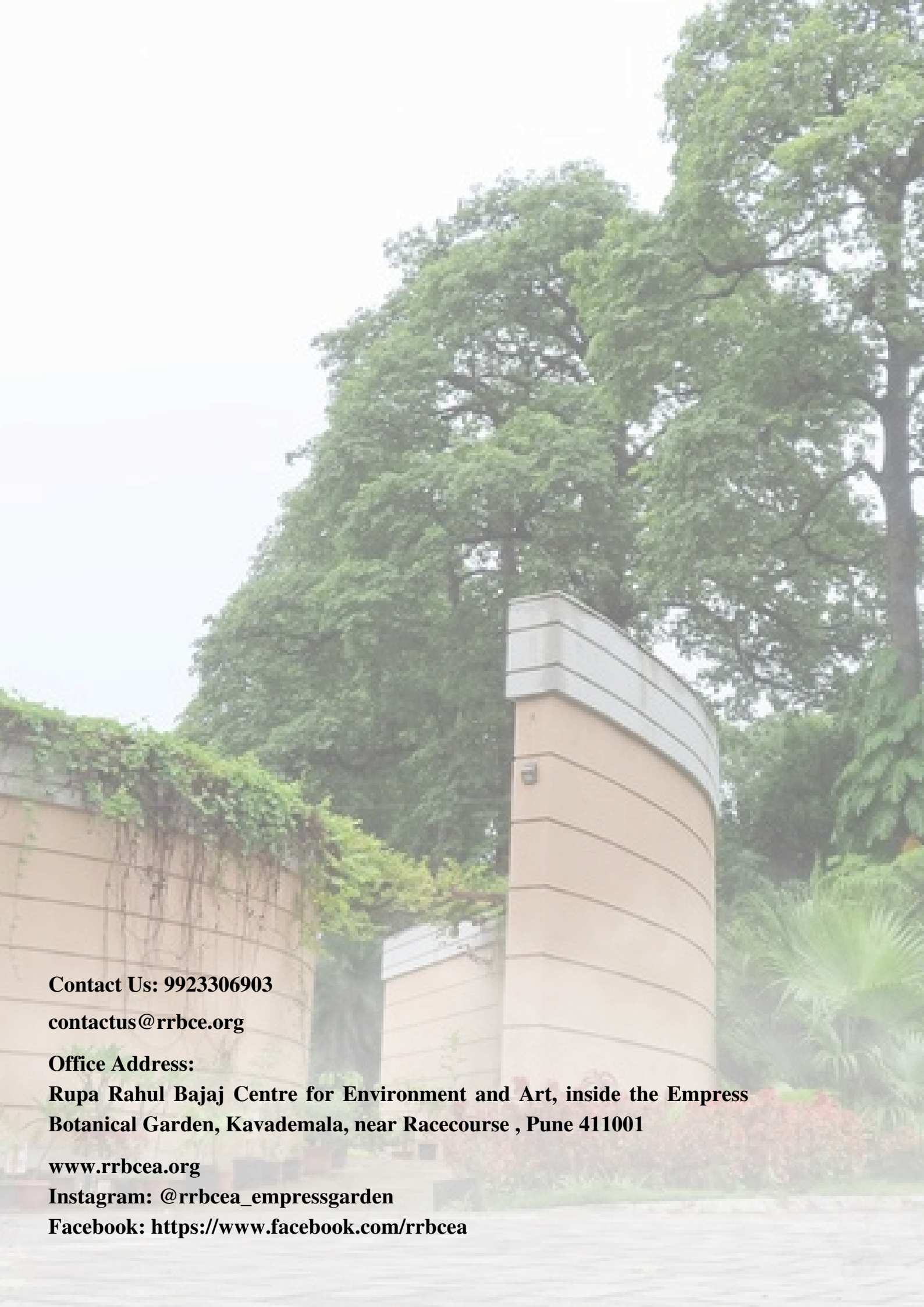
Vaishnavi Kulkarni
Sound barrier project



Pranali Lokhande
Garden Survey



Sarvesha Kamble
Carbon Sequestration



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