

In touch with infinity at Mirissa Hills



The main bungalow by night (view from the lawn)

Mirissa Hills, is a boutique hotel located on a 60 acre cinnamon plantation in Mirissa. Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum Zeylanicum*) is the commodity that first drew westerners to the shores of Sri Lanka over half a millennium ago. The hotel consists of several structures including Sri Lanka's first cinnamon museum, where live demonstrations of cinnamon peeling will be given to visitors. The property is in addition to being a place for recreation, a working cinnamon plantation, so visitors can have an authentic experience of how genuine cinnamon is produced. The various structures that comprise the hotel are architectural masterpieces by the well known architect



A sculpture adorns the living room of the main bungalow

C.Anjalendran The main structure is wrapped around the top of a hill, affording views all around. The breathtaking view from the bungalow is its most defining feature. One can just relax on the verandah with a glass of chilled beer and stare out into what seems like infinity. An ideal location to chill out if ever there was

one. The main bungalow features a well stocked bar, a swimming pool and in one wing of the main bungalow, even an art gallery featuring some unique sculptures selected by the discerning Anjalendran. The bedrooms in the main bungalow feature original paintings by well known Sri Lankan artists.



The view from the front verandah. Even though there is the illusion of proximity to the beach, the hotel is located on top of a hill in the interior



The main structure having been built around the crown of a hill, affords wide vistas all around, on the land side as well as the sea side.



The chic living room of the main bungalow

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This species is a protected plant and anyone harming it can be arrested even without a warrant. Further more, the Maadu-Ganga estuary and the islands are protected as a Sanctuary under the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance since 2006 and have been made an important wetland under the International Convention for the Protection of Wetlands, popularly known as the Ramsar Convention. The Ratambilla is a protected species under the Fauna and Flora Protection Ordinance and is included in Schedule five under Section 42.

According to this section, it is an offence to destroy or damage any protected plant and to sell or attempt to sell any such plant or any part. This protection is not confined to the plants growing on state land but extends to those growing on private properties. These are all cognizable offences, that is, a person engaged in doing these can be arrested without a warrant. The punishment for these offences is a fine of Rupees 3000 to 15000 (this is the fine after being enhanced by the Increase in Fines Act No. 12 of 2005) and a jail term of 2 to 5 years or by both the fine and the jail term.

Although both this species and the habitats in Maadu-Ganga are legally protected, it is not an entirely satisfactory state. This is because the last remaining refuge in Patamulla and the few trees in the islands are not looked after. At least, the refuge is better secured at present due to the vigil of the owner but this lady being old and ill, cannot carry on this task for ever. It is not clear whether her descendants are interested in protecting this refuge in the present manner, as is evident from her apprehensions for the future. This lady is not aware of the scientific importance, but has been determined to protect these trees as she has not found it anywhere else but only from her land and this observation had made her realize that this should be a rare and valuable tree that ought to be protected. It was a long time after that she was told about the real

importance and is happy and contented that she was able to save it for so long till those who know it as important could take efforts to protect it formally. She is also certain that she has never seen any seedlings of this tree during her lifetime and said that even the smaller trees were there as far as she can remember. She was pleading tearfully for us to take any possible steps to protect this grove that she has been protecting for a very long time. If not, there are possibilities of people cutting down these trees for timber or of encroaching on the land, clearing all vegetation. People like Mrs. Soysa deserve our highest gratitude and regard for their dedication to protect our bio-diversity amid so many personal hardships without any personal benefits in mind.

It was important to know that the Department of Wildlife Conservation, the Central Environmental Authority and the Coast Conservation Department are interested in this species and the maintenance of the habitats. The Divisional Secretary of Balapitiya is also keen to protect this tree and the habitat and is willing to help coordinate any efforts. This is both fortunate and encouraging because the preservation of this refuge needs some immediate action, such as, keeping a vigilant eye on the trees so that they are not damaged or destroyed and to seek ways to enhance the protection of the habitat and the trees.

At the same time it is necessary to propagate this species and introduce it to other suitable habitats to have ex-situ populations. It is happy to note that Douglas Tissera of the Lanka Sulu Dheewara Sarnelanaya has been able to grow it from cuttings and the plants in their premises at Pambala, Kakkapalliya, near Halawatha (Chilaw), in the Puttalam District have been flowering for several years. This shows that vegetative propagation from cuttings of this species is possible without resorting to expensive measures such as tissue culture.



REACHING OUT Dad-to-be (again!) Matthew McConaughey finds common ground with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger at the National Conference on Volunteering and Service on Monday at San Francisco's Moscone West Convention Center, where the actor spoke out about his j.k. livin' foundation.

STAR WORTHY

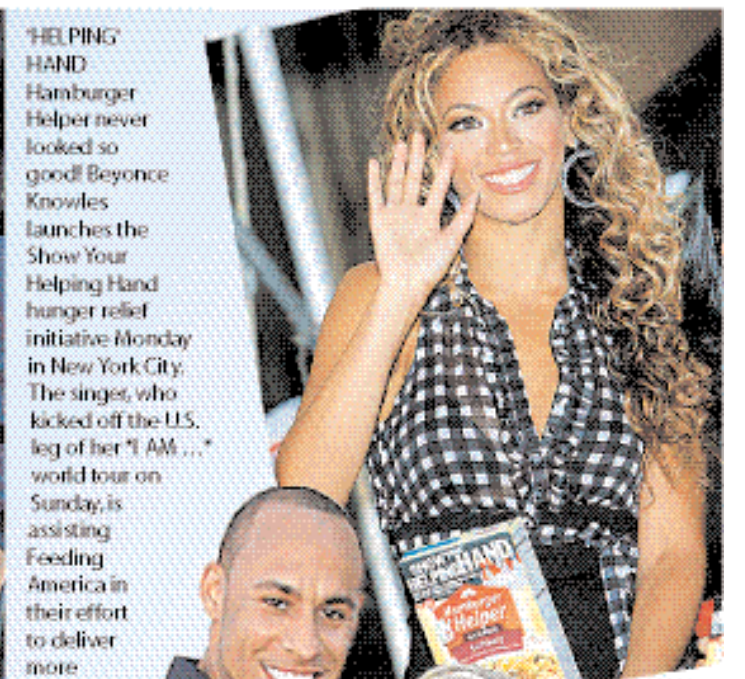
Honored for her contributions in the entertainment industry, Cameron Diaz happily shows off her shiny new star along the Hollywood Walk of Fame on Monday. The actress, who received the 2,386th star on the famous sidewalk, will next be seen in the drama, *My Sister's Keeper*, which hits theaters on June 26.



WIGGED OUT Now that's a hairstyle! Anne Hathaway gets wiggly with it Monday, channeling her inner Rainbow Brite while lunching with boyfriend Adam Shulman in New York City. The actress is in the Big Apple performing in the Public Theater's Shakespeare in the Park series.



PEOPLE about... MORE ON TARGET She's back! After a successful UK tour, Britney Spears returns to Los Angeles and resumes some familiar behavior - shopping! - during a visit to Target on Monday.



'HELPING' HAND Hamburger Helper never looked so good! Beyoncé Knowles launches the Show Your Helping Hand hunger relief initiative Monday in New York City. The singer, who kicked off the U.S. leg of her "I AM...*" world tour on Sunday, is assisting Feeding America in their effort to deliver more



GETTING HER KICKS Kendra Wilkinson gets a leg up on fiancé Hank Baskett, who lends a tender touch to their baby-to-be at the Los Angeles Film Festival's screening of *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* on Monday in Westwood, Calif. "This is my wedding gift to him," the former *Girls Next Door* star told