

**EXPORT TRADE OF INDIGENOUS AQUATIC
PLANTS IN SRI LANKA AND THEIR
CONSERVATION ISSUES: A REVIEW**

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Abstract

Aquatic plants are exploited due to the ornamental, medicinal, edible, industrial values etc in Sri Lanka. Most of aquatic plants are exported to the foreign countries since they are used for the fish tank decorations. Ornamental aquatic plants have been exported to 43 countries around the world over one year period of time from 1st March of 2013 to 28th February of 2014 from Sri Lanka. Aquatic plant species in Sri Lanka are faced a series conservation issue on the particular endemic and indigenous species. Present study was intended to analyze and evaluate the trade of aquatic plants in Sri Lanka with a particular focus on indigenous species. Data on the ornamental aquatic plant species subjected to ornamental export trade and their quantities were extracted from Customs Goods Declaration Forms submitted by the ornamental aquatic plant exporters to the Sri Lanka Customs. During one year period, total of 218 aquatic plant species under the 34 families were exported from Sri Lanka. The most common species exported was the *Dracaena sanderiana white*, and *Lobelia cardinalis "small leaf"* was the species exported in least quantities. When considering the foreign exchange earnings *Echinodorus grisebachii bleheri* has earned highest amount while *Dracaena sanderiana baskets* has brought least earnings. Total income generated from the ornamental aquatic plants trade during one year period was SL Rs.546, 950, 172.67. According to present study there were exporters who are practicing tissue culture and vegetative propagation. The contribution of endemic aquatic plant species was negligible compare to total earnings of the trade and only 13 exporters were actually exported ornamental aquatic plants. The government authorities' involvement is required to streamline this sector for a bright future. And also, today is the high time to collaborate the shareholders with the authorities for the sustainable management of ornamental aquatic plants.