

## Oral presentation

### Effects of ethnicity on garden composition and potential ecological impacts of home gardens in Little Havana (Miami, FL USA)

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**Introduction.** Urban home gardens are understudied. The lack of information is particularly critical in an ethnically and biologically diverse area such as southern Florida. The multicultural nature of urban environments affect which species are included in home gardens.

**Objectives.** We examined home gardens in the Little Havana community of Miami, FL (USA), to address three questions: 1. What species are present?, 2. Does ethnicity and residency time affect garden composition, 3. How many species are natives or invasive exotics?

**Methods.** We sampled forty gardens in Little Havana. Twenty-nine gardens were randomly selected, and in depth interviews were conducted with each gardener. Vouchers were made for each new species and the number of species within each garden was recorded. A larger sample of forty gardens, which included non-randomly selected gardens, was used for statistical analysis of trends within gardens.

**Results.** We sampled forty gardens and found 211 species in 79 plant families within twenty-nine randomly selected gardens. Including the eleven non-randomly selected gardens increased the species number to 244 species within 81 families. Ethnicity had no effect on garden diversity. However, analyses of a larger data set (forty gardens) demonstrated that gardeners from rural background have species rich gardens. Only Hispanic gardeners grew fruit trees and other edible plants. The percentage of invasive species (11.4% of total) exceeded that of native species (8.1%). Gardeners who expressed environmental concerns generally had more diverse gardens and a greater number of tree species.

**Conclusion.** Gardens in southern Miami are very diverse, but do share some similar species. Several common species, such as *Murraya paniculata* and *Eugenia uniflora* are invasive exotic species. Hispanic gardeners are more likely to have food and medicinal plants in their gardens than non-Hispanic gardeners. Urban garden not primarily grown for food; instead gardens are places imbued with personal meaning for their owners, serving as areas for socializing, relaxing, and a space for expressions of aesthetic values.

Keywords: urban home gardens, southern Florida, Little Havana, invasive exotic species

#### Selected References

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