Around the bend in Labookellie

Posted on



A hybrid petunia in shades of pink

We journey downhill passing Pussellawa to reach Labookellie. At the turn of a bend, rows of colourful blooms caught our attention.

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Dainty rose cacti

Roadside stalls were bathed in the striking hues of flowers in full bloom. These blossoms and pot plants were the livelihood of many families in the area.

A makeshift stall filled with plants with pretty little flowers captured our attention first. It was owned by Hasanjali and her husband Indika. The couple have converted

their garden into a nursery to foster and grow plants that will adorn and beautify other home gardens. As with many of the flower sellers, while their stall is at the bend of the road, the little home gardens are a short distance away and the members of the family travel to and fro, all a part of this venture. The duo bring seeds and small plants from Welimada and nurture these in their garden.

A short distance away, was thewell-established plant and flower stall by Kanchana and Janaka. Since setting up their stall nearly 16 years ago, they proudly display over 80 varieties of dainty flowers and pretty plants. They even supply cut flowers to florists in Colombo and beyond.

The climate and rich soil of the hill country is ideal for horticulture. Therefore, it is not surprising to see many small gardens across the hills. These radiant gardens can be accessed by travelling downhill along rough foot paths.

Daisies are the most popular and they are grown in greater quantities. Small plants all neatly arranged in black pouches filled with soil and fertiliser were nurtured carefully. The colourful selection of the cockscomb flowers was a burst of shades – yellow, orange, pink and red. Strawberry plants, roses, chrysanthemums, daisies and many other varieties of flowers create a vibrant garden; something straight out of a fairytale.

> A variety of giant cabbage had been grown and this unusual plant was on display at the stall.

One could catch a glimpse of interesting varieties such as winter cherry; we spotted a plant that had just begun to bear fruit. Small and white as the fruit ripens, it changes from yellow to red. Ice begonia, varieties of cacti including the cactus rose and hydrangeas are some of the plants grown here. Great care and time is taken to foster the plants.



Kanchana and Janaka‘s stall was established 16 years ago

Many of these varieties can be planted during the months of January to April. However, during the rainy season, flowering plants are transported from other areas in the Island. If you peek closely into these gardens, you might even find a few vegetable patches. We were shown a pot with a variety of giant cabbage at the stall that could have almost been mistaken for a blossom.

As the resplendent flowers swayed to the cooling breeze of Labookellie, with the shades of spring still etched in our minds, we bid adieu to the flower sellers and continued our journey along the winding roads. These blossoming flowers of the

hills gave us another reason to return soon.

