

A DTU PhD Wins a 2020 Golden Globe Award and Longs to Bring Vietnamese Ginseng Down from the Mountains

Dr. Ho Thanh Tam became one of the ten winners of the 2020 “Golden Globe Awards”, through his continual dedication to research. His dream is to deliver the rare and valuable wild Vietnamese Ginseng from the mountains to the people.

Get back up again after failure

Tam was raised in the Thang Binh district of Quang Nam and has always been fascinated by plants, especially the Ginseng growing in the Truong Son mountain forests.



Dr. Ho Thanh Tam. Photo: AN

After graduating in Biotechnology from Dalat University, Tam decided to start a career in research, with the ambition of cultivating selectively bred plants. *“While at university, I already started researching Laba Bananas, endemic to Lam Dong, and reproducing them asexually,”* said Dr. Tam. *“That was the first time I ever entered a laboratory, but my successive failures worried me for days on end. But then, with the encouragement of my lecturers and friends, I persevered and finally succeeded.”*

In 2014, after years of researching valuable crops in Vietnam, Dr.Tam transferred to Chungbuk National University in South Korea to study for a PhD. His five years there allowed him to work on advanced crop science projects in well-equipped laboratories.

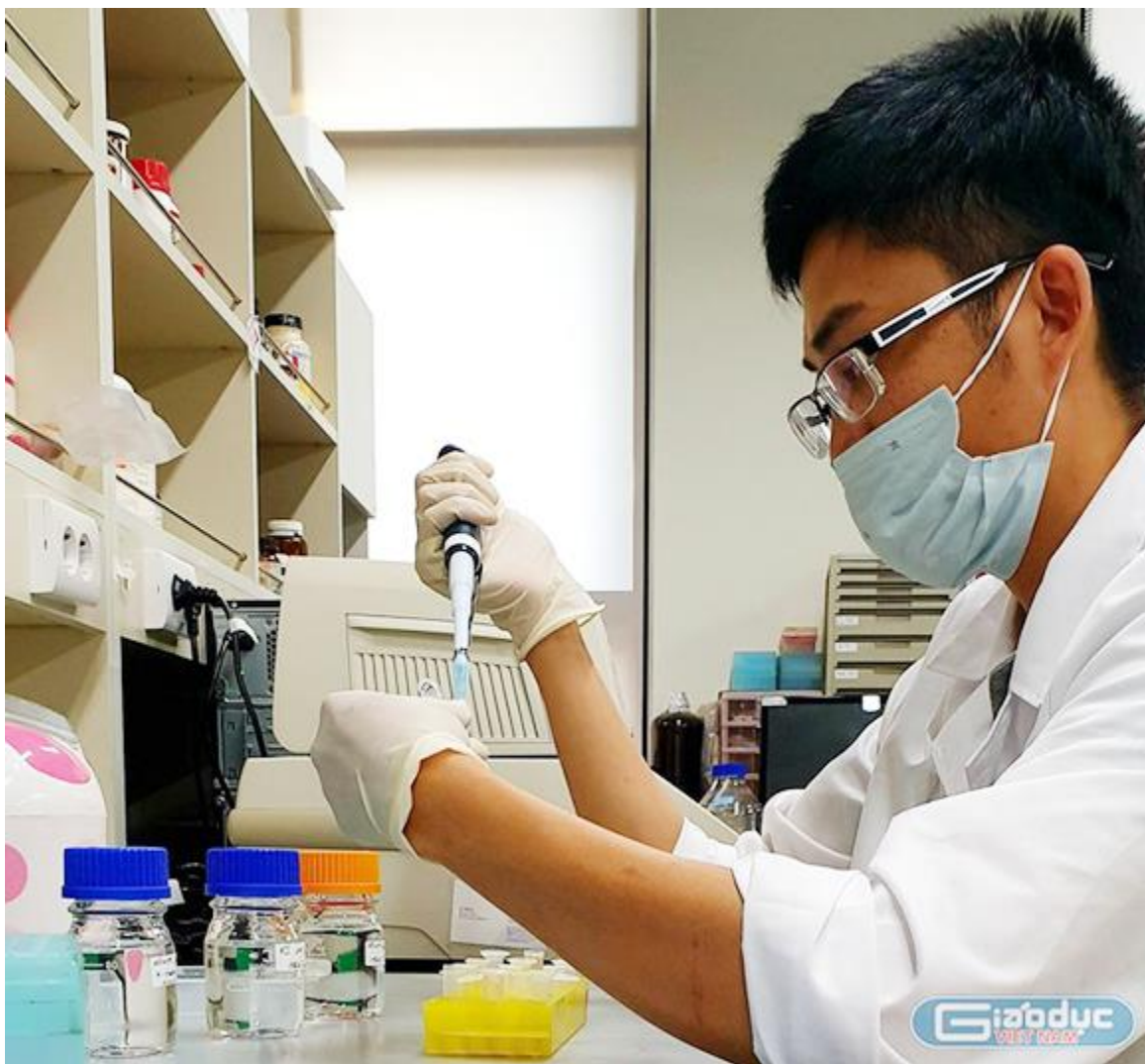
“The work environment in Korea is very demanding and highly efficient,” he recalls. “My rapid progress there kept me locked in my lab and occasionally I even worked all through the night.”

Dr. Tam’s hard work was rewarded with success and, in 2017, he won a third prize for his presentation at the In Vitro Biology meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina, a second for his presentation at the 3rd International Orchid Symposium in Seoul, South Korea in 2018 and two other best presentation prizes at conferences in South Korea.

“After the first conference prizes, I resolved to devote myself to my research even more,” Dr.Tam divulged. “After that, my winning presentation at the In Vitro Biology meeting was also a huge encouragement for me.”

Bringing hope back

Early in 2020, Dr.Tam decided to return to Vietnam and work as a lecturer and researcher at the DTU Institute for Global Health Innovation, where he continued to realize his dream of preserving and developing Vietnamese Ginseng.



Research on Vietnamese Ginseng produces satisfying results. Photo: AN

“Over the past ten years, I have dedicated much time and effort researching Ginseng. In Korea, they have commercialized their native species, but in Vietnam it is still difficult because the Ginseng is mostly found in the highlands around Ngoc Linh Mountain. My objective is to develop a Vietnamese cultivar and grow it in the lowlands and middle levels. If I succeed, it can then be cultivated in many other locations on an industrial scale.”

Dr.Tam is also working on transplanting other rare species in danger of extinction, like the Venus Slipper and the bristly Marbled Jewel Orchid, in order to preserve the species and create high-quality cultivars.

“My team has already published eight papers in national journals and one internationally on Vietnamese Ginseng. We asexually reproduced Ginseng in the lab and took the plants to Kontum and the Bidoup Nui

Ba National Park in Lam Dong for cultivation, which are now growing well, paving the way for cultivation in the wilderness around Ngoc Linh Mountain.”

Meanwhile, biomass is being gathered to produce the active raw materials for industrial production. Dr. Tam's work is gradually bringing Vietnamese Ginseng, seen as a “national treasure”, down from the mountains to many other regions of the country.

(Media Center)