

Nominee: Een toekomst voor autochtone bomen en struiken (A future for indigenous trees and shrubs)

Project description:

In the run-up to 2010, the year of biodiversity, everyone was concerned, and with reason, about the decline of our fauna and flora. What most people do not know, however, is that our native oak trees, hazels, hornbeams and so on are threatened with extinction. Only 5% of our greenery consists of real Belgian trees and shrubs.

These INDIGENOUS PLANTS are the trees and bushes that are descendants of the plants which settled in our region after the last ice age. The cause of the disappearance of these INDIGENOUS PLANTS is the cheap imports. For example, the common oak has been growing in our region since time immemorial. But the common which you can buy from a plant nursery or from a garden centre is almost certainly an import. That in itself is not so bad, one would think. More variety is more fun. But the newcomers have an entirely different biorhythm. As a result they are not suited to our climate, our trees and our wildlife. The blackthorns that are imported from Italy for example blossom for the Brown Hairstreak butterflies. Belgian blackthorns by contrast are however adapted to the lifecycle of this insect. Our plant and animal world thus requires INDIGENOUS PLANTS!

By planting an INDIGENOUS PLANT you not only contribute to biodiversity. These plants are also better adapted to our environmental conditions and consequently have a better chance of survival. Moreover, they promote the regional identity. Only benefits in other words!

The three Limburg regional landscapes have joined forces to help INDIGENOUS PLANTS. To achieve this we protect the places where INDIGENOUS PLANTS still grow and thrive. We also harvest seeds at these sites and grow them. In this way we can always use INDIGENOUS plants for our own landscaping activities. But our main objective is to market these precious seedlings so that everyone can buy and plant INDIGENOUS PLANTS. Because at the moment there is still a major shortage. In cooperation with various authorities and organisations we also went in search of sustainable solutions to deal with the gap in the supply. The INDIGENOUS PLANT quality label has helped us arrive at a solution. We are not quite there yet but all the partners are happy.

This project is a success thanks to intensive cooperation between Regional Landscape Haspengouw and Voeren, Regional Landscape Lage Kempen, Regional Landscape Kempen and Maasland, the Nature and Forest Agency, the Institute for Nature and Forest Research, the Agency for Agriculture and Fisheries, the Limburg environmental associations, the Limburg social economy workshops and the Flemish Land Agency.

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Photograph: Quality of an indigenous plant. (© RLH)



Photograph: Harvest of indigenous seeds. (© RLH)



Photograph: Indigenous hawthorn seeds. (© RLH)