

LEARNING ABOUT FORESTS - MALTA

Issue No 4



LEAF your gateway to outdoor learning!

Dear forest friends,

Welcome to the fourth issue of our newsletter.

Work on your projects has now started in earnest and I have already met a number of LEAF forest teams to discuss your plans for this year. In this issue I have also included an article about members of a LEAF forest team that are busy working on their project for this year.

As many of you know LEAF Malta has been cooperating with **ENO – Environment Online** for the past four years. ENO is an international organisation present in more than 150 countries through a virtual network of educators. ENO has made a strong commitment during the UN RIO+20 Summit; that of planting 100 million trees by 2017.

Throughout the past years we have planted a number of trees which were endorsed to this initiative. To raise further awareness and generate more interest ENO has also created the Treelympics competition whereby schools involved in tree planting events log the number of trees planted on a specific portal <http://www.treelympics.org/>. Interested schools are invited to contact us to facilitate the registration process and help us keep a record of the trees endorsed to this initiative. Thanks to the intervention of the PARKS Directorate around 3,000 trees which are being planted at Buskett through the EU funded LIFE project; Saving Buskett will also form part of this international initiative and we'll be thus doing our bit in helping ENO reach the target.

Very busy and exciting times lie ahead since we might also be hosting the LEAF National Operators' meeting next March. Keep tuned!

Kindly be reminded that the deadline for submission of LEAF projects is Monday 9th May 2016.

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A 'European Garden' at Xrobb I-Għagin Nature Park

A 'European Garden' was planted at Xrobb I-Għagin Nature Park and Sustainable Development Centre, Marsaxlokk. It includes 28 trees, representing each EU member state. It was inaugurated by Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner for the Environment, as part of a wider initiative of the international NGO – ENO Environment Online. The activity was funded through the European Commission's Europe Direct network and organised with the cooperation of Nature Trust Malta through its LEAF programme.



The programme included a hands-on session whereby thirty students from three LEAF schools had the opportunity to learn more about site management and tree aftercare.



Thanks to the PARKS Directorate within the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change, students were given a guided tour of the area where they could see for themselves the work that goes into the upkeep of the planting site until the new trees become acclimatised and well established. Staking, water trenching, irrigation, weeding, grass cutting and mulching were some of the themes discussed. Towards the end of the session students were also involved in a weeding exercise in the area where they had planted a number of dwarf fan palm trees two years back.

The CHOGM Commitment Grove

During a special event held at Xrobb I-Għagin Nature Park, 64 students from four EkoSkola schools planted 53 Tamarisk trees together with consuls from various consulates and other dignitaries representing the Commonwealth countries. The tree planting session which brought to a close the official EkoSkola-CHOGM events was organised by Nature Trust Malta through its international Education for Sustainable Development Programmes – EkoSkola, YRE (Young Reporters for the Environment) and LEAF (Learning about Forests); the CHOGM taskforce, the President's Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society and the Office of the Prime Minister.



Students from Helen Keller Resource Centre Qrendi, St Monica School Birkirkara, San Ġorġ Preca College - Floriana Primary and St Clare College - San Ġwann Primary B, read out the declaration that was prepared during the EkoSkola-CHOGM Young Citizens' Summit that was held towards the end of November. A commemorative plaque was unveiled to mark the occasion. The students accompanied the dignitaries to plant the trees and attach the flags of the respective Commonwealth country to the newly planted trees. The Tamarisk (*Tamrix africana*) trees are a living reminder of resilience, an attribute that was brought to the fore in various CHOGM forums during the past week. Resilience in the face of adversity posed by the incumbent sea spray that frequently showers the coastal site due to strong South-Easterly winds.

The 53 Tamarisk trees that were planted will form part of the wider initiative of an international NGO - ENO - Environment Online .

The LEAF Forest Team of Maria Regina College visits Buskett Woodland



On the 24th of November 2015 the EkoSkola committee went to Buskett on an educational outing. The objectives of this outing were to donate Sandarac Gum trees to the Buskett project Life Saving Buskett, to learn about the different plant species found in the area and to collect seeds for our school Botanical Garden.

Mr. Ebejer, who makes part of the Directorate for Parks, Afforestation and Countryside Restoration (P.A.R.K.S.), started our visit by mentioning various jobs related to environmental awareness. He said that the University of Malta has introduced numerous courses to become an environmental scientist, a marine biologist or a landscape manager. This has provided new career opportunities in the sector of environmental awareness.

Buskett is mostly a natural semi-woodland. Some of it is man-made as some trees were planted by the Knights of St. John in the 16th century. The aim of Life Saving Buskett is to regenerate Buskett with the help of funds provided by the European Union. An Environmental Audit carried out by P.A.R.K.S. helped them to identify the main problems in Buskett. Through this project, they are planting more indigenous trees, restoring breached rubble walls – to minimise soil erosion, and protect the natural parts of this woodland.

We discussed our project regarding the embellishment of our school garden. The following are suggestions put forward by Mr. Ebejer:

Nursery

Bird Watching Area

Improved footpaths to guide people in garden area

Mr. Ebejer also suggested some examples of trees we can plant in our school garden like the Lentisk (*Pistacia lentiscus*). We collected some of these seeds that need to be squashed, squeezed and then put on a paper to let dry. We also got seeds of the Bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis*) and the Narrow-leaved Ash (*Fraxinus angustifolia*). These trees are typically found on a valley side which is ideal for our garden as it is situated in Wied il-Għasel.

Mr. Ebejer gave us an idea of which herbs we should plant in our herb section. We can plant mint, celery, basil, rosemary and thyme. These can be easily planted in our low soil. He also suggested that it would be helpful if we walked around Wied il-Għasel to see what grows and to collect more seeds.

This visit to the Buskett Life Saving Project was very educational and provided us with various ideas of what can be planted for our school garden project. We would like to thank Mr. Ebejer for the opportunity to learn more about Buskett and promote similar ideas in our school garden.

Laura Marie Mercieca

**President of the EkoSkola /
LEAF Committee**

Maria Regina College GSS



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The EDIC-Victoria Gozo LEAF Award Scheme



Europe Direct-Victoria Gozo in collaboration with Learning About Forests is proud to announce a LEAF Award scheme which is open exclusively to Gozo schools enrolled in the EkoSkola/LEAF programme.

Interested schools are expected to choose one of the following aspects and develop a LEAF project within their school community to raise further awareness about the importance of forests in the world.

The four key aspects are:

Protecting our native woodlands, maquis, garrigue and afforested areas.

Instilling respect and love for trees wherever they occur.

Making responsible choices to reduce negative impacts on world forests.

Growing and planting more trees.

The respective schools have to adopt the EkoSkola 7-step methodology throughout. Basically you need to follow these steps:

Appoint a forest team.

Choose a key aspect (from the list above). Research and investigate.

Devise an action plan.

Include field trips to forests, in a park or similar areas and incorporate LEAF issues into your lessons.

Check and report progress.

Inform and involve the whole school community.

Create a forest code.

The projects will be reviewed by a panel of experts and the best projects will receive awards. Europe Direct -Gozo office will award the 1st placed with a small greenhouse that can be used to further propagate indigenous plant species (sponsored by Bank of Valletta p.l.c.). The 2nd and 3rd place will be provided with a number of garden utensils and basic irrigation systems that can be used for landscaping purposes. All projects submitted will be eligible for the International LEAF Award irrespective of their placing in this scheme.

Interested schools have to fill in the application form <http://www.leafmalta.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Final-Application-Europe-Direct-Gozo-in-collaboration-with-LEAF.docx> and send to Ms Marvic Refalo on marvic.refalo@ilearn.edu.mt and a copy to Mr Johann Gatt on johann.gatt@ilearn.edu.mt and to Ms Marlene Muscat on edic@europedirectgozo.org. Forms are to be received by not later than **Friday 22nd January 2016**.

Finalised LEAF projects have to be handed in by not later than

Monday 9th May 2016.



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