

Forest Restoration and Biodiversity in Monte da Fraga

Country: Spain

School: Universidade da Coruña

Participants: Many teachers and more than a thousand students.



Monte da Fraga is a forest area located between the Schools of Science and Philology on the A Zapateira campus of the Universidade da Coruña. It was in the past a marginal space, characterized by excess eucalyptus along with gorse and brush, abandonment, and lack of silvicultural treatments. It has a strong South-North slope and is crossed by the high voltage line.



However, when it is approached, it is possible to detect the potential of the landscape and the diversity of spaces full of different species and other elements of natural interest. It is also remarkable in its size (4.2 hectares) and its location in a high place with great views (Castro de Elviña, the city, the Atlantic Ocean). A closer approach to the forest allowed them to detect its full potential. The natural area is a biodiversity reservoir, an area of big CO2 removal impact on the campus, a green space of reference, and a project where practical education and research could take place.

The main objective of these environmental education and volunteering activities is to promote environmental awareness and care for the environment. The Monte da Fraga restoration allowed them to use the space to focus on teaching, research training and environmental awareness for the entire university community. Another pillar they had under account was promoting the participation of local citizens. Moreover, they also counted on the participation of the City Council of A Coruña in this project.

Anyone that was interested could participate, as the activities were open to everyone. Environmental education and volunteer activities were conducted both for the university community and for outsiders.

Weekend activities were also carried out in order to facilitate families' participation and connect the campus with the city, an approach that is ubiquitously implemented in Universidade da Coruña. The environmental groups ADEGA and HABITAT also participated in the project from the beginning of the project in the 2017-2018 academic year. They conducted different activities of study and conservation of the space, in addition, to participating in the elaboration of the basic custody project, making the project more accessible to all kinds of people.



The project is inculcated to the actual Vice-Rectorate of Infrastructures and Sustainability. Additionally, the Monte da Fraga Rehabilitation Project counts with the collaboration of the Consellaría do Medio Rural (local administration promoting the rural environmental development), under a collaboration Agreement with the Universidade da Coruña.

Related to forest restoration, two main Steps were carried out: First, the removal of invasive plants, which was done both professionally and by volunteering. Then, the reforestation with native species. Different stages of this project took place throughout these 16 years. Also, other actions were done taking in consideration the aim of supporting scientific-technical activities compatible with the forest of the area and the conservation of its natural values. Moreover, in the walking line towards an experimentation and demonstration park, several



projects were proposed and taken into consideration. Some of the most interesting activities made were :- The establishment of areas in which the organic waste from the restaurants and cafeterias on campus, as well as forest debris, can be composted. More specifically, the organic waste is composted following typical domestic methods and practices. It allowed the development of activities of training and awareness for the selective collection of waste and its sustainable management, while also promoting home composting. Experimental wetlands were installed as a viable purification system, both economically and environmentally. Currently, new plots for the purification of water from roofs and parking lots are being constructed.

The project increased awareness of nature and biodiversity importance was stated among both the university community and the citizens of A Coruña, promoting this way the protection and conservation of the ecosystem. Moreover, it has been frequently mentioned the good impact of having access to this green natural space in the everyday life on campus. Every year, new projects are developed and incorporate new activities in Monte da Fraga, allowing more people to participate and get involved. Therefore, this project does not have an end and the main goal is for them to keep working on it and improving its conditions, so it can have a greater and bigger impact in the university community and in the citizens of A Coruña.

"It is exciting being able to learn more about nature and biodiversity being this close to the city and without having to move from campus. It is nice walking around when you need to relax after a test. Also, the activity I liked the most was one in which by just taking a small walk we were able to identify different types of mushrooms and take the edible ones home to have for dinner. It was very interesting and fun."

- Alicia Vila, Postgraduate student in Education

