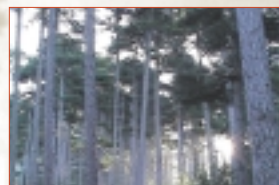




THE Corsican PINE

Pinus nigra subsp *laricio* var *corsicana*
Scientific name

U lârîce ou *u lariciu*
Corsican name



Project Life Nature



THE Corsican PINE

Biological and ecological features

- Coniferous tree from the Pinacea family, the Corsican pine can reach up to 160 feet high;
- the silvery gray bark comes in the form of large irregular slabs;
- the trunk is straight, tall and slender, and can have large diameters (70 inches);
- its cones are small (1.5 to 3 inches long) and good cone production occurs every 2 or 3 years;
- its exceptional longevity can go over 500 years old;
- being a light-demanding species, it grows up rapidly in the open light;
- young trees have a conical shape bearing whereas older trees or those situated on ridges get flat-topped;
- perfectly adapted to the mediterranean climate, it withstands summer drought and takes advantage of corsican mountains good annual rainfall (800 to 1500 mm/year).



Thanks to these properties, the Corsican pine is the third tree species used for reforestation in Continental France after the Douglas fir and the Maritime pine.

Properties

- Hardiness: it adapts to different sorts of climate.
- Adaptability: it grows on a great variety of soils (except on chalky or very wet soils).
- Productivity: it grows rapidly and gives high quality wood.

The Corsican pine natural area

■ Corsican pine forests



Geographical distribution

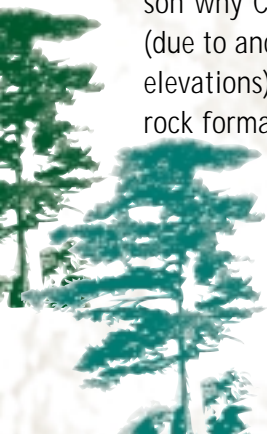
Two Corsican pine ranges can be identified:

- **Natural area:** it's the natural habitat of the Corsican pine. It is only found in the Corsican mountains which is why the species is considered as endemic to Corsica. Corsican pine forests cover more than 111 150 acres out of 525 910 acres of Corsican forest; pure Corsican pine stands cover 51 870 acres.
- **Introduction zone:** this is where the species was introduced for different reasons, even though it is not part of the natural vegetation. In Continental France, plantations of Corsican pine represent 247 000 acres.

WALKS in the Corsican PINE forests



Corsica was named the «Elysée de la géologie» by a 19th century geologist (Gueymard). This island is, above all, a unique mineral environment, born of a complex geological history. This is the reason why Corsican landscapes diversity arises from the hilly relief (due to ancient tectonic plate movements and frost action at high elevations) as well as from the wide range of colours visible in its rock formations.



«There is no end to the descriptions of its tooth-like structures, its towers, its needles, its swellings that are so capriciously carved into the landscape, passing suddenly from rounded shapes to extreme jaggedness. The western wall, made up of superb pink granite, contrasts with the green pines, giving a most pleasing effect»



Three easily accessible pathes will guide you across the diversity of these forests.

Valdu Niellu Forest

The Radules trail



Access: R.D. 84 between Calacuccia and the Verghju Pass.

Parking : a spot known as «the horseshoe» between the Poppaghja Forest Lodge and the Verghju ski resort.

Trail markers: Caribbean blue rectangles;

→ Distance: 3.5 kilometres;

▼ Estimated time: 2 1/2 hours.

Points of interest : biological reserve; a rather rare Corsican pine and Birch mix; very old trees in high open stands; a shepherd present during the summer; GR 20 nearby.

Vizzavona Forest

Corsican pine theme trail



Access: R.N.193 between Tattone and the Vizzavona Pass.

Parking : Vizzavona train station or at the beginning of the trail to the Cascade des Anglais.

Trail markers: royal blue circles;

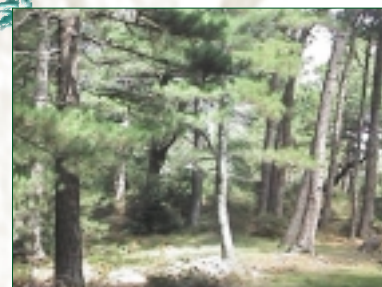
→ Distance: 350 metres;

▼ Estimated time: 30 minutes;

Points of interest: population of Corsican pine to be exploited when they are 350 years old; a Corsican pine, Beech and Holly tree mix; archaeological path nearby.

Ospedale Forest

Corsican pine theme trail



Access: R.D. 368 near the Ospedale dam, take the turning to the hamlet of Cartalavonu.

Trail markers: royal blue circles

→ Distance: 3.2 kilometres;

▼ Estimated time: 2 hours.

Points of interest: Corsican pine, Green oak and Holly tree mix; big granite boulder outcroppings, crosses another trail (the Tafoni trail).



MAN and the corsican PINE forest



The beauty of Corsican landscape has inspired many authors and poets throughout centuries. If the maquis is often mentionned for its remarquable scents and colours, the forests have equally caught the eye of the passer-by.

«It is not works of art that will broaden the mind of those who travel in Corsica but, rather, the awe and admiration that nature inevitably inspires in a region where all the vistas are terrifying and majestic»

(Hubert Lauvergne, Mémoire sur la Corse, 1823, in L'île d'à côté, Paul Silvani, 1998).

In the 1880's, Guy de Maupassant wrote about the Aitone Forest:

«...enormous pine trees created a groaning canopy above our heads that gave out a sad and constant lament, whilst both to the left and to the right, their straight and slender trunks formed a sort of army of organ pipes that seemed to make monotonous music of wind amongst the pines...»

There are no longer any so-called «natural» forests in Corsica : the whole landscape has been strongly shaped by men activities such as farming and breeding, and later on forest management.

The Corsican pine wood has significantly been harvested since 1768 when Corsica was taken over by France. Since then and especially since 1852 (Blondel agreements) when the forests were divided up between the government and the communes, the Corsican pine has become the main harvested tree species. Forest trails are created and the Corsican pine is greatly favoured in the mountains at the expense of broad-leaved species (as Oak or Beech trees) and other coniferous trees (Silver fir, Yew).

Nowadays, the Corsican pine remains the most highly logged species in Corsica. However, a return towards more natural stands (such as mixed forest stands) has become a priority. The Corsican pine represents at least 3/4 of the island's wood sales. Most of it is used for building and veneer. Best woods are earmarked for joinery and cabinet-making.



Corsican pine wood harvest

Felled wood



The Corsican PINE forest

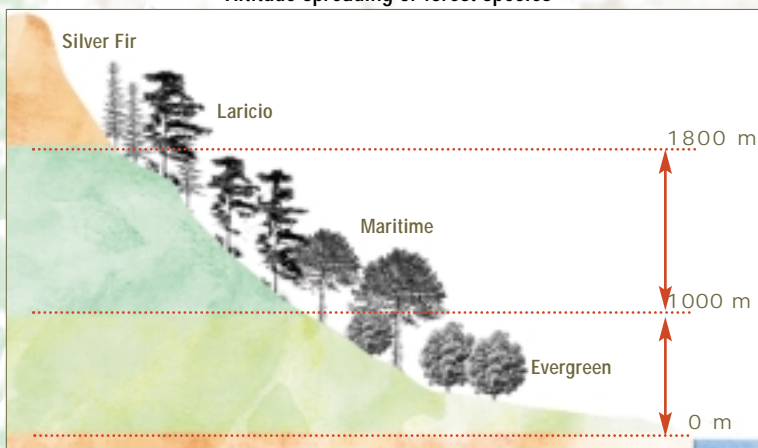
laricio

The Corsican pine forests are characteristic of Corsican mountains (from an altitude of 1 000 to 1 800 m) where they reign on sunny slopes (*sulana*).

On northern slopes, where it's darker and cooler (*umbria*), they combine with Beech, Silver Fir, Common Yew and Holly tree forests.

Little by little, as we go down to the coast, these forests first mix with and then yield to Evergreen oak or Maritime pine woods.

Altitude spreading of forest species



These Corsican pine forests are the keystone of a complex ecosystem made up around them. Their existence guarantees the destiny of many animal and plant species. Their heritage value is exceptional.

Sheltering 28 bird species, they are the habitat of the unique French endemic bird, the Corsican Nuthatch (*Sitta whiteheadi*).

The Corsican pine is not a threatened species and its stands are globally well-preserved.

The real threat comes from forest fires. They are too frequent and devastating because of mankind.

Nowadays, two main challenges direct island forests management:

- an economic multifunctional highlight of forests made in a permanent concern of ecological resources;
- the restoration of the ancient ecological diversity that the age-old forest harvest by mankind has unbalanced and weakened.



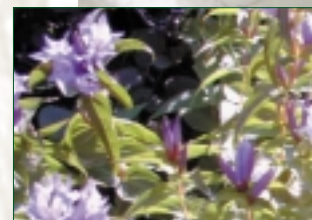
Little «Botrychium»



Biological diversity



«Luzule du Piedmont»



Willow Gentian

«A few Corsican pines with smooth pink trunks sway in the wind on the two mountainsides, their branches strangely horizontal. The foliage of these giants, battered by violent storms, has discovered how to resist and has developed the lift/drag ratio necessary for their survival»

(Jacques d'Welles, about the Bavella pass, *L'Illustration*, 1924, in *L'île d'à côté*, Paul Silvani, 1998).



Further INFORMATION

European environmental policy

The preservation of the environment has been a major concern of the European Union since the 1970's. European directives such as «Bird life» and «Habitats» have created a solid legislative basis for the protection of species (fauna and flora) and of natural habitats that are either rare or endangered throughout Europe.

Natura 2000

A network of protected sites has been created in Europe to reinforce these directives. It is known as Natura 2000. Its aim is to maintain biodiversity within a sustainable management framework, taking both economic and socio-cultural requirements into account.

The Corsican pine habitat

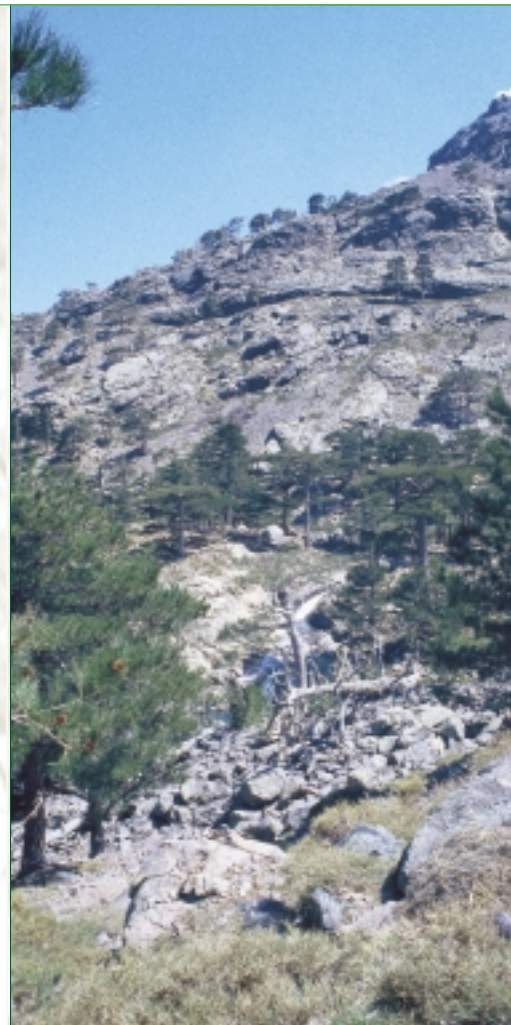
The natural habitat of the Corsican pine is relatively scarce in Europe and it has been given priority status within the framework of the «Habitats» Directive. It constitutes the environment for several species of interest at the EU level such as the Corsican nuthatch (endemic bird) and the Corsican painted frog.

LIFE programme

LIFE is one of the Europe's financial aids for the implement of its Directives. The Office National des Forêts (French forest service, public forests manager) is the manager of almost all the Corsican pine forests in Corsica. It has received LIFE funding for its programme called «Towards the conservation management of the Corsican pine habitat» implemented on sites of the Natura 2000 network.

Actions taken

- Development of theme paths;
- creation of an exhibition presenting the Corsican pine (Bavella Forest, Arza Forest Lodge).
- design of management tools for Corsican pine stands, taking their diversity into account.
- forestry projects intended to recreate the species mix, to improve the biotope of species (such as the Corsican wild sheep) that live in Corsican pine forests and to protect habitats of other species closely linked to that of the Corsican pine (Yew, Thuriferous juniper).



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