



PRECIOUS TREE PROJECT

PTP is a local Garden Route tree-planting concern based in Wilderness Heights. It was set up in 2010 by Ray Nolan with the intention of addressing the regeneration of forests around Wilderness and along the Garden Route. Since its inception, PTP has been concentrating on creating “patches” or “pockets” of endemic, indigenous forest trees in designated areas along the Garden Route.



The Garden Route, appropriately named for its lush natural vegetation, has roughly 40% of its indigenous forest left.

Growth & development, population expansion, expanding business & residential development, climate change, rising temperatures and the ravages of drought over the past decade have had a significant impact on what remains of our indigenous forest along the coast.

Addressing the regeneration and regrowth of our forest areas along the Garden Route has been compounded and highlighted by the devastation caused by the fires in recent months. In June 2017, UNESCO members approved the Garden Route as an official UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (Source: ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES NEWS, June 2017). The decision at global level to address our natural forests and all its biodiversity is a positive and encouraging one for the Precious Tree Project.

PTP VISION AND MISSION

Our current medium and long term goal is to significantly raise the presence of endemic and indigenous forest along the Garden Route through a range of tree-planting programmes, fundraising events, sponsorships and donations, etc.



GROWING AND PLANTING FOREST TREES IS WHAT WE DO

We specialise in planting various species of forest trees in close proximity in order to help create healthy and biodiverse forests. We use the highest grade organic compost and vermiculture (earthworm) products to feed and strengthen our saplings before planting them out into small, carefully chosen pockets of “bio-mimicked” mixed lots of indigenous trees, emulating the wondrous biosphere of a mature indigenous Forest.

We are also involved in the removal of non-indigenous vegetation along Garden Route. Where necessary, we remove non-indigenous vegetation in the area and plant endemic forest trees by way of replacement.

Where do we get our trees?

- From our own small PTP nursery: here we grow our own trees; PTP sustainably harvests and propagates endemic, indigenous 'precious' and 'rare' forest trees in the southern Cape (Garden Route region).
- From small, established existing indigenous local nurseries.
- From local community members who own small holdings in the area and who are passionate about growing indigenous forest trees endemic to the Garden Route.
- Other sources: We are currently initiating a social upliftment and job creation programme tied in with our endeavours which involves the setting up local nurseries (that offer job creation opportunities) that will provide a local source of locally grown indigenous forest trees.





Who plants our sponsored trees?

As a small emerging local initiative, we draw our VIP's (very important planters) from a pool of volunteers along the Garden Route who have offered their services out of their own passion for the environment and in recognition of the need to protect and regenerate our natural local environment.



What types of trees do we grow and plant?

 LIST OF INDIGENOUS FOREST TREES WE GROW AND PLANT		
Bostaai bos	Kusvaal bos	Silveroak
Boekenhout	Kruisbessie	Salie
Bosvlier	Lighteningbos	Swartysterhout
Bosrooïessenhout	Melkhout	Swartstinkhout
Cape Plum	Notsung	Tolbos
Cape Saffron	Num Num	Wildeperske
Cheesewood	Olienhout	Wildemoerby
Coral	Onderbos Perdepis	Wildevy
Duintaaibos	Poikysterhout	Wildeolyf
Egte Geelhout	Rank Saffron	Waterbessie
Essenhout	Rooi Els	Witpeer
Geelhout	Rivierboswillow	Wilde Piesang
Hardepeer	Sandtaaibos	Wit Stinkhout
Kamassi	Saffron	Witysterhout



A popular choice of indigenous tree along the Garden Route is the *Virgilia Orobooides*. The Keurboom, one of the pioneer species, is the tree that appears first more frequently than other species after a fire or after damage to an area of a forest. Research has shown that the Keurboom provides shade for other forest species and it prepares the soil for other forest plants to grow in.

Where do we plant our trees in the Garden Route?

A forest will grow in an area that is generally protected from fire and bergwinds (hot dry winds blowing off the mountain) and in areas that have a minimum annual rainfall of 500mm-800mm.

A forest will not grow in areas where forests have not naturally flourish previously as a result of climatic and weather patterns .. a forest, for example, would not grow in a fynbos area.

On this understanding, the locations we choose along the Garden Route are:

- areas that were previously forest areas, or
- damaged parts of existing forests, or
- forest areas overrun with non-indigenous trees, or
- forest areas that have fallen prey to “timber plantations”, or
- areas which are protected from fire and lend themselves to forest growth.

WHY WE BELIEVE IN PLANTING TREES?

Our individual health and wellbeing (which determines the quality of the lives we live here) are of prime importance as a human race. Having a community of happy healthy people is a beautiful thing. Since we are intrinsically connected to our natural environment we would be naïve to consider our own individual health and wellbeing without considering that of our external environment. Anything and everything that we address in respect of our own health and wellbeing needs to be addressed in the greater context of our existence since we are completely and utterly dependent on our *natural environment* for our existence, survival, growth & development. Our natural environment provides all the resources we need to simply survive (the primary being air, water, food and energy in that order). The *quality* of these offerings influences the quality of our lives and the quality of our growth and development.

Our connection to the natural environment is not simply a physical one but has implications for our mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing as well. Simply being in and close to nature has a positive effect on our mental and emotional wellbeing. We’ve all experienced how the forest green of nature creates a feeling of balance, centred-ness, restful calm as well as restoring, healing and grounding.

The healthier our natural environment and her ecosystems, of which we are a part, the healthier the resources we can draw from her and the greater the wellbeing we derive from her.



The Status Quo?

On a global level, the state of our natural environment is not a happy one. We are faced with the unprecedented high levels of pollution across the globe: air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution – the result of a combination of natural as well as anthropogenic (human) causes. Our collective individual and industry footprints on our planet are leaving very little room for our natural environment to regenerate itself and grow sustainably. Forests are diminishing at rapid rates across the globe thereby effecting the natural cleaning up and regeneration of our resources.

Global warming and climate change are also having an impact on local climates, effecting the natural growth and regeneration of our forests. Droughts and floods are compromising the availability of water in an already water-scarce region and threatening our existing forests.

PLANTING TREES IS THE “GREENEST” FORM OF BALANCING, MITIGATING, OFFSETTING OUR COLLECTIVE FOOTPRINT AND REGENERATING THE PLANET

The biggest challenge for governments and big business across the globe is around the provision and supply of clean water, clean energy, clean air (and of course healthy food). There are many products and technologies on the market (existing and under development) in response to these challenges. Many of these “greener technologies” are an attempt to mitigate our heavy collective environmental footprint. These products and technologies, while gaining more momentum as part of a rising Green Economy, are mostly costly and out of the financial reach for many.

When considering the purchase and installation of a renewable energy, water, or waste efficient system, for example, there are many hidden environmental impacts that are not brought to light by the manufacturers, the suppliers or the contractors who install them. These hidden factors include the mining of raw materials and manufacture these materials into a usable product (followed by the costs of transporting the product to the end user). Not only are the “embedded” (hidden) energy, water and waste footprints around the production and transport of all of these technologies and products not made transparent, but the effectiveness of the majority of these products is calculated only from its final installation and from the moment it is switched on.

As far as “going green” is concerned, planting trees is by far the most effective method to choose in terms of cost and efficiency and ‘off setting’ your impact on the environment. Planting a tree has an immediate effect on the micro and macro levels for all life on this planet. Planting a cleverly chosen, local, indigenous, endemic Tree does not have any of these hidden ‘environmental impacts’, is effective immediately and continues to have an impact for an incredibly long time. Once the trees are planted they immediately start to attract animal life such as birds and insects, which in turn helps in accelerating the restoration process.

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BENEFITS OF TREES

As a Tree, grows and matures, it will produce more oxygen than carbon dioxide. This means that a growing and maturing tree will contribute to reducing greenhouse gases and will reduce global warming for anything between 40 and 100 years and beyond. The other benefits of Trees are endless and range from the most basic and practical, such as binding and nitrogen fixing of soil, improving all around water quality. A single Tree becomes a biosphere and an ecosystem for many forms of life, ranging from bacteria, insects, birds etc. and through to primates, apes and humans. Many Trees planted together to mature into a forest will develop into a wonderfully complex, inter-connected and intricate life-form that is beyond the individual Trees. They play a key role in our battle against climate change, feed our rivers, help to regulate the impact of storms and floods, harbour biologically-diverse ecosystems, provide shelter, jobs and security for forest-dependent populations.

Within our cities, urban forests purify the air and ground water, regulate temperatures, provide shade, and encourage pride of place

Benefits for our natural environment:

1. Reducing greenhouse gases and reducing global warming.
2. Oxygen production as it grows and matures.
3. Shade and cooling of the natural environment
4. Biomass and biodiversity.
5. Food and shelter for a myriad of differing life forms, from the most basic of moss and fungi, other plants, birds, insects, animals and of course human beings.
6. Providing medicinal value.
7. Future building materials. Limited use of trees/wood as a building material is recommended in fire hazardous areas.
8. Future life on this planet.

Benefits for us as Individuals:

1. Produces the oxygen we need to breathe.
2. Cleans the air we breathe (absorbs CO₂).
3. Cleans the water we need to drink (nearly 70% of our bodies are made up of water)
4. Cleans the water we need to grow our food.
5. Cleans the soil in which we need to plant our food and grow our trees
6. Provides shade to our homes when well positioned and can save us electricity consumption (reduces reliance on air-conditioners in summer).
7. Provides a healing, relaxing environment for mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.



HOW MANY TREES TO PLANT?

As an individual:

How many trees should I plant to 'off-set' my modern lifestyle? (As Tree growth and oxygen outputs vary from Tree to Tree, and from species to species, broad averages are used): Several carbon calculators are available on the net for your own calculations?

1. For every 600km of aeroplane flight = 1 x tree planted.
2. For every 8 000km of driving = 1 x tree planted.
3. For every 1 month of electricity use = 1 x tree planted.
4. For every 1 month shopping and consumption from modern supermarkets = 1 x tree planted.

As a corporate:

Accurately estimating the number of trees a business requires to offset or mitigate its environmental footprint usually requires an energy and/or carbon audit. This is a complicated process and can often be costly to the point that many businesses are not able to or willing to invest in and follow through with the recommendations of such audits. With this in mind, we offer a range of corporate tree-planting packages that provide a simple measure of off-setting a company's footprint.

(See attached document: PTP Sponsoring Options)