

Uilenkraal Forest Restoration Project

2024 PROJECT REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through our Forests for Life programme, we form long-term partnerships with small-scale, local organisations and provide support to plant trees, restore forest and woodland habitats, manage critical catchment areas, and improve the lives of communities that rely on forest resources in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Since 2011, Greenpop has implemented forest and landscape restoration projects across **four countries**, with **230,299 trees** planted across **147 hectares**. Over this period we have collaborated with **15 implementation partners** in Sub-Saharan Africa and are currently actively implementing four projects. This annual project report focuses on one of those **four projects**: the **Uilenkraal Forest Restoration Project**.

A collaboration between Tree Liberation Front, Platbos Conservation Trust, Bodhi Khaya Nature Retreat, Blomerus, Kleinbos, and the Greenpop Foundation, the **Uilenkraal Forest Restoration Project** aims to enhance land management in the Uilenkraal Valley, just outside Gansbaai, Western Cape, South Africa. The project seeks to restore 45 hectares of degraded forest patches at the Uilenkraal Valley, across Bodhi Khaya Nature Retreat, and Kleinbos Farm through alien vegetation management, natural regeneration. To date 145,000 indigenous saplings have been planted. The expected outcomes of this project include climate change mitigation, improved soil quality and stability, increased species biodiversity, reduced alien invasive vegetation, and increased community income.



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INTRODUCING THE UILENKRAAL FOREST RESTORATION PROJECT

The Uilenkraal Valley forests, nestled near Gansbaai in South Africa's Western Cape, represent Africa's southernmost forest ecosystem. This ancient landscape—spanning Platbos Nature Reserve, Kleinbos, Bodhi Khaya, and Blomerus—hosts relic trees over 1,000 years old and supports a remarkable diversity of plant and animal life, including the elusive Cape leopard, bushbuck, and endangered western leopard toad.

Located on the Baviaanspoort Hills between Hermanus and Gansbaai, these forests survive in deep, sandy, alkaline soils with relatively low rainfall (≈650 mm/year). This challenges conventional forest ecology, as most forests require moister mountain ravines or riverbanks.

Historically, these forests have endured centuries of degradation from agriculture, invasive alien vegetation, and wildfire, leaving only fragmented patches of indigenous woodland, making the protection and restoration of Uilenkraal Valley's unique biodiversity critically important.

Since 2011, Greenpop' has partnered with Tree Liberation Front, Platbos Conservation Trust, Bodhi Khaya Retreat, and Kleinbos, to restore and expand these forest remnants. Our efforts focus on removing invasive species, planting indigenous trees from our dedicated nursery, and re-establishing ecological corridors between forest patches.

To date, over 145,000 trees have been planted across more than 55 hectares, with annual highlights including the Reforest Fest, which brings together communities to plant thousands of trees in a single weekend.

By restoring the Uilenkraal Valley forests, Greenpop is not only safeguarding a living relic of South Africa's natural heritage but also enhancing biodiversity, improving water and soil health, reducing fire risk, and contributing to climate change mitigation for generations to come.



INTRODUCING THE PROJECT PARTNERS

THE GREENPOP FOUNDATION

The Greenpop Foundation NPC is a leading environmental non-profit organisation (NPO#: 151-411 NPO; PBO#: 930050622) based in Cape Town, South Africa. We are on a mission to educate for action.

As an antidote to eco-anxiety, we aim to inspire enthusiasm and build capacity for positive environmental action. Our work is diverse. We provide technical and financial support for reforestation and urban greening projects. We craft creative eco-education curriculums and awareness campaigns. We run engaging nature-based events and experiences. From getting our hands dirty running local projects to consulting for global organisations, we turn ideas into impact.

Greenpop was founded in 2010 and has since worked across Sub-Saharan Africa and empowered thousands of people around the world to get active (not anxious) about the future of our planet.



PLATBOS FOREST RESERVE

Platbos Forest Reserve has engaged in forest restoration activities for the past 20 years, creating a semi-permanent job market within the forest restoration sector. This initiative stimulates local communities by providing additional income and fostering a broader understanding of the value of forest restoration within the local context. As the southernmost forest in Africa, protecting Platbos is crucial for preserving the natural heritage of all South Africans and ensuring the forest's continued survival, which will help mitigate the local impacts of climate change.

BODHI KHAYA RETREAT

Bhodi Khaya intends to manage the reforestation of the original species of the coastal sand forest that once thrived on the land. The goal is to rehabilitate the degraded farmland with reforestation and regenerative farming practices up to where the original forest meets the fynbos.

INTRODUCING THE PROJECT PARTNERS

BLOMERUS

Blomerus, owned by Georgina Hamilton, is a property situated between Platbos Forest Reserve and Bodhi Khaya Nature Retreat. It contains patches of indigenous forests and fallow agricultural land in need of restoration. The work conducted on this property will complement ongoing restoration efforts within the Uilenkraal Valley through active indigenous tree planting and the completion and maintenance of a firebreak, which protects both Platbos and Blomerus.

KLEINBOS

Kleinbos is located at the top section of Platbos. With the new owner's (Jo Fuller) interest in contributing to restoration activities in the Uilenkraal Valley, Platbos has extended the existing firebreak onto Kleinbos. This delineates the line between fire-prone fynbos habitats in the top section and the forest in the bottom section. The firebreak stretches across three properties partnering with Greenpop to conduct restoration-related work, allowing the extension of Platbos Forest to its historic extent, considering the changes within the burning and non-burning communities in this area.



THEORY OF CHANGE

WITHIN OUR UILENKRAAL FOREST RESTORATION PROJECT, WE...



PROVIDE FUNDING TO 3 LANDOWNERS IN THE UILENKRAAL VALLEY



CONDUCT TRANSPARENT AND EFFECTIVE MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND REPORTING

SUPPORT LANDOWNERS IN FOREST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION BEST PRACTICE



SO THE LOCAL LANDOWNERS CAN...

PLANT TREES
(ACTIVE RESTORATION)

MANAGE NATURAL REGENERATION
(PASSIVE RESTORATION)

MANAGE ALIEN VEGETATION & WILDFIRE

ESTABLISH RESTORATION-RELATED EMPLOYMENT



GROW TREES
IN DEGRADED FOREST PATCHES



PROTECT FORESTS
FROM THREATS SUCH AS DEGRADATION AND WILDFIRE

INCREASE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND INCOME



EMPOWER PEOPLE

TO STEWARD THEIR ENVIRONMENT & SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES

IN ORDER TO...

RESTORE HEALTHY & SUSTAINABLE FOREST LANDSCAPES

ALIGNMENT WITH LOCAL & GLOBAL GOALS

UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

Our work contributes to SDGs 13 (Climate Action) and 15 (Life on Land) through the restoration of forest ecosystems which are vital in combatting the impacts of climate change.



STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FORESTS (2017-2030)

Our work contributes to the Strategic Plan's Goal 1: Reverse forest cover loss & Goal 2: Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits by restoring forest ecosystems and working with local communities to identify economic opportunities related to forest restoration and conservation.



UN DECADE ON ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION

Our work contributes to Goal A - The integrity of all ecosystems is enhanced, with an increase of at least 15 per cent in the area, connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems, supporting healthy and resilient populations of all species - of the UN Decade by strategically planting indigenous trees to restore connectivity to degraded forest ecosystems.



BONN CHALLENGE

Our work contributes to the Bonn Challenge's goal to bring 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes into restoration by 2030 by restoring degraded forest landscapes.



10 NYDF GOALS

Our work contributes to the global effort aimed at bringing 350 million hectares of land under restoration activities by 2030 #5 "Restore forests" by restoring degraded forest landscapes.



AFR100

Our work contributes to the AFR100 goal to bring 100 million hectares of land in Africa into restoration by 2030 by restoring degraded forest landscapes



DFFE 10 MILLION TREES PROGRAMME

Our work contributes to the DFFE initiative to plant 10,000,000 trees across South Africa to restore degraded forest ecosystems and landscapes.



KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

Our work contributes to Goal A: Protect and Restore of the KMGBF by restoring degraded forest landscapes and educating local communities on the importance and benefits of protecting natural ecosystems.



PROJECT LOCATION

The Uilenkraal Forest Restoration Project is located near Gansbaai, Overberg, Western Cape, South Africa.

GPS: 34°33'41.1"S 19°26'51.9"E

View our interactive map on explorer.land.



Map of the 23 sites under restoration in Uilenkraal Valley

OUR RESTORATION APPROACH

Platbos is a dry forest on nutrient-poor soils, requiring specific conditions for recovery. Over the last century, the forest has adapted to survive, with anthropogenic climate change posing additional challenges. The restoration approach at Platbos Forest Reserve involves managing alien vegetation, supporting natural regeneration, and planting indigenous seedlings harvested from the forest interior. Each spring, newly germinated seedlings are collected and nurtured in the forest nursery. After two years, they are replanted at the start of the rainy season using a dryland planting technique.

The most common adaptation to site conditions is called "facilitation," where trees grow in communal clusters around decaying stumps. This technique involves digging a 700mm x 700mm pit, creating a berm to capture runoff, and filling the pit with wood chips from cleared alien vegetation. Saplings are planted at the pit's edge, aiming for a closed canopy to cool the soil and suppress alien vegetation germination. High-density planting patterns are based on observations of natural forest recovery. As young stands grow, they thin themselves, facilitating further recovery through natural regeneration. Active tree planting serves as a critical "kick start" for forest recovery. Each year in spring, the Platbos staff harvest the newly germinated, naturally regenerated forest seedlings from the forest floor and rear them in the forest nursery. After 2 years, they are ready to be replanted to expand the forest. This tree planting happens at the start of the rainy season to ensure the best survival probabilities



COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Due to the private ownership of the Platbos Forest Reserve, Bhodi Khaya, Blomerus, and Kleinbos properties, there are no “traditional” community engagement activities as part of this project. However, local community members are employed through the restoration activities undertaken as part of the project as well as across the properties for a variety of roles and responsibilities.

The Uilenkraal Forest Restoration Project is a direct beneficiary of Greenpop’s annual Reforest Fest, which invites the public to the Valley for a restoration festival where participants plant 5,000 trees. While not traditional community or stakeholder engagement, this experience facilitates conversations about restoration and educates the public on the work being done in the Uilenkraal Valley.



PROJECT STATUS

The primary focus of the Uilenkraal Forest Restoration Project involves activities such as alien vegetation clearing and management, the development and maintenance of firebreaks, and the annual planting of up to 20,000 indigenous trees. Among these, 5,000 trees are planted during Greenpop's annual Reforest Fest — a festival celebrating and focusing on environmental conservation and restoration. Since the project's inception it has expanded from just the Platbos Forest Reserve to include the nearby properties of Bodhi Khaya, Blomerus and Kleinbos. The addition of these properties has enabled the project to create greater connectivity between the degraded and disparate forest patches that remained in the Uilenkraal Valley after decades of deforestation and degradation. The addition of these properties have also enabled the expansion of restoration activities, thereby creating further employment opportunities for local communities, and the trialling of innovative approaches such as grazing livestock to help manage alien vegetation.



MONITORING & EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

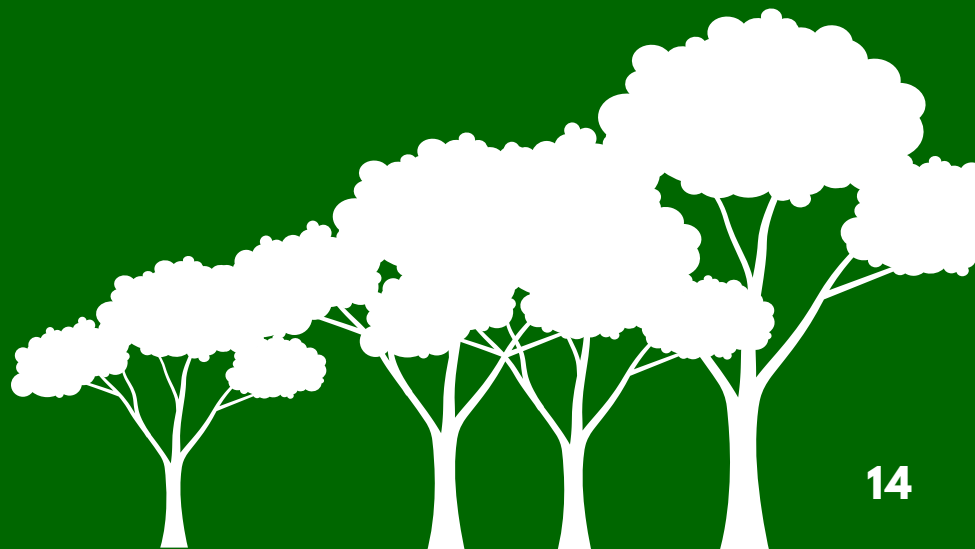
Monitoring and evaluation tools for the project include vegetation and soil monitoring methodologies, satellite data, fixed-point photography, and records maintained by project managers (e.g., purchase and activity records). Vegetation monitoring was conducted by Greenpop's Monitoring Team using the latest Greenpop Monitoring and Evaluation guidelines. This involves baseline monitoring, the establishment of fixed plots before planting, and consecutive assessments of vegetation growth, health, and cover. Additionally, fixed-point photographs are captured by the Greenpop Monitoring Team to visually document changes in the landscape over time. Out of the field, Greenpop is able to access satellite data to determine indicators such as the Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) for the site over time, through the Restor platform.





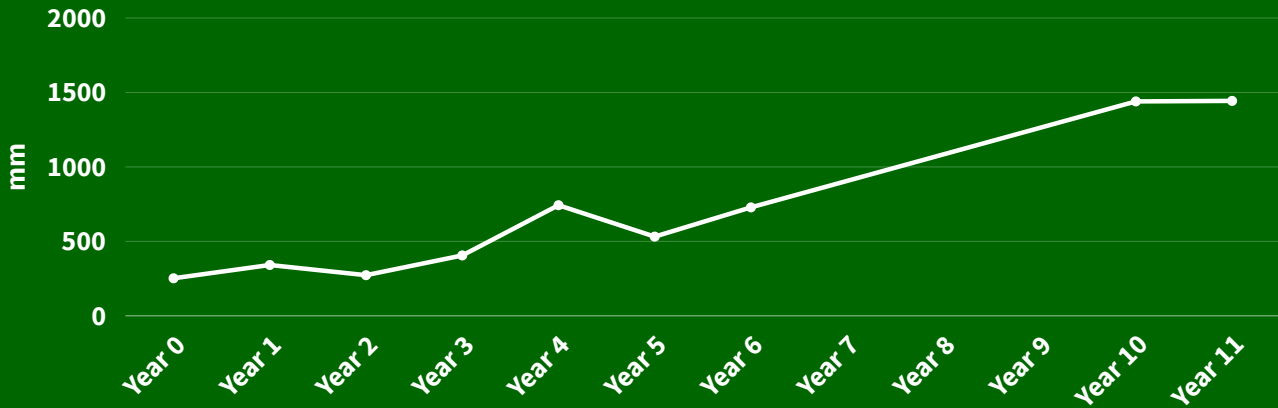
2011-2024 IN NUMBERS

	2011 - 2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
TREES PLANTED	85,645	20,000	20,000	20,000	145,645
HA UNDER RESTORATION	7.45	45	5	5	62.45
# OF SPECIES PLANTED	17	17	17	17	17
PARTNERS ENGAGED	2	3	4	4	4

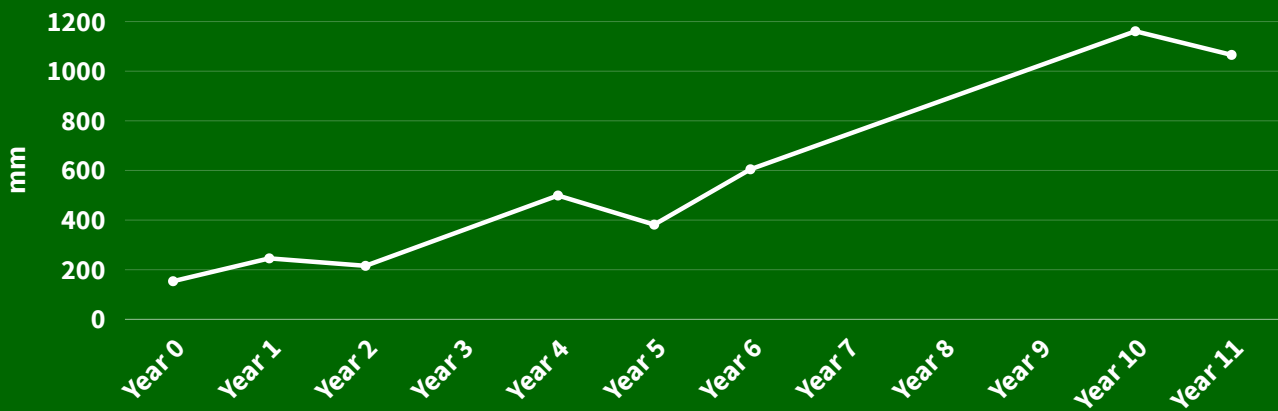


MONITORING RESULTS ACROSS ALL SITES

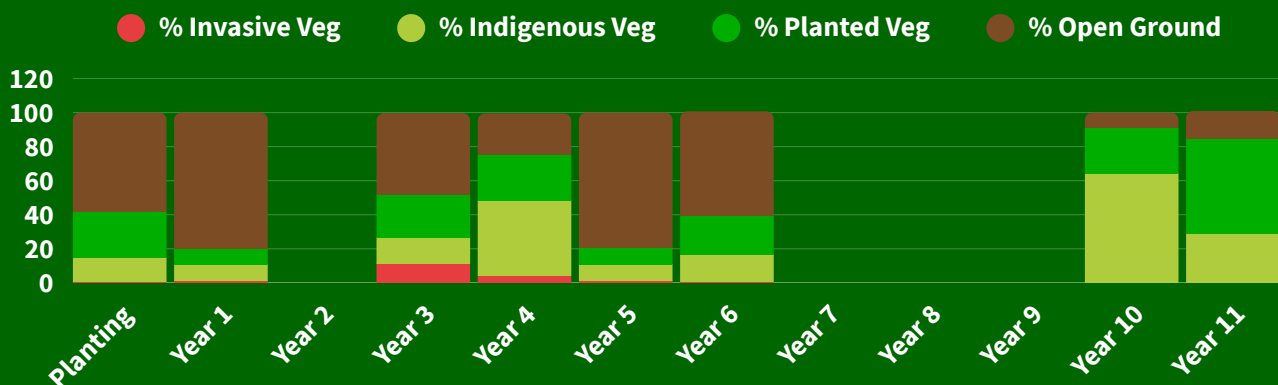
TREE HEIGHT



CANOPY DIAMETER



VEGETATION COVER



UILENKRAAL FOREST RESTORATION PROJECT STATUS

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The Uilenkraal Forest is in a steady state of recovery, thanks to dedicated conservation and restoration efforts, coordinated across multiple stakeholders and landowners in the Uilenkraal valley. Comprehensive fire management strategies, and active alien vegetation management, in combination with active restoration and assisted natural regeneration has set this relic forest ecosystem on an encouraging trajectory that promises to see this piece of natural heritage preserved for generations to come.

Further promising developments such of the change of ownership in previously mismanaged land adjacent to the Platbos Forest holds even further potential for wider spread restoration and conservation in the area.

In conclusion the future of the Uilenkraal Forests and adjacent fynbos ecosystems are looking better than ever, with steady momentum and all the right pieces in place to create long term resilience for Africa's southernmost forest. In addition, events such as Reforest Fest facilitate knowledge transfer, and inspiration for the wider restoration and conservation movement, both locally and globally



CLOSING WORDS

The project as a whole is a source of great joy and satisfaction, not only for me but for everyone involved, including my staff and the public who visit Platbos and are inspired by what has been accomplished. Reflecting on the environmental disaster zone that surrounded the remaining forest fragments when we arrived 30 years ago, compared to the current landscape, I can honestly say I never imagined this transformation was possible.

In this light, I am intensely grateful for the partnership with Greenpop, which has made our wildest dreams come true.

In 2024, we cleared a significant amount of alien vegetation, expanded the nursery substantially, and benefited from good rainfall. I look back on 2024 with gratitude and satisfaction. The future holds more alien clearing and proactive fire management on the landscape. We now have good neighbours on all sides, with the sale of the Strandskloof farm on the southern boundary of Platbos Forest. We have already cleared there with a team of six men for two months. A "narrative trail" is being built across the five properties—Bodhikaya, Blomerus, Platbos, Kleinbos, and Strandskloof—to showcase landscape restoration and the progress and processes involved.

Every time I encounter the products or logo of one of the donors, I am filled with gratitude and admiration. I wonder if they truly know the difference they have made. Should we not host them here and walk them through the sites? Introduce them to the people who depend on this restoration work for a living and have learned so many skills along the way? If this is not possible, then a simple thank you will have to suffice.

Francois Krige, Project Implementer



THANK YOU

PLEDGE PARTNERS

The Greenpop Foundation is proud to be partnered with the following donors who have all pledged to support our forest restoration work on a monthly/quarterly basis. The consistent and ongoing support from these companies allows us to plan our restoration impacts and financial budgets accurately each year. We couldn't do it all without these partners who have made a pledge towards a greener world.



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THANK YOU



THANK YOU

NOTEWORTHY DONORS

In 2024, we give special thanks to a few of our notable Pledge Partners who have contributed significantly to our Forest Restoration work. Your support allows us to push the boundaries of impact in the work that we do.



INDIVIDUAL AND ONCE-OFF DONORS

And a HUGE thank you to the countless individuals and businesses who supported this programme through once-off donations, monthly donations, Tree Certificates, green gifting purchases, GivenGain campaigns and more in 2024.

Every single donation is seen and appreciated, and we are grateful for all of the trust and support that we receive from our TREEvolutionary community.

Together we have been able to make an incredible impact.