



A Nursery for Endemics and Key Native Species

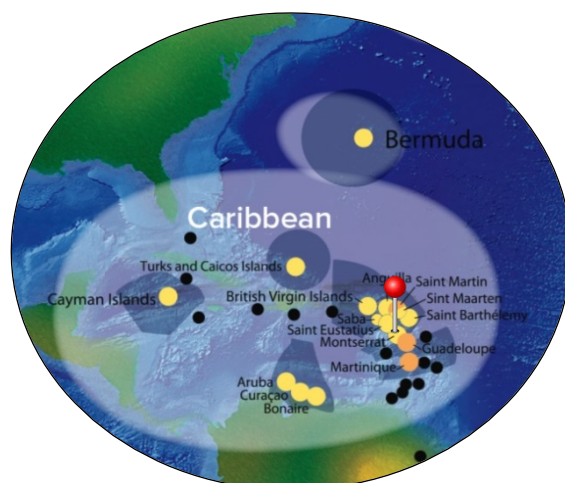
Targeted territory: Montserrat

Total project budget: 88,810 Euros

BEST 2.0 grant awarded: 88,810 Euros

Duration: January 2017 – May 2017 (17 months)

Lead organisation: Montserrat National Trust (MNT)



Background:

Montserrat is home to 74 regional endemic plant species, out of which 2 are strictly endemic and critically endangered, (*Rondeletia buxifolia* and *Epidendrum montserratense*), and one is probably extinct due to volcanic activity (*Xylosma serrata*). In addition 3 globally threatened species are still present on island (*Cedrela odorata*, *Guaiacum officinale*, *Swietenia mahagony*). The island also hosts a high number of endemic animal species that rely on habitat conservation and restoration for their survival.

Montserrat is a small, yet ecologically rich island, but faces severe threats to its biodiversity due to a volcanic eruption that started in 1995 which caused the destruction of most of the natural ecosystems in the south of the island and resettlement of the population in the north of the island placing increasing pressure on its ecosystems.

Description of the Project:

The project will establish the infrastructure required to enable MNT to propagate plants of special ecological value thus improving their survival prospects. This will include propagation areas, irrigation system and storage areas.

The propagation of *Rondeletia buxifolia* from cuttings will commence immediately within an existing mist propagation unit at the MNT. A micro-propagation unit for orchids will be established and used to raise *Epidendrum montserratense*. 6 tree species will also be propagated within the nursery: 3 endangered tree species with ornamental properties (*Guaicum officinale*, *Swietenia mahagony* and *Cedrela odorata*) and 3 species that are effective for dry forest restoration (*Cytharexylum fruticosum*, *Tabebuia heterophylla* and *Bursera simaruba*). Several sites in the North of the island will be assessed for the presence of the 2 endemic species and priority sites for reintroduction will be identified.

Other activities include raising awareness among the general public about Montserrat's unique species and the threats they face, and involving communities in planting the seedlings during a native tree planting day.

Intended results:

- A nursery for propagating plant species of ecological value is established in Montserrat and is fully operational. The operation of the nursery and promotion of the use of native plants raised will be incorporated into the Montserrat National Trust's core activities at the end of the project.
- The population size of the targeted species in Montserrat is increased.
- The process of restoring 10 hectares of dry forest has been initiated through the planting of propagated seedlings of *Cytharexylum fruticosum*, *Tabebuia heterophylla* and *Bursera simaruba*.



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