

Did you know that...

- The Laurel Forest is a remnant forest from the Tertiary, which means that co-existed with the dinosaurs.
- It once existed Laurel Forest in the European continent, but it vanished in a natural way due to the glaciations, being restricted to the archipelagos.
- The Laurel Forest is a very rich Forest regarding biodiversity. For example, there are 45 insect species and 25 spiders strictly connected to the Azores Laurel Forest.

LIFE Sustainable Laurel Forest Project www.life-laurissilva.spea.pt

This project aims to protect the natural habitats present in the Special Protection Area (SPA) *Pico da Vara/ Ribeira do Guilherme*. This SPA contains the bigger area of natural vegetation existent in the island of São Miguel and one of the biggest in the archipelago, being a suitable area for modeling the future management of the Regional Protected Areas Network.

As a result of the insularity and distance from the mainland, the Azores present many species that can only be found in this archipelago (endemic species), that are not even present in the other Macaronesian archipelagos (Madeira, Canarias and Cabo Verde).

It is for this reason that this projects reveals a great importance, because through its actions it will ensure the survival of this unique natural values!

www.life-laurissilva.spea.pt



Laurel Forest, a living fossil.



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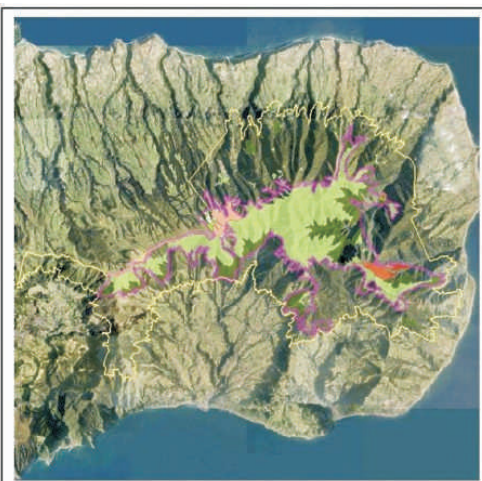


Laurel Forest, a living fossil.

Laurel Forest is the name given to the humid, subtropical to temperate, forest consisting majorly on trees belonging to the Lauraceous family. This sort of habitat is endemic to the Macaronesia, a region formed by Azores, Madeira Islands, Canary Islands and Cape Verde. However, in each archipelago, this Forest presents unique characteristics and species.

In Azores, the Laurel Forest is restricted to small mountain areas in several islands of the archipelago and seriously threatened by the invasion of exotic vegetation.

The Site of Community Importance Serra da Tronqueira/Planalto dos Graminhais presents one of the largest Laurel Forest spots in S. Miguel Island.



Legenda

- ZPE Pico da Vara - PTZPE0033
- Futuro SIC
- Laursilve Macaronésica - 9360
- Chamecias Macaronésicas - 4050
- Turfeiras Activas-7710
- Turfeiras Degradadas-7120
- Turfeiras Arborizadas-91D0

Laurel Forest Vegetation

The Laurel Forest consists majorly in a group of species, such as trees and herbaceous species, many of them endemic to Azores. We stand out:

Azorean Juniper (1): (*Juniperus brevifolia*) Up to 12m evergreen, dioecious tree or shrub. Linear-lanceolate leaves, needle-like, up to 10x2 mm, dark green. Cone subglobose. Green when young, later turning brown. Seeds ovoid, 3 per cone.

Azorean Blueberry (2): (*Vaccinium cylindraceum*) deciduous, tall shrub or small tree up to 3.5m. The leaves alternate oblong, acuminate, serrulate, 3-5 cm. Inflorescence of axillary, 10 to 20 flowered racemes. The petals are white, pink or red, connate, forming a narrowly campanulate corolla, up to 1.5 cm long. The fruit is a blackish-blue, ovoid, edible berry, up to 1.5 x 1 cm.

Laurel (3): (*Laurus azorica*) a up to 13 m dioecious shrub or small tree. Has young twigs and leaves densely brown-tomentose. The leaves are elliptic, oblong or obovate, more or less acute and aromatic. Inflorescence subsessile. The flowers are actinomorphic, pale yellow. The fruit is a black ellipsoid berry.

Azorean Holly (4): (*Ilex azorica*) up to 7m. evergreen, dioecious shrubs or small trees with smooth bark. The leaves are simple, obovate, acute, glabrous, often spiny, up to 6 x 5 cm. The flowers are axillary, actinomorphic, in fascicles. Petals white, fused below. Corolla up to 5mm. The fruit is a red, globose, 4-5 seeded berry, up to 8mm.

Azorean Plum Tree (5): (*Prunus azorica*) up to 6m. A small tree or shrub. Young twigs reddish-brown. The leaves are simple, elliptical, up to 12 x 6 cm, acuminate, regularly crenate. Inflorescence a 20 flowered, suberect, elongate raceme, up to 20 cm long. The petals are 5, white, orbicular, up to 5mm. the fruit is black, ovoid, more or less acuminate.



Lily of the Valley Tree (6): (*Viburnum tinus*) up to 4m. Small, evergreen shrub with more or less pubescent branches. The leaves are opposite, simple, entire, ovate and obtuse, up to 8 x 5 cm. The flower is in terminal corymbs. Corolla pinkish-white, 5-lobed. The fruit is dark blue, 1-seeded, subglobose drupe.

Buckthorn (7): (*Frangula azorica*) up to 6m. Deciduous shrub or small tree with smooth, brown bark. The leaves are simple, entire, elliptic, acuminate, up to 15 x 8cm, sparsely pubescent beneath. The flower is axillary, clustered. The petals are pale yellow. The fruit is shiny, black, 2 to 3 seeded, fleshy drupe.

Azorean Heather (8): (*Erica azorica*) up to 6m. Evergreen shrub or small tree. The leaves are simple, needle-like. The flower in terminal, lax panicles. The petals are green, often tinged with purple, connate, forming a campanulate corolla. Stigma exerted. Fruit is a dry capsule.

Picconia (9): (*Picconia azorica*) evergreen tree or shrub with smooth, pale bark that grows up to 8 m. The leaves are opposite, simple, entire, lanceolate and glabrous. The flower in short, axillary clusters. Corolla white, 4-lobed. The fruit is a dark blue, ovoid drupe, fleshy when young, later dry and brown.

Fayatree (10): (*Morella faya*) evergreen, dioecious tree or shrub that grows up to 10 to 16m. The leaves are light green, oblanceolate, more or less acute, glabrous, with a few glands. Leaf-margin entire to shallowly toothed. The flower is in branched catkins, yellow-green, with 4 stamens each. The

Threats

- Reduction on distribution area due to agricultural and forestall crops.
- Invasion by exotic plants, specifically the Madeira Sweet Pepperbush, Ginger Lily, Australian Cheesewood, Chilean Rhubarb and Australian Blackwood.

