PROJECT NAME:
Uilenkraal Valley Restoration Project

PROJECT LOCATION:
Uilenkraal Valley, Gansbaai, Overberg, South Africa
(GPS: 34°33'41.1"S 19°26'51.9"E)

PROJECT SUMMARY:
A collaboration between Tree Liberation Front, Platbos Conservation Trust, Bodhi Khaya Nature Retreat (Purple Plum Properties), Kleinbos and the Greenpop Foundation, the Uilenkraal Forest Restoration Project aims to improve land management in the Uilenkraal valley just outside of Gansbaai, Western Cape, South Africa.

The project aims to restore 45 ha of degraded forest patches at the Platbos Forest Reserve, Purple Plum Properties (PPP) and Kleinbos farm, through alien vegetation management, natural regeneration management, and, where needed, active planting of 150 000+ indigenous tree seedlings over the last decade. The expected outcomes of this project are climate change mitigation, improved soil quality and stability, increased species biodiversity, decreased alien invasive vegetation, and increased community income. As the work continues, the aim remains to support landscape-scale restoration.

PROJECT MAP:
Since 2011, Greenpop has conducted forest restoration work with Platbos Forest Reserve as an implementation partner, and have worked towards expanding the existing fire break along the Platbos Reserve, and initiating the restoration of more than 20 individual sites within the valley.
WHY IS THIS LANDSCAPE IMPORTANT?

Our work in the Uilenkraal valley started at the Platbos Forest Reserve, host of the southernmost Afro-temperate forest in Africa. During the early stages of the restoration work here, the existing forest had been slowly degraded by the encroachment of invasive vegetation, increases in fire return interval and the clear-cutting of parts of the forest for historical agriculture. Since the 1960s, botanists have puzzled over the very existence of Platbos Forest. Other relic forests survived gradual temperature increases by retreating into more moist mountain ravines (kloofs) and riverbanks. In stark contrast, Platbos Forest occurs in deep sandy, alkaline soil on north-facing, gently undulating terrain. This forest survives on a gentle, sunny slope and is exposed on all sides to the seasonal winds that blow on and off through the summer months.

What makes Platbos a unique forest is its tree species composition. The dominant trees are the Afromontane species of *Celtis africana* (White stinkwood), *Olinia ventosa* (Hard pear) and *Apodytes dimidiata* (White pear), combined with the coastal forest tree species of *Sideroxylon inerme* (White milkwood) and *Chionanthus foveolata* (Pock ironwood). As a result, Platbos does not fit comfortably into any of the existing forest categories.

On-going restoration work at Platbos has ensured most of the degraded sections and edges have been replanted with indigenous seedlings, allowing a diversity of species to reclaim these degraded sections over time. The need for restoration work at Platbos has now almost reached its end, as most of the target areas have been replanted, and it is now up to the forest to grow and thrive where it once did so. The annual Reforest Fest has been hosted by Platbos Reserve from 2011 - 2019, and since 2021, the neighbouring Bodhi Khaya Nature Retreat has welcomed the participants and crew for these tree-planting festivities.

Collaborations have developed between neighbouring properties and the Platbos Reserve over the past few years, and so the Uilenkraal project has now become a partnership that includes 4 different properties: Platbos Forest Reserve, Bodhi Khaya Nature Retreat, Blomerus and Kleinbos. This has allowed the opportunity to scale the restoration work here towards a landscape approach, rather than focusing on a single property. Through collaborative partnerships and sound scientific research, this project aims to restore areas that were historically forests, and ensure their continued protection and survival.

As forests thrive in communities, so does our work: Through partnership and collaborative intervention, the stakeholders work towards each other’s strengths to protect the existing forests and their diverse inhabitants (including leopards, bush buck and various other smaller animals and plants) as well as reclaiming the areas that once were dominated by these forest habitats.
IMPACT TO DATE: 2023

- 105,654 TREES PLANTED
- 4 PARTNERS
- 7,000+ PARTICIPANTS AT REFOREST FEST
- 16 SPECIES PLANTED
- 6 PEOPLE PERMANENTLY EMPLOYED

# OF TREES PLANTED PER YEAR

- 2021: 20,000
- 2022: 15,000
- 2023: 10,000
- 2024: 5,000
- 2025: 0

- 11 REFORESTATION FESTIVALS HOSTED
- 12 HECTARES OF FIREBREAK CLEARED AND MAINTAINED
- 20,000 TREES TO BE PLANTED IN 2023
IMPLEMENTING ORGANISATIONS

The implementing organisations for the Uilenkraal Valley Restoration Project are the Greenpop Foundation, Platbos Conservation Trust and Bodhi Khaya Nature Retreat.