

# TÜLÜŞAH

(*Centaurea iconiensis*)

An ex situ conservation project at Nezahat Gökyiğit Botanik Bahçesi, Istanbul, Turkey

Key words: Nezahat Gökyiğit Botanik Bahçesi, tülüşah, ex situ conservation

Nezahat Gökyiğit Botanik Bahçesi (NGBB) is a unique 50ha, (125 acre) Botanic Garden situated in a busy motorway intersection in a residential area of Istanbul. It is the largest replanted green area in Istanbul, representing an increase of 12%. Started in 1995 by Nihat Gökyiğit as a Memorial Park in memory of his late wife, Nezahat Gökyiğit, its aim was to restore the environment in an area which had been severely destroyed by major motorway construction. In 2003, the Park became the 'Nezahat Gökyiğit Botanic Garden'.

The mission statement for the Botanic Garden is "To explore, explain and conserve the world's plants".

#### AIMS

Apart from creating an attractive recreational facility, the Garden provides:

- An educational and scientific facility in a city with few arboreta or botanic gardens;
- Protects endemic and rare plants under severe threat through urban development and to conserve Turkey's astonishingly rich plant life diversity.

The biological richness of turkey  
W9,000 flowering plant species.  
3,000 endemic  
3,000 threatened.



#### CONSERVATION

Target 8 of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): Ex Situ Conservation "60% of threatened plant species in accessible ex situ collections, preferably in the country of origin, and 10% of them included in recovery and restoration programmes."

Four ex situ conservation projects have been successfully undertaken at NGBB, with more planned. One of these is on *Centaurea iconiensis* (vernacular name Tülüşah), a critically endangered endemic species from central Anatolia, (Turkey). Only 22 plants were known in the wild, so over 2 years plants were grown and propagated in NGBB.

Target 14 of the GSPC: Public Education & Awareness "The importance of plant diversity and the need for its conservation incorporated into communication, educational and public awareness programmes."

By collaborating with local people, 300 plants of *Centaurea iconiensis* were transplanted into a fenced area in its native habitat 800 km away from NGBB. During the ceremony, local schools performed folk dances and through posters and presentations, the project raised public awareness in local communities.



- Centaurea iconiensis* has been
- publicised on radio and television programmes;
  - included in a story in an educational facility in NGBB;
  - adopted by an Istanbul school, the children making book markers and t-shirts, introducing the species to their families and a wider audience.

Apart from *C. iconiensis*, there are still 1,805 threatened plant species in Turkey which should be taken into ex situ collections before 2010 according to GSPC.

Toward this target, NGBB, together with other botanic gardens in Turkey, is starting a new project which aims to:

- reassess the threat categories of 142 critically endangered Turkish plants;
- collect propagation material and create ex-situ collections in Turkish botanic gardens;
- establish a national plant collections network;
- facilitate educational activities for the public and training programmes for staff from other botanic gardens.



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