

# Sappi celebrates Arbour Day and our heritage by conserving endangered Pepperbark trees

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There is serendipity in the fact that Arbour Week and Heritage Day are both celebrated in the month of September, which also heralds the beginning of spring in South Africa. As the country breathes a tentative sigh of relief as it cautiously reopens the economy under Level 2 of the national Covid-19 lockdown, there is hope for a reawakening in the human spirit of its people as it celebrates its cultural and natural heritage in many ways.



Sappi Forests team at Sutton plantation planting trees and doing the Jerusalem challenge.

At Sappi Southern Africa, where the company has 166 important conservation areas (ICAs) listed on its forestry plantations in Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal, among them, six declared nature reserves covering an area of 6,486 hectares, there is no doubt that Sappi Southern Africa takes the conservation of biodiversity on its property seriously. This commitment is reinforced by its Threatened and Endangered Species Stewardship Programme, with its flagship *Warburgia salutaris* project.



A recipient with her *Warburgia salutaris*.

In a continuation of its ongoing work on this project and in a lead-up to Arbour Week, Sappi, in conjunction with the SANParks Skukuza Nursery, has made available 2,000 *Warburgia salutaris* – or pepperbark tree - saplings to the Endangered Wildlife Trust for their *Warburgia salutaris* project in the Soutpansberg Protected Area in Limpopo Province. The saplings were originally propagated through the cooperation between Sappi, ARC Nelspruit and SANBI Nelspruit and held at the Skukuza Indigenous Nursery awaiting distribution to qualifying Warburgia projects.

In KwaZulu-Natal, 1,600 saplings that were propagated by Sappi's Richmond Nursery and the Sappi Shaw Research Centre, have been supplied to the Sibaya Coastal Precinct. These trees form an important part of the natural vegetation rehabilitation programme, which is being undertaken within the precinct, whilst at the same time forming a future seed orchard in a secure area once the trees mature. Recipients receive the trees at no charge and in return they undertake to protect and preserve the resources of our planet and make seeds available for future propagation requirements.

Since inception, Sappi and its working group partners, SANBI Nelspruit, Fort Hare University, ARC Nelspruit and the Shaw Research Centre, have propagated and provided over 40,000 seedlings to traditional healers, urban and rural communities and created seed orchards in safe and protected estates.



*Lubisa Primary School traditional dance group performed the Jerusalem Dance, blending it with Zulu moves as part of their Arbour Day and Heritage Month celebration.*

### **Sappi commits to monitoring and managing biodiversity**

Tying in with this commitment to conservation of threatened species, is Sappi's approach to the management of its biodiversity on its land. "In the same way that customers want certified products, they also want more detail on responsible biodiversity management and that is why our 2025 Sustainability Targets are aligned with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and focusing on SDG 15 (Life on Land) our aim is to improve the health or condition of our biodiversity habitats – our ICAs - by 10%," says Dr David Everard, Sappi Forests' Environmental Manager.

Approximately one-third of Sappi's owned and leased land is managed for biodiversity conservation. Besides replanting the trees that are harvested every year, and maintaining the forest cover of the plantations and perpetuating the carbon sequestration cycle, almost every activity undertaken, from the start of a tree's life to its removal from the compartment, has an effect on biodiversity. "Our job as responsible custodians of extensive areas of land is to limit those impacts on the natural environment," says Dr Everard. Sappi will participate in the EWT and DEA's Biodiversity Disclosure Project, which is far more than just about protecting rare and threatened species, habitats or ecosystems, but also about monitoring and improving activities related to alien invasive management, soil retention and monitoring water quality.



*Sinevuso High School pupils showing off their pepperbark trees.*

### **Sappi teams take up the Jerusalem Dance Challenge to celebrate Arbour Week**

Sappi Southern Africa is traditionally active in celebrating Arbour Week as its foresters and environmental managers assist with and educate local schools in tree-planting activities. Due to the closure of schools this year, these activities were curtailed and instead Sappi teams at mills and forestry operations took up the global challenge participating in the popular Jerusalem Dance Challenge which has taken the world by storm. Employees were encouraged to "Plant a Tree, Plant Hope" while also celebrating the diversity of their collective

cultural heritage by donning traditional attire.

In Mpumalanga, also hampered by the social distancing brought about by Covid-19 protocols, the Sappi team has launched their TreeMail programme, where 200 beneficiaries which include community members, government stakeholders and local schools have been identified and will each receive a Warburgia tree with planting and care instructions.

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