

## **The volunteer program for the environmental rehabilitation of Las Mesas continues, with the participation of Fundación Cepsa**

- **With the assistance of around thirty volunteers from Cepsa, Envera, AFES Mental Health, the Insular Mountaineering Federation of Tenerife, and the Nivaria Mountaineering Club**
- **The activity focused on collecting seeds from the Canary Island juniper and raising environmental awareness around the area**

As part of the project for the environmental rehabilitation of Monte de Las Mesas, under the collaboration between the Tenerife Island Council, the Santa Cruz City Council, and Fundación Cepsa, and led by the Wolfredo Wildpret Botanical Garden Chair, the second environmental volunteering action has been carried out. This time, the focus was on collecting seeds from the Canary Island juniper, a characteristic species of the thermophilic forest of the islands.

The action, organized by the Office of Environmental Participation and Volunteering of the Natural Environment, Sustainability, Security, and Emergencies Area of the Tenerife Island Council and the Sustainable Santa Cruz Foundation, has involved the participation of over 35 volunteers from Cepsa, under its corporate volunteering program Voluntas, the Nivaria Mountaineering Club, the Insular Mountaineering Federation of Tenerife, AFES Mental Health, and the Envera Association. The latter two were winners of a social value award from Fundación Cepsa in 2022 and 2023, respectively.

The activity began with an initial educational talk given by Victoria Eugenia Martín, on behalf of the aforementioned chair at the University of La Laguna, responsible for the natural restoration project of this environment, which aims to restore its thermophilic forest, of Mediterranean origin, as it has suffered constant human intervention throughout time.

This human action has caused a regression, among others, in the surface area of the juniper woodlands in the Archipelago. That is why in the restoration of the vegetative landscape of Monte de Las Mesas, the main species to be used in the units of vegetation that are going to be restored will be the juniper.

The seed collection process in the area has been carried out under the supervision of members of the aforementioned Chair, who have already conducted numerous collections in the area in recent months and are familiar with the optimal state of the cones for their viability in germination. Subsequently, they'll be taken to the greenhouses of the University of La Laguna for their treatment and germination in suitable seedbeds for their growth.

The final phase will involve planting in the potential areas of Monte Las Mesas determined by the research team after the bioclimatic study of the territory, which is

currently in full development, under the collaboration agreement between the Tenerife Island Council, the Santa Cruz City Council, and Fundación Cepsa.

The seed collection as part of the environmental volunteer program of the project constitutes an awareness-raising activity about the process of plant life emergence. From a simple seed of just a few centimeters, a powerful and vigorous tree can emerge, providing oxygen for our lives. In this way, people who cultivate a close bond with nature see their physical and emotional health strengthened, and they also develop a greater environmental and social sensitivity.

Throughout the year, the environmental volunteer program will continue at this site, open to the participation of other local organizations and all interested persons, with initiatives such as removing invasive species, collecting seeds, and planting native plant species, among others.

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