

Heidelberger Wäldchen: 25 years planting the future in the present

The partnership between Bund Für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland (BUND) and Apremavi reaches the milestone of 25 years of activities and celebrates the more than 169 thousand seedlings planted.

The Atlantic Ocean divides the two environmental NGOs that became partners in 1998. The German organizes campaigns and environmental education activities while raising funds for restoration. The Brazilian plant plants new forests in strategic areas.

Cooperation between the organizations began with a visit by Miriam Prochnow to the city of Heidelberg, an offshoot of a workshop between Brazilian and German NGOs in Berlin. After the seminar, Miriam and other Brazilians went to Heidelberg for a series of meetings with representatives from the local city hall and BUND. Klemens Laschefski coordinated the visit from BUND, who had just completed an internship at Apremavi and had returned to Germany inspired to contribute to the restoration of the Atlantic Forest.

A large part of the resources raised to enable the planting of these forests in Brazil comes from the efforts of students from Heidelberg municipal schools, through the sale of cucas and pancakes, and Christmas products, among others. The concentration of funding takes place during the Christmas period, when students are encouraged to “buy” tree seedlings to restore the Atlantic Forest and give the certificate for this planting as a gift, instead of traditional gifts.

The scope of the Heidelberg Forests project in Brazil has been established over the years. The main activity is the restoration of the Atlantic Forest with the planting of trees, combined with lectures, visits to trails in forest areas, and support for educational campaigns, seeking to raise awareness and involve students and society in general in protecting and recovering the environment. Natural. Whenever possible, forests are planted in teaching centers and strategic areas so that the space can also be explored as a resource in environmental education activities, contemplation, and interpretation of nature.

The first Heidelberg Forest was established at Escola Municipal de Ensino Fundamental Ribeirão Matilde, in Atalanta (SC), in 1999, shortly after the partnership was agreed. Over the years, the forest grew and became a significant part of the school space. In 2019, when it was twenty years since the planting, the students also created postcards, illustrated with elements from the Bosque da Escola through drawings and collages. In the same year, the ecological booklet “[Designing the School Forest: 20 Years of Love for Nature](#)” was launched. The booklet is an initiative of the School, has the support of Apremavi and BUND, and contains drawings and poems created by students who made the forest their source of artistic inspiration.

Planting new Forests

In the project, ecological restoration activities are combined with outdoor environmental education for children, young people, teachers, and volunteers. To begin the activity, the forest species being planted is described and identified. Some peculiarities about trees are addressed at this point, such as:

- The need to choose fruitful, ornamental, and noble trees from the Atlantic Forest;
- Importance for nature in diversifying the various forest species, seeking to promote the successional stages necessary for successful ecological restoration;
- Historical aspects of forest species that had an important economic cycle in the region;
- The importance of the landscaping aspect of the property is to make it more integrated with nature and provide a better quality of life.

The planting is monitored by the Apremavi team, but the responsibility for maintenance and care of the area lies with the land owner or administrator. Furthermore, Apremavi has made efforts to register all new plantings from the Heidelberg Forest Project on the Environmental Portal, a management tool for Apremavi's ecological restoration projects.

By December 2022, 169,495 trees of native species from the Atlantic Forest had been planted, forming 87 forests, in 39 cities in Santa Catarina, Paraná, and São Paulo, benefiting 123 public and private properties and more than 1,800 people.

Another pioneer forest of the project and exemplary in environmental education activities in Trombudo Central (SC), on the Krüger Haus property. The owners of the rural tourism enterprise develop activities related to the history of German immigration in the region and also carry out environmental education activities with visitors.



Before and After of the Krüger Haus property. Photos: Arquivo Apremavi.

> **Discover the Krüger family forest**

Apremavi in Heidelberg

Every two years a team from Apremavi is invited by BUND to visit the city of Heidelberg and take part in “Der Regenwald kommt in die Klassenzimmer” (The Atlantic Forest goes to the classrooms), a week of lectures in all the schools that do part of the program, seeking to promote connections between cultures and exchange knowledge about nature. The lectures are given in German, for students aged 9 to 17 (primary and high school), involving around 600 students each year.

Lasting 1 hour and 30 minutes, the lecture mainly addresses topics such as the Atlantic Forest in Brazil, Brazilian biodiversity, and the problems and threats that affect the country. One of the highlights of the meetings is the presentation of a film about Brazilian Biomes, prepared by Apremavi, especially for this exchange, in addition to the distribution of Environmental Education materials.

The lectures bring students from Germany closer to the search for conservation and restoration of forests: *“Over the years we have realized that the action we do in schools here in Heidelberg is extremely important because it is an opportunity to show children and young people how our daily life here in Germany can be directly connected with the conservation status of the Atlantic Forest”*, comments Brigitte Heinz, representative of the BUND.

More than 4,300 German students participated in the lectures over the years.



Communication Actions

Environmental education activities with schools in the region mainly address issues relating to the importance of preserving and recovering native forests and their effects on water and biodiversity,

using educational materials prepared by Apremavi. In addition, videos, articles, and publications were produced using project content.

Carolina Schäffer, Communication Coordinator at Apremavi, believes that the involvement of children and young people in planting is a powerful environmental education tool: “Getting your hands dirty helping to plant trees brings a huge sense of responsibility to children and young people, and this practical action is complemented by the use of illustrative teaching materials and makes environmental education a pleasurable and successful process”.

> **Check out the 28 articles that have been published over time**

Expression Award

In the 28th Edition of the Expressão de Ecologia Award, the award in the special category ‘Global Partnership for Climate Security’ was awarded to Bosques de Heidelberg. The Onda Verde Trophy materializes recognition of the results of the initiative, but also in the way in which plantings and the promotion of communities' connection with the forest are made possible: through dialogue, cooperation, and constant transparency in the long-standing partnership between Apremavi and BUND.

Miriam Prochnow, co-founder and advisor of Apremavi, was the one who received the trophy from Antônio Odilon Macedo, one of the creators of the award and president of the jury. For Miriam, who led the efforts to create the project, participating in this edition of the Expressão Award was a source of pride, especially because it is the environmental award with the longest uninterrupted longevity in Brazil and also because of the category in which the project received the award: “the moment we live in is historic and building global partnerships to combat climate change is urgent and essential”, commented Miriam shortly after the ceremony.

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