

International Conference „Growing Valuable Broadleaved Tree Species”
October 06th – 08th, 2008, Freiburg (Germany)

Parallel Sessions Topic 3: *Non-wood goods and services*

Cultural associations with valuable broadleaved trees

Ioannis Ispikoudis¹, Olympia Dini-Papanastasi², Tatjana Reeg³

¹ Faculty of Forestry and Natural Environment, Aristotle University of
Thessaloniki, GR- 541 24 Thessaloniki, Greece

² Forest Research Institute, National Agricultural Research Foundation, 57006
Vassilika, Thessaloniki, Greece

³ Institute for Landscape Management, University of Freiburg, D – 79106 Freiburg,
Germany

Besides their importance for wood production and the supply with other non-wood products, valuable broadleaved trees in the landscape have important cultural values. Mythology, religion and legends are the most unique aspects that influence the social response of particular VBTs.

Comparing the associations linked to different tree species in several European countries, traditions or stories that are unique for one country can be found. There are remarkable similarities across Europe such as:

- there are some tree species with strong symbolic power which is the same for several countries,
- there are the same issues (religious, superstitious, cultural...) connected with different tree species in the different countries.

For example, two tree species with rather negative connotations are alder and elm, whereas many positive associations are connected with birch, ash and lime. Trees of justice were known in several countries, but the used species is different in Portugal, Switzerland or Poland.

These associations of trees sometimes are connected with special places where these trees were (and sometimes still are) found, so that the impact of cultural traditions can be seen on the landscape still today. In Greece, for example, lime tree (tree of Virgin Mary) and walnut (its leaves are used in Orthodox Christian ceremonies) are associated with religion. This is enhanced by the fact that these trees were very often planted in front of churches.

Broadleaved trees are part of many place, village and family names, weather predictions and sayings concerning lightning, or superstitions, for example magic protection against witches or evil ghosts.

In this presentation, findings of the cross-country comparison will be discussed; some aspects will be presented in details and illustrated with examples from Greece and Germany.

Speaker:

First name: Ioannis

Surname: Ispikoudis

Organization: Faculty of Forestry and Natural Environment, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, GR- 541 24 Thessaloniki, Greece

Phone number: 0030 2310 992723

Fax number: 0030 2310 992729

e-mail address: ispik@for.auth.gr