

National Tree - Għargħar (Sandarac Gum Tree)

- 🌲 The Sandarac Gum tree was declared as the Maltese national tree on the 16th of January 1992.
- 🌲 It comes from the cypress family.
- 🌲 It was believed to grow in abundance a long time ago in Malta, as is evident from places like Hal Għargħur and San Ġwann tal-Għargħar, these places got their name from the same tree.
- 🌲 Today it is very rare to see in the wild and it is an endangered species. We find about a hundred trees in Mellieħa and another four in other parts of Malta.
- 🌲 The Sandarac Gum tree is a relatively small tree reaching a height of 6m and is very slow growing.
- 🌲 The leaves are scale like, 1-8mm long and 1-1.5mm wide, and branch out from each other like fingers.
- 🌲 Like all coniferous trees the Sandarac Gum tree produces cones which are both male and female on the same tree.
- 🌲 The female cones start to form at the same time as the male cones. At first they look like a four-pointed star in the middle of which is a shiny droplet, sticky to the touch. This is called a 'pollen drop' and its sticky substance helps the male pollen to stick to it so that fertilization can take place.
- 🌲 The seeds are small and have a papery wing on each side. These wings help the seed to be dispersed by wind.



National Plant - Maltese rock centaury - Widnet il-Bahar (Maltese rock centaury)

- This plant is endemic, it is in fact found only in the Maltese islands with related species in Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Morocco and Algeria, as well as in the Canary Islands.
- Wild Maltese rock centauries grow on sea cliffs on the west of Malta and the south of Gozo but it can be easily propagated from cuttings.
- Nowadays it is often planted in public areas but should be planted even more often.
- This species is protected by both local and international legislation but in spite of this protection, all is not well for our best-known plant. Its existence in the wild is threatened, especially, because of the destruction of its natural habitat.
- It's flowering time is between May and July and it produces violet flowers.

