

Fruit & Tree

Biodiversity and Traditional Knowledge in traditional orchards.

The project region of Western Styria is rich in traditionally managed mixed orchards. Traditional orchards are man-made landscapes that consist of extensively used meadows or pastures stocked with high trunk apple, pear and other fruit trees, normally used for juice, cider or "Schnaps" (spirit) production.

This cultural landscape type is equally important as a genetic resource, as a habitat of a rich flora and fauna, as a landscape structuring element, and it also presents a source of high quality food.

The cultivation of fruit species like apples and pears is connected with a broad spectrum of practical and traditional knowledge, skills, customs, nutritional habits and different cultural expressions.

In order to stop the rapid decline of biodiversity in the traditional orchards, an interdisciplinary approach and a broad bundle of measurements is necessary.

The aim of this project is a census of the genetic fruit resources and the associated traditional knowledge, as well as the initiation of interest for research on biodiversity and the starting of measurements for the maintenance of threatened fruit varieties.

The educational research focus is put on the development and the evaluation of learning environments in the sense of an Inquiry Based Science Education. The aim is to involve students of different age groups and different school types into authentic inquiry processes in cooperation with scientists, in order to develop their interests in biological, ecological and socio-scientific issues as well as their interest in scientific approaches.

In the project described, the data concerning the biodiversity of fruits (in the region mentioned) is being collected, documented, and the fruit properties are being tested.

Students play the central part in acquiring the existing traditional knowledge, in gathering and testing the fruit varieties and in presenting the results at the final public event.

Especially students of high schools (FS Maria Lankowitz, BRG Kepler) are invited to participate in analyzing and preparing the data for scientific publications.