

Trees and forests

Europe's first redwood forest planted at Eden Project

http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/mar/14/europes-first-redwood-forest-planted-at-eden-project

Though there is 5,000 miles between California and Cornwall, south-west England's warm, damp climate is expected to suit the redwoods perfectly



What the area may look like years from now: a redwood forest in Cornwall. Photograph: Jeffrey Schwartz/Alamy

Forty coast redwood trees were planted on Monday at the [Eden Project](#) in the south-west of England, the first time a “forest” of these big friendly giants from north America has been introduced to Europe.

By the year 2050 they will soar 25m into the Cornish sky. If all goes to plan they will become a new landmark, thrilling and amazing people for many centuries to come.



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Coast redwoods are the tallest living things on Earth, growing to 115 metres in height. But almost all have been cut down over the past 150 years and many of the remaining specimens in California and Oregon are under threat in their west coast home because of drought, forest fire and the decline of the foggy, sometimes chilly, conditions they thrive in.

The project, a collaboration between Eden and the [Archangel Ancient Tree Archive](#), based in Michigan, is designed to preserve the trees for future generations. Though 5,000 miles separates the two regions, Cornwall's warm, damp climate is expected to suit the redwoods perfectly.



Children from Lanlivery CP School participate in the planting of redwood trees at Eden project. Photograph: Emily Whitfield-Wicks/Eden Project

Eden co-founder Sir Tim Smit said: “This will become a unique collection of the tallest living things on Earth. The redwoods will stand at Eden for, we hope, thousands of years to come.”

Schoolchildren, Eden apprentices and Smit planted the trees. AATA co-founder David Milarch said: “Tim, the schoolchildren and the Eden apprentices are planting an eternal forest - a first not just for the UK but for Europe.

“This is an unique archive, a living library of genetics that can be utilised for our generation and for hundreds of generations into the future to rebuild and replace what we’ve damaged.”



Eden Project scheme will preserve coast redwood trees for future generations

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The 40 trees were among 100 saplings nurtured by AATA's experts. They took cuttings from living redwoods and from stumps of great felled trees. New saplings were cloned from these and sent to Cornwall.

Among the specimens cloned were 10 from the Fieldbrook stump, the remains of a famous northern Californian redwood felled in 1890 when it was around 3,500 years old.

If it had not been cut down it would probably be the world's largest tree by now. It left a stump more than 10 metres in diameter, wider than any other known single trunk. Material was taken from shoots that grew from the stump, to clone the new saplings.



A file picture of children on the giant redwood Fieldbrook stump (date unknown). Photograph: Ericson Collection, Humboldt State University Library/Eden Project

The saplings arrived in [Cornwall](#) a year ago and have been grown on since then until they were strong enough to be planted out.

The AATA's mission is to [propagate the world's most important old growth trees before they are gone](#), archive the genetics of ancient trees around the world and reforest the Earth with the offspring of these trees.

Inspired by the success of AATA in propagating ancient trees, Eden - celebrating its 15th birthday this week - is planning a UK-wide ancient tree cloning project.

Smit has pointed out that the Eden project will not - in all probability - exist by the time the redwoods have reached full maturity. If its conservation goals are met, the place will be redundant; if they have failed then there may not be much left of the world as we know it.

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