



**Meise
Botanic Garden**

About Plant Blindness and Plant Ethics





- ▶ 150 employees Fl.C.
- ▶ 30 employees Fr.C.
- ▶ 120 volunteers
- ▶ 20 guides
- ▶ 150.000 visitors
- ▶ 92 hectares
- ▶ 18.000 taxa
- ▶ 4 million specimens
- ▶ > 50 buildings



What do you notice first?



Would you have noticed these flowers if there was no butterfly ?

Would you have noticed these trees if there were no birds ?



Imagine you are in a tropical forest and all the way you meet these cuties

Would you have spotted the “hidden” beauty at your feet?



Plant Blindness

The inability to notice plants in one's environment

- ▶ Emotionally more connected to animals
- ▶ They move and interact with us
- ▶ Do we even perceive plants as living beings?



In memoriam ...

- ▶ Plant blindness and awareness was a dear cause of Gert Ausloos, the former head of the Garden's education department
- ▶ On the 11th of November 2017 a Plant Blindness group was set up in his memory by his former friends, family and co-workers
- ▶ Participants include scientists, university professors, high school teachers, communicators and artists



Plant Blindness Action Plan

- ▶ Education and awareness
- ▶ Learning paths
- ▶ Plant ethics



People acting for plants



- ▶ Citizens forced by law to cut off thistles refuse to comply despite the fines



- ▶ The “Hands Off Our Forest” Campaign in the UK

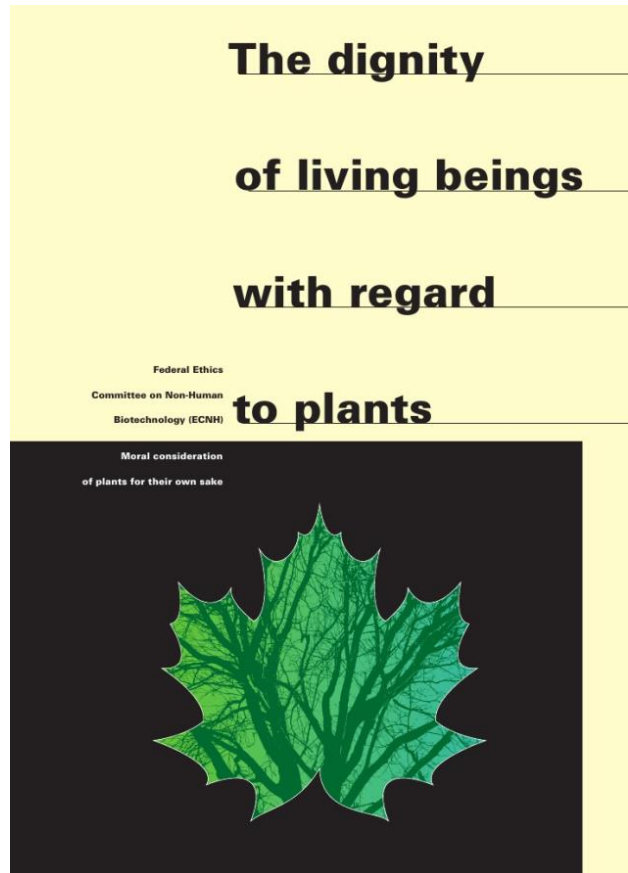


- ▶ Protesters hold a “funeral” for 60 heritage trees felled in Sydney



Plant Ethics how far should we go?

- ▶ Change of behavior by awareness?
- ▶ Code of conduct?
- ▶ Legislation?
- ▶ Give rights to plants?
- ▶ Some countries already acted :
 - ▶ Switzerland : City of Geneva and Ethics Committee on Non-Human Biotechnology
 - ▶ Switzerland, Germany and Austria : Position Paper on the Rights of Plants



Masters of adaptation and survival!



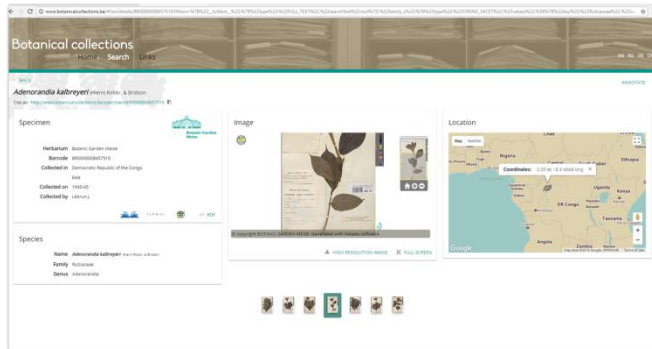
Yet has human kind the rights to impose these counter-nature treatments to them?



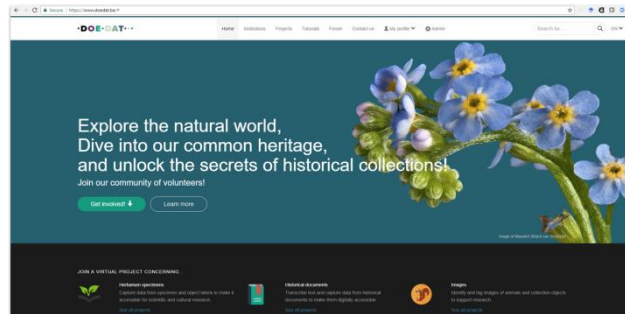
Still not enough of plants ?



► Visit us at:
<https://www.plantentuinmeise.be>



► 1.5 million of specimens online:
<http://www.botanicollections.be>



► Contribute at :
<https://www.doedat.be/>

What is your opinion on the matter?

- ▶ World Café round table
- ▶ 30 min to reflect on 2 statements:
 - ▶ What are weeds? (Onkruid)
 - ▶ Offer a plant as present without knowing if the person can/will actually care for it?
- ▶ Designate a rapporteur!
- ▶ 3-5 min to summarize your discussion to the rest of the group



Contributors

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SORRY! Still guilty of Plant blindness !

