

# Does “FOPER” Has Its Own Forest?

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## Abstract

*Background and purpose: Nowadays, when the environmental protection is increasingly gaining in importance, initiation such as conversion of productive forest with primary economic functions into forests with special purpose should be positively welcomed. FOPER forest near Varaždin is an example of this kind of conversion. FOPER Forest is one of the outcomes of FOPER Project which was established on the area of South East Europe. FOPER Forest is located on the area of 3.60 ha of the Management Unit “Zelendvor”. On one half of that area Research forest was planted, while on the other half Memorial Park will be planted in spring 2013. Overall aims of FOPER Forest is to acquire habits of people who are living in urban areas to visit green areas; to raise their environmental awareness and to strengthen cooperation in education and research; but even more important is strengthening cooperation and friendship in South East Europe (SEE). Specific aim of FOPER Forest is visitors’ education about vegetation of FOPER Project countries in Memorial park and conducting researches in Research part.*

*Material and methods: Two main methods were used to gather the material on FOPER Project and on FOPER Forest: (I) published literature was reviewed, (II) the Internet and relevant web sites provided access to other information.*

*Discussion and conclusion: Good promotions of FOPER Forest can attract potential tourists and visitors and raise not only their environmental awareness, but also their awareness of importance of forestry as profession. They could see that forestry is not narrow profession which deals only with management of forests, but a complex scientific profession, which deals with variety of different fields. FOPER Forest is the great example of the overall*

*guiding principle of FOPER Project which is „learning by doing”.*

*Keywords: FOPER Forest, conversion, forest with special purpose, FOPER Project, Memorial part, Research part*

## INTRODUCTION

In 2004 European Forest Institute (EFI) established a project called Forest Policy and Economics Education and Research (FOPER) on the area of South East Europe, whose research results may contribute to improved legislation, policy, management, and relationships amongst the forestry sector [1, 2]. It is a project which aimed at strengthening the capacity of education, training and research [2, 3], but those were not the only outcomes of this project. In this project hundreds of people from different countries were involved, who developed, during their work on the same goal, cooperation and new friendships for life. In the name of all these great appearances which are result of FOPER, the idea of FOPER Forest spontaneously arose. In the literature we didn’t find anything similar and for now FOPER forest is a unique project. FOPER Forest will be a mixture of education, research and pleasure. On one side of FOPER Forest will be Research part which will symbolize primary goals of FOPER and on which researches will be conducted. On the second part of FOPER Forest will be Memorial part (park), which will with its horticultural beautification symbolize cooperation and the friendships, which has arisen during last 8 years among the people from different countries which were involved in FOPER Project. Organized planting of trees for research part already caused a public and media interest.





a place for education of pupils and students. Expected results of Memorial Part-Park are: raising visitors' (tourists') ecological awareness, landscape beautification, increasing the number of visitors (tourists) and improvement of cooperation between Finland and South East Europe.

Planting of Memorial part (Park) is predicted on spring 2013 after the terrain will be prepared. Terrain preparation includes removing of Black Locust' roots on autumn 2012.

Regarding conceptual design (Figure 3), the park is divided into cells which will link thematic units with associated flora.

Cells will be perpendicular to the main alley, each separated by paths or roads. Trails in the park would have to retain the naturalness by mowing. In the park trees and shrubs that occur in the lowland and mountain Croatia will be planted, as well as trees and shrubs from partner countries. Planting trees and shrubs will be performed in a way that they simulate the natural composition of plant communities, with aspiration that the rare species will be equally represented as the main species.

Groups of trees and shrubs will be crisscrossed with the meadows. Next to the species of trees and shrubs the nametags with their name will be set, while billboards with their description will be close to the paths.

Total 122 of trees will be planted in the park at intervals of about 4x5 m (depending on type), and 148 shrubs should fill spaces between the trees. It is desirable that trees and shrubs will be plant in groups and individually. The complete list of names and numbers of tree and shrub species are in table (Table 1).

## Aim of the project

Beside economic functions to provide us with wood and wood products, forests have social and ecological functions. As society becomes increasingly concerned about the negative impacts of climate change, loss of biodiversity and declining supplies of water; those functions are increasingly gaining in importance. Except raising ecological awareness of individuals, it is very important to create and implement proper politics which will try to prevent those negative impacts. FOPER Forest is a good example in which one part of economical forest will be converted into park and research forest. It has also a great value, due to the vicinity of Educational Path, which with one part passes along northern and northeastern edge of FOPER Forest. The aim of Educational Path is education of primary school pupils about flora and fauna of the immediate environment of their homes. That is going

TABLE 1  
List of names and numbers of tree and shrub species

Trees		Shrubs	
Name	Number	Name	Number
<i>Abies alba</i> Mill.	6	<i>Cornus mas</i> L.	14
<i>Acer pseudo-platanus</i> L.	2	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i> L.	19
<i>Acer platanoides</i> L.	20	<i>Corylus avellana</i> L.	3
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> L.	4	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i> L.	3
<i>Betula pendula</i> L.	4	<i>Crataegus oxyacantha</i> L.	13
<i>Carpinus betulus</i> L.	5	<i>Euonymus europaea</i> L.	4
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i> L.	4	<i>Genista tinctoria</i> L.	8
<i>Fraxinus angustifolia</i> L.	3	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i> L.	8
<i>Fraxinus ornus</i> L.	3	<i>Prunus spinosa</i> L.	16
<i>Juglans nigra</i> L.	3	<i>Rosa canina</i> L.	12
<i>Picea abies</i> L.	5	<i>Rubus idaeus</i> L.	3
<i>Picea omorika</i> Pančić	9	<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i> L.	8
<i>Pinus nigra</i> Arnold	7	<i>Ruscus hypoglossum</i> L.	2
<i>Populus alba</i> L.	3	<i>Salix caprea</i> L.	3
<i>Populus nigra</i> L.	2	<i>Sambucus nigra</i> L.	6
<i>Prunus avium</i> L.	5	<i>Staphilea pinnata</i> L.	11
<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> Franco	5	<i>Taxus baccata</i> L.	5
<i>Quercus cerris</i> L.	4	<i>Viburnum opulus</i> L.	6
<i>Quercus petraea</i> Liebl.	5	<i>Vinca minor</i> L.	4
<i>Quercus robur</i> L.	7		
<i>Salix alba</i> L.	3		
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> L.	3		
<i>Sorbus torminalis</i> Crantz	4		
<i>Tilia tomentosa</i> Moench	3		
<i>Ulmus laevis</i> Pall.	3		
TOTAL	122		148

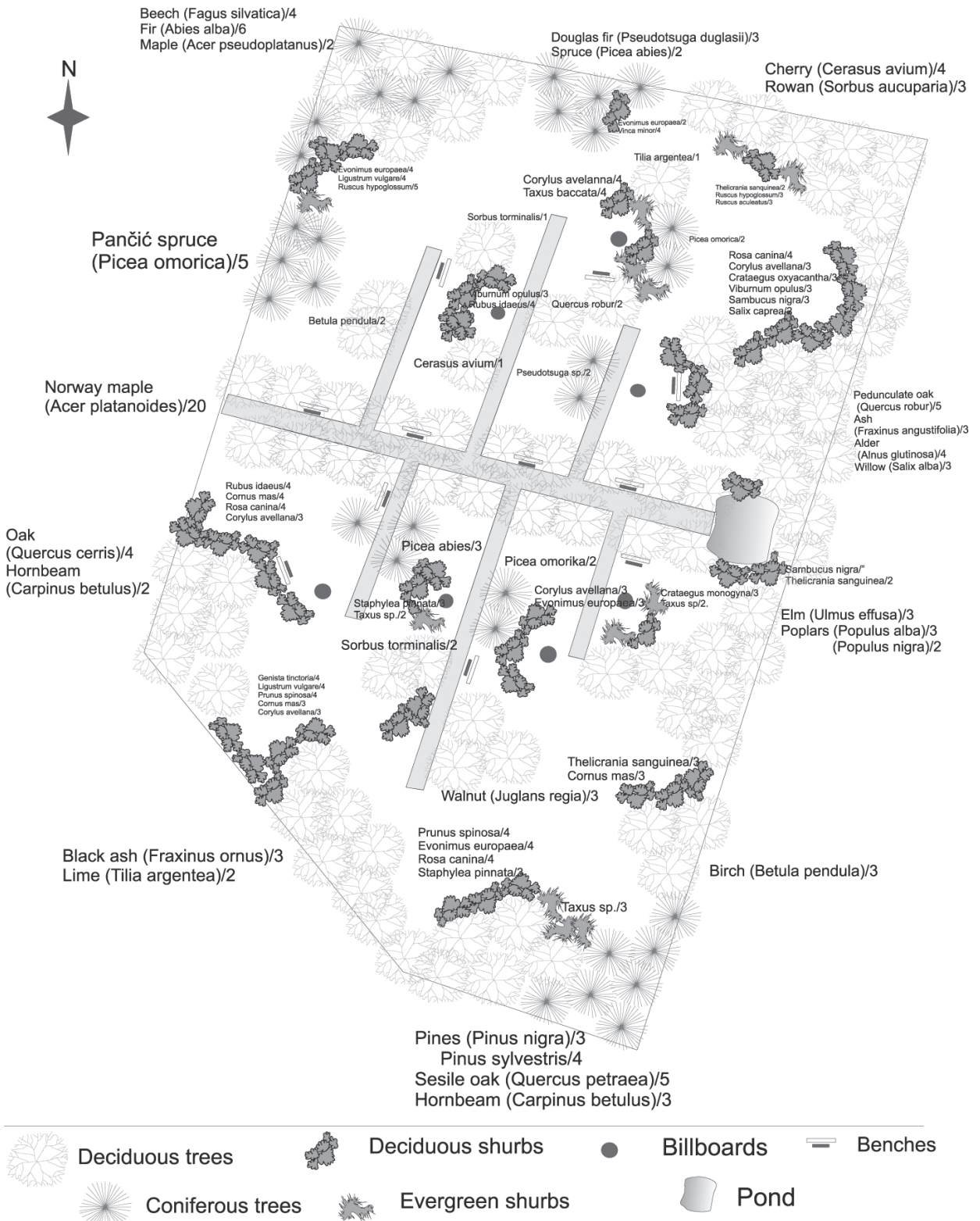


FIGURE 3 Horticultural floor plan of Memorial Park

to be great supplement to FOPER Forest, due to the existence of information about local wild game, which on one side enriches biodiversity of that area, but on the other represents a possible threat to seedlings of FOPER Forest, because it is not fenced yet.

Overall aims of FOPER Forest is to acquire habits of people who are living in urban areas to visit green areas (park forest) during their free time, and to raise their environmental awareness of the social functions of forests, and strengthening cooperation in education and research, but more important is strengthening cooperation and friendship in South East Europe (SEE). Here lies the value of this project due to the conflicts and political tensions in nearly past in SEE region.

Specific aim of FOPER Forest is visitors' education about vegetation of FOPER Project countries in Memorial park and conducting of research in Research part.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The fact that organized planting of trees for Research part already caused a public and media interest, it can be assumed that this is a good basis for achieving overall aims of FOPER Forest. Good promotions like that can attract potential tourists and visi-

tors and raise not only their environmental awareness, but also their awareness of importance of forestry as profession. By visiting FOPER Forest they could see that forestry is not only narrow profession which deals only with management of forests, but a complex scientific profession, which is dealing with variety of different fields.

FOPER Forest is not only made for beautification of the area and as a memorial part for FOPER Project, which mostly aims Memorial part; it is also made to get exact calculations on which planting method is more profitable, which partly aims Research part. Century long future researches conducting, which impose Research part, in a way guaranty a future cooperation and friendships not only in Croatia, but also in South East Europe if FOPER Project will be continued in future.

FOPER Forest is the great example of the overall guiding principle of FOPER Project which is „learning by doing“.

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