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Experiment shows potential for vegetation to recover at the Sierra Nevada ski station

08.12.2008

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Preparation work on the ski slopes in Spain's Sierra Nevada destroys a large number of plant species.

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In their efforts to develop new methods to restore plant cover, researchers from the University of Granada have now successfully grown the area's two native shrub species in the laboratory. They hope to use these to guarantee the biodiversity of the Sierra Nevada National Park.

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complicata Bory (Resedaceous), which occupy an ecological niche found primarily in and around the ski station.

In order to ensure their successful relocation to their natural environment, the researchers wanted to understand "some of the environmental requirements of these plants in order optimise germination and growth". The main problem for these shrubs over the short term is that "they cannot self-regulate naturally in order to recover their biodiversity".

Seeds that grow in the laboratory

The study used samples of three different soils from the ski station. The objective was to see whether they could grow in different experimental conditions. The soils were not randomly selected: they were chosen according to orientation, slope, height and proximity to the ski station slopes, etc.

Various treatments containing plant growth regulators were applied to the seeds (auxins, giberelines, citoquinines and ethylene), "in order to improve the germination rate and growth of the seeds in the laboratory, and to make it easier to subsequently transfer and plant them at the ski station", said the researcher.

The seeds germinated and grew successfully in the laboratory. Serrano said the effectiveness of the regulators could be seen in aspects such as formation of the



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