



GaiaShopping mobilises the local community to protect forests

Forest fires can cause extensive damage to human life and the natural environment. In Portugal, where forest cover occupies around 38% of the total land surface and various forest products are important contributors to the export market, forest fires present a significant risk and can be devastating.



Like our other shopping centres which have a Community Advisory Panel (CAP) in place, in 2011 GaiaShopping in Portugal held a discussion with CAP members on the International Year of the Forest. Inspired to take action to protect local woodlands, the CAP members decided to work together to reforest an area that had been previously burned down in a forest fire.

With little budget and a lot of people to involve, the GaiaShopping team made great efforts to organise the reforestation day. The nature conservation organisation Quercus, which is represented on the GaiaShopping CAP, identified the area where the work should be done and advised on the particular species which should be planted taking into account the conditions of the soil and climate, and the need to mitigate the risk of forest fires from spreading in the future.



A total of 53 people volunteered, including staff from tenants' shops and shopping centre service suppliers and representatives from local entities which are part of the GaiaShopping CAP, such as the forestry department, local firemen, the local council and charitable organisations which support social and environmental causes.



The day was a great success. Everyone collaborated as a team and all stakeholders involved were very pleased to have the opportunity to make a positive contribution to their community and the environment.