



Save Our Cedar Report 2024

Mount Mulanje Conservation Trust



INTRODUCTION



Since 2016, thousands of hectares of Mt Mulanje plateau have been reforested with the unique Mulanje Cedar tree. Without the hard work and participation of the local communities, Cedar growers and the Forestry Department, restoration on this massive scale would not have been possible. Mount Mulanje Conservation Trust's initiatives highlight that collaborating with local partners and communities can mobilise positive actions to preserve Mount Mulanje's unique biodiversity.

This report provides details for Cedar restoration that has taken place across the mountain: in Chambe, Lichenya, Thuchilla, Madzeka, Sombani and Chisepo landscape.

MOUNT MULANJE

Mt Mulanje is a steep sided, isolated mountain massif rising to 3,000 m asl. The mountain is home to diverse habitats ranging from Miombo Brachystegia woodland located on the drier side of the mountain (Phalombe, Fort Lister), mid-altitude rainforest (Likhubula, Ruo valley and Eastern Outer Slopes), Cedar Cloud forest in the wetter areas and on the plateau: fire-induced montane grassland, evergreen forest, and sub-alpine rocky wetlands at the peaks. A unique ecology has co-evolved and adapted to the diverse landscape creating high levels of endemism. With 71 endemics, and 70 near-endemic plants and a mix of faunal species only found on Mt Mulanje and nowhere else on earth.





MULANJE CEDAR

The iconic Mulanje Cedar tree (*Widdringtonia whytei*) holds significant ecological and cultural importance as Malawi's National Tree. Unique to Mount Mulanje, and valued for its timber, this tree is threatened with over-exploitation, pushing it to the brink of extinction. As a result, it is classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Efforts to protect the Mulanje Cedar and its keystone ecological role in the Cloud Forests are crucial for safeguarding biodiversity, protecting water catchments, and sustaining the livelihoods of local communities that depend on the ecosystem services and resources.



2023-2024 PLANTING SEASON KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



36,140 trees planted
(30,031 Mulanje Cedar & **6,109**
companion indigenous species)



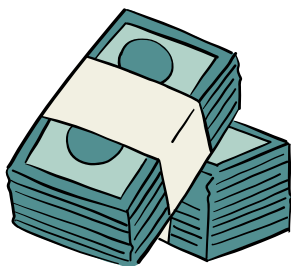
Employed **480** people for
seasonal work.



Seedlings transported to **6**
sites.

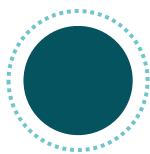


Assisted regeneration of **27**
hectares.



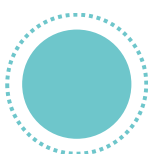
Total cost of campaign:
USD 15,350.00

LOCAL STEWARDSHIP



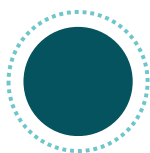
Tree nurseries

We collaborate with **8** community-managed nurseries. Members have received training in nursery management, and are certified Cedar growers. A total of **83** local individuals were engaged in managing the nurseries during the 2023 to 2024 growing season.



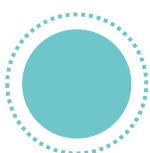
Local people

360 people were employed for mountain work. Activities involved clearing the land in preparation for planting, digging holes for the seedlings, transporting seedlings from the base of the mountain to the planting site, & planting.



Planting zone supervisors

15 supervisors managed six teams of **60** people. Supervisors assisted in the mapping of Cedar restoration sites and received comprehensive training prior to the start of all restoration work.



Support staff

Support staff were required to perform various roles at different levels during every stage of the process. Local community members helped to load and unload tree seedlings from different nurseries. Watchmen were employed to guard the seedlings before being transported up the mountain, and Forestry officers supervised the work.

THE PROCESS



1. Mapping

Identify areas across the mountain terrain, and assess suitability for habitat restoration efforts.



2. Supervisor briefing

Meet with team leaders to outline operational logistics for each restoration zone.



3. Land preparation

Clear planting sites by removing invasive species and dense low growing vegetation. Mark and dig 36,000 holes (30cm X 30cm) for tree seedlings.



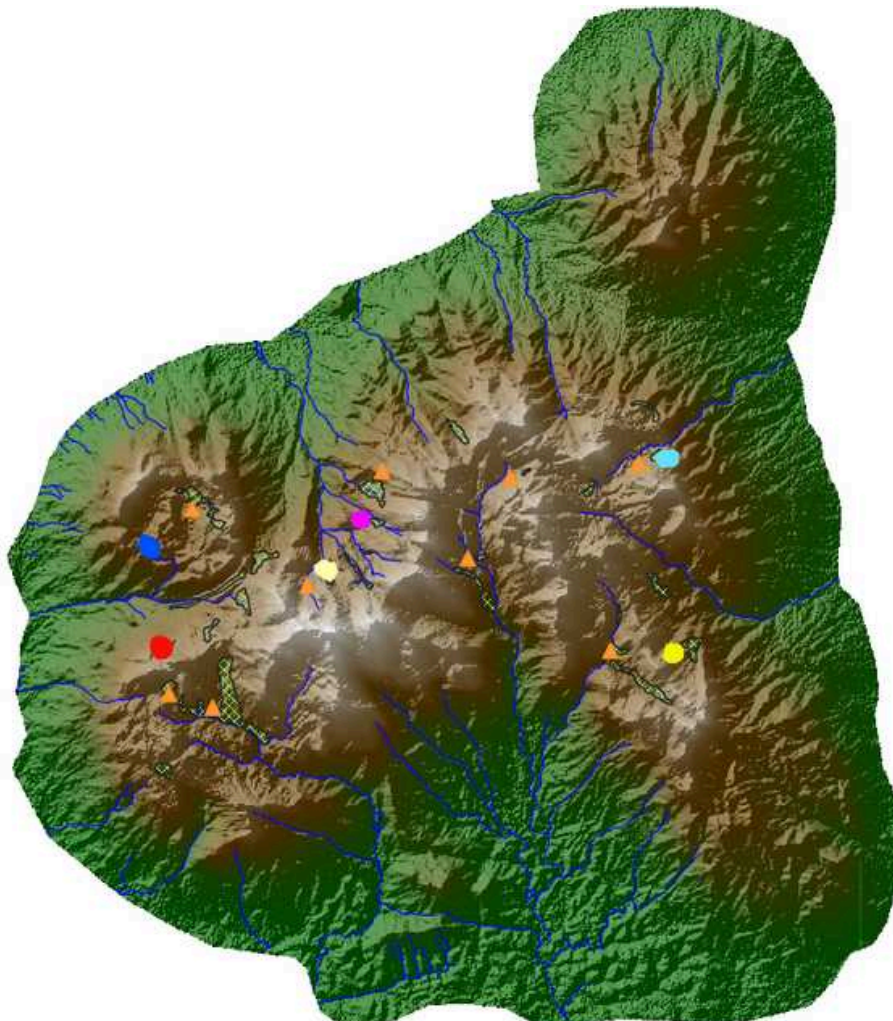
4. Transportation

Transport seedlings from community nurseries to the base of mountain. Individuals then carry 35 seedlings per headload to respective planting site, hiking between 4-9 hours.



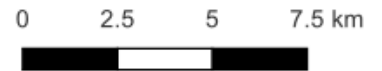
5. Plant trees

OVERVIEW OF 2023-2024 PLANTED AREAS

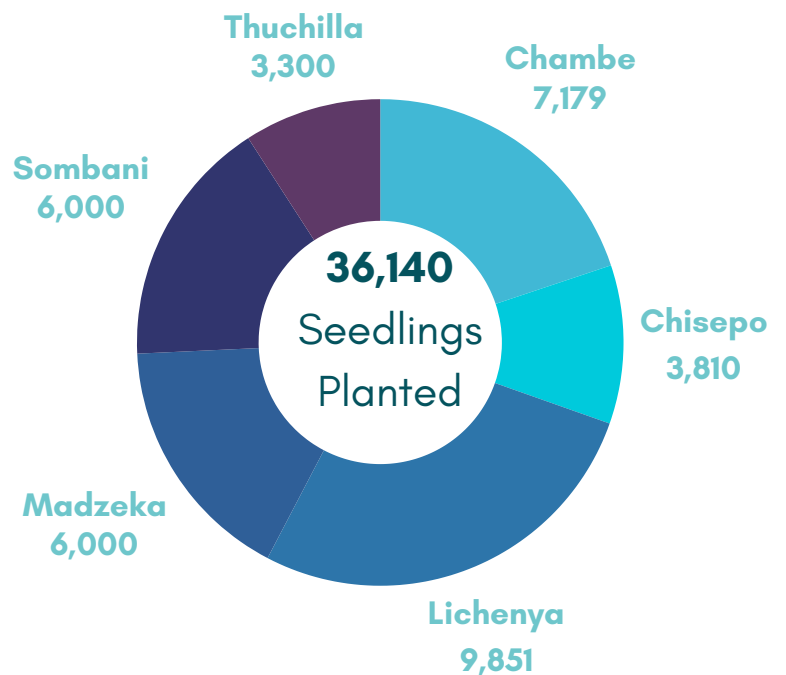


Cedar planting sites

- Chambe
- Chiespo
- Lichenya
- Madzeka
- Sombani
- Thuchilla
- ▲ Mountain huts
- Historical Cedar clusters
- Rivers

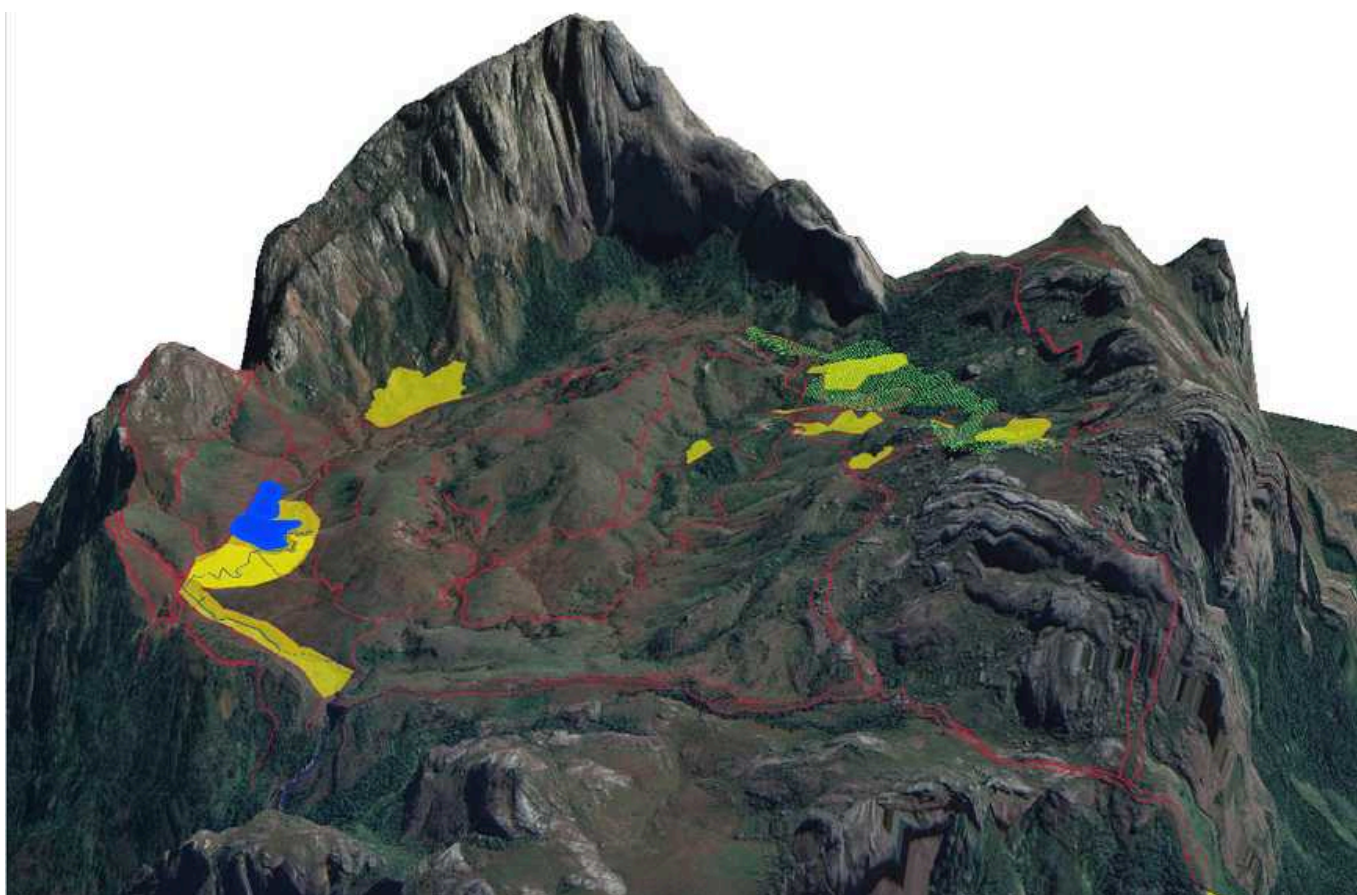








**27 hectares
planted**



CHAMBE

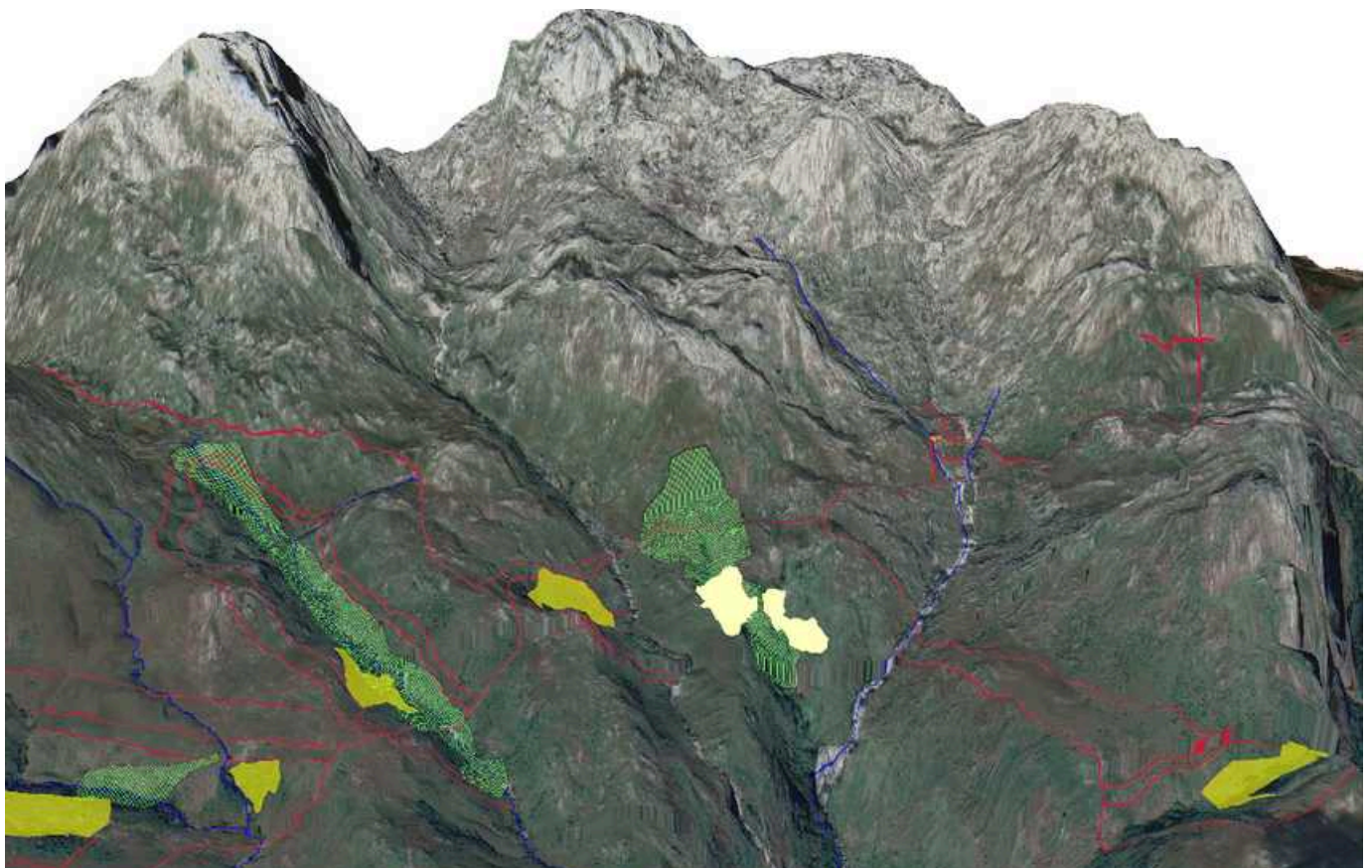
- Cost: USD 2,786.00
- Land area: 5.7 hectares
- Number of seedlings: 7,179
- Seedling composition: 5,281 Cedar, 1,898 indigenous species
- Community tree nurseries: Five
- Number of days to complete: 13 days









-  Chambe 2024 planting
-  2018-2023 Cedar planting sites
-  Historical Cedar clusters
-  Mountain hut
-  Firebreak network
-  Rivers

CHISEPO

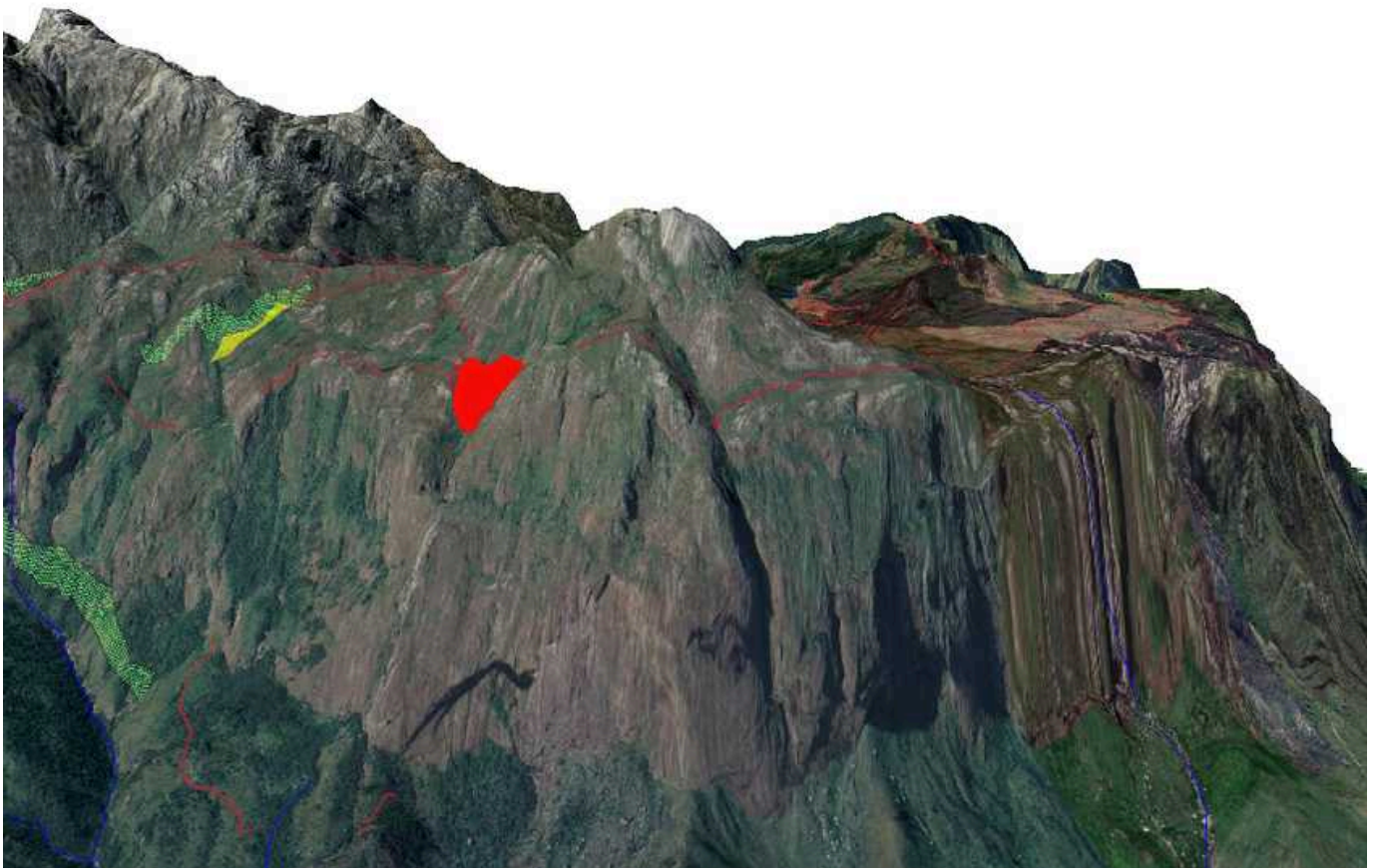
- Cost: USD 1,390.00
- Land area: 2.9 hectares
- Number of seedlings: 3,810
- Community tree nurseries: One
- Seedling composition: 3,810 Cedar
- Number of days to complete: 6 days








-  Chiespo 2024 planting
-  2018-2023 Cedar planting sites
-  Historical Cedar cluster
-  Mountain hut
-  Firebreak network
-  Rivers

LICHENYA

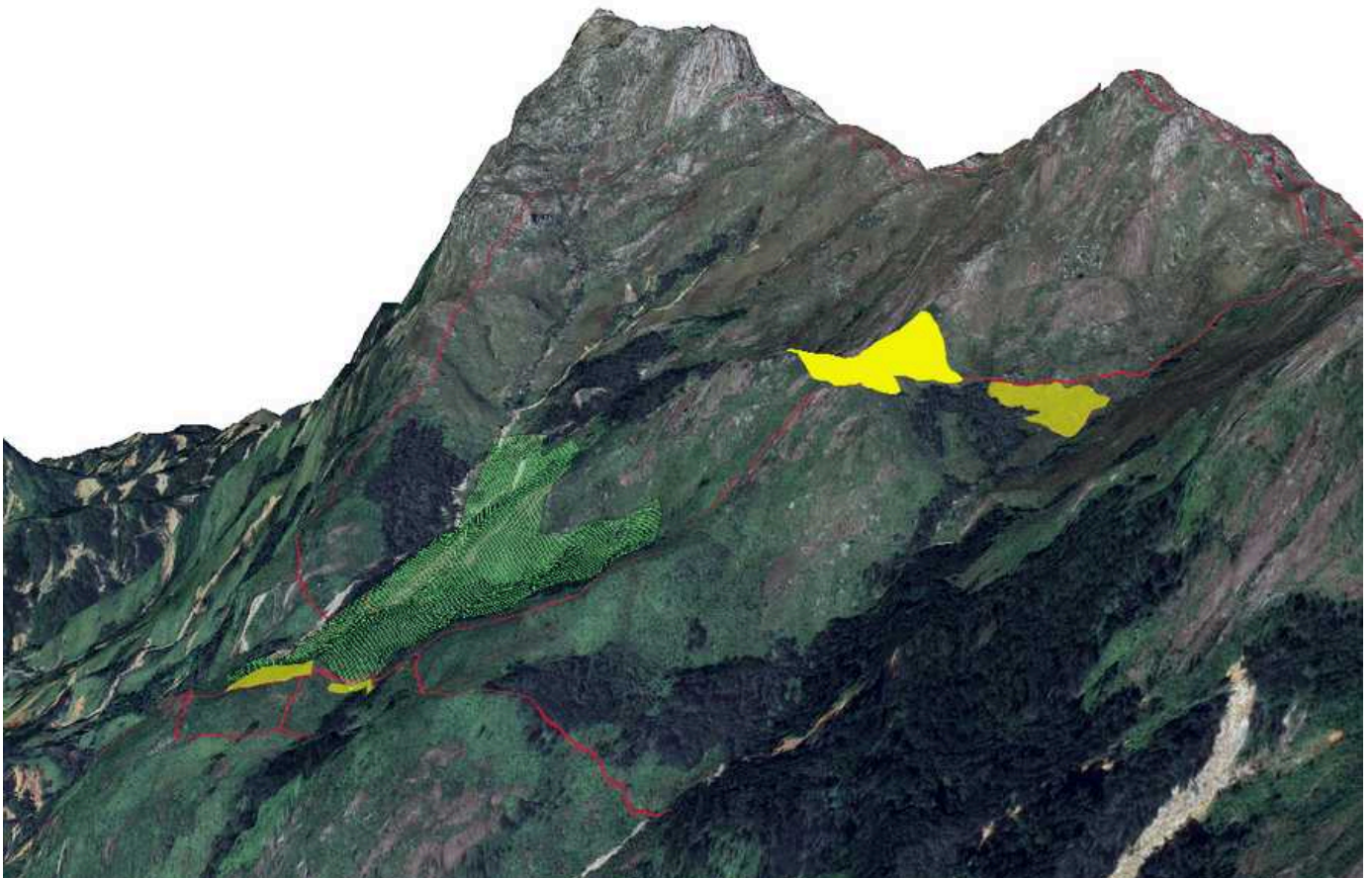
- Cost: USD 3,992.00
- Land area: 7.5 hectares
- Number of seedlings: 9,851
- Community tree nurseries: One
- Seedling composition: 6,000 Cedar, 3,851 indigenous species
- Number of days to complete: 19 days



-  Lichenya 2024 planting
-  2018-2023 Cedar planting sites
-  Historical Cedar cluster
-  Firebreak network
-  Rivers

MADZEKA

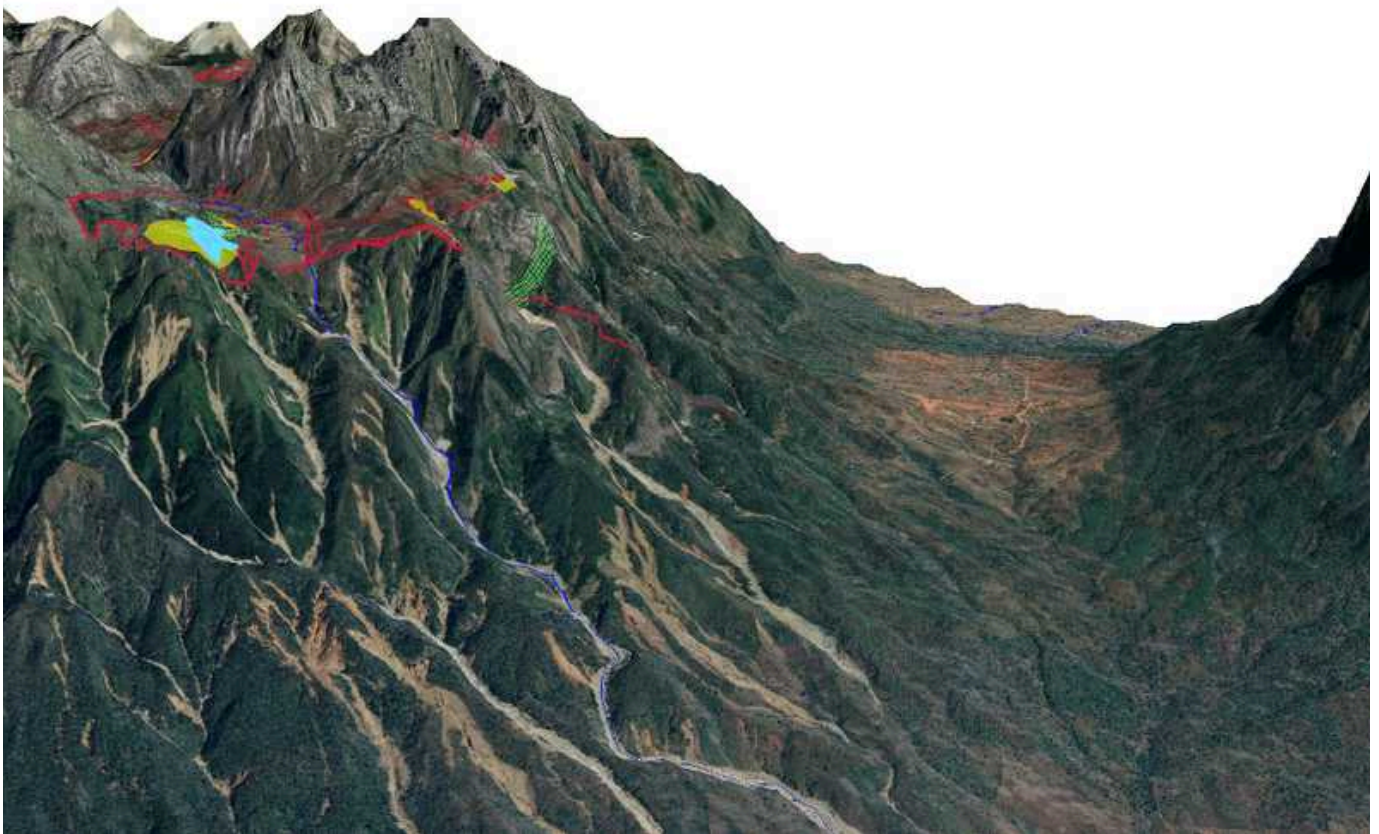
- Cost: USD 2453.00
- Land area: 4.5 hectares
- Number of seedlings: 6,000
- Community tree nurseries: One
- Seedling composition: 6,000 Cedar
- Number of days to complete: 11 days








-  Madzeka 2024 planting
-  2018-2023 Cedar planting sites
-  Historical Cedar cluster
-  Firebreak network
-  Rivers
-  Mountain hut

SOMBANI

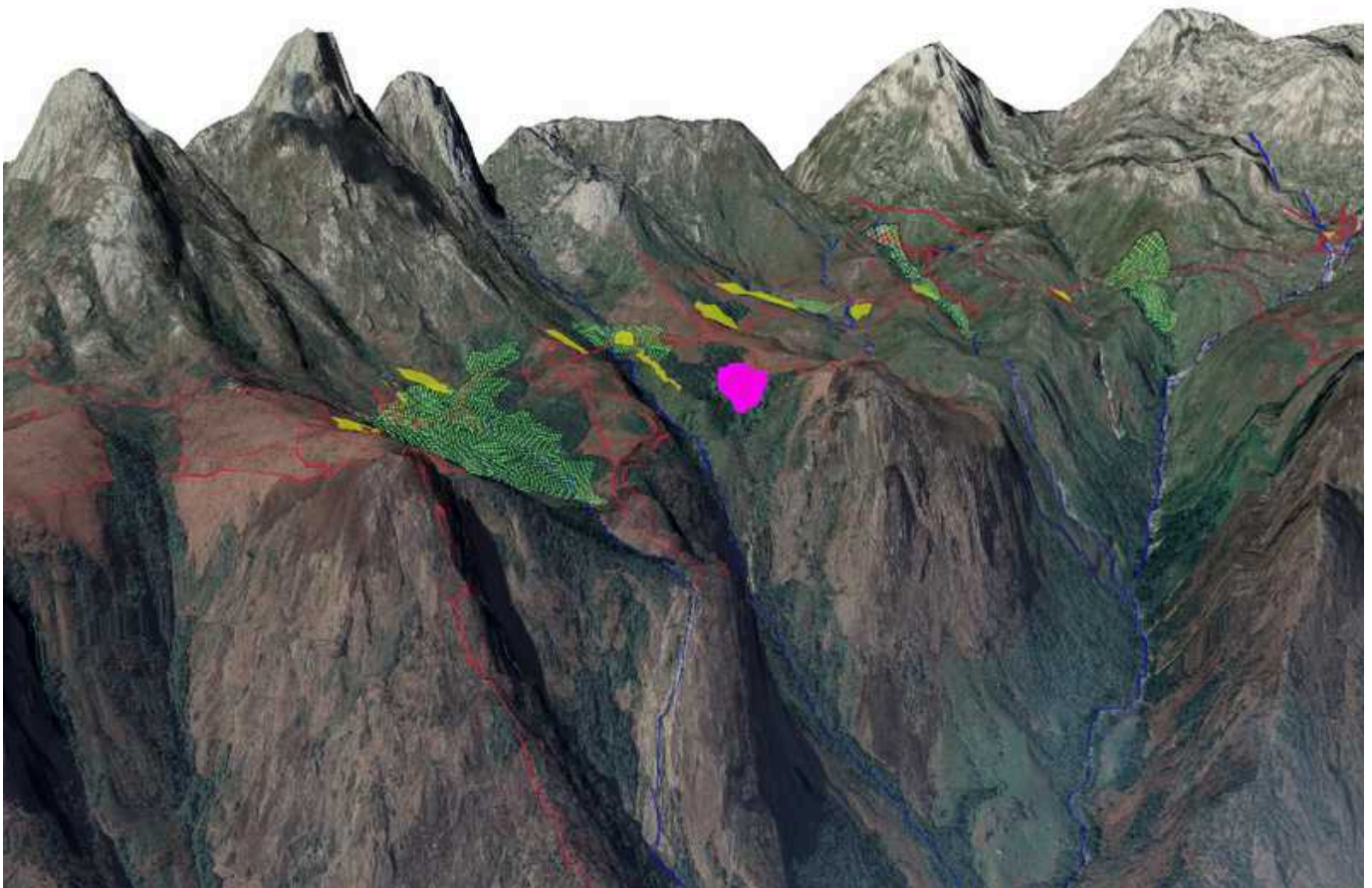
- Cost: USD 2,425.00
- Land area: 4.5 hectares
- Number of seedlings: 6,000
- Community tree nurseries: One
- Seedling composition: 6,000 Cedar
- Number of days to complete: 11 days









-  Sombani 2024 planting
-  2018-2023 Cedar planting sites
-  Historical Cedar cluster
-  Firebreak network
-  Rivers

THUCHILA

- Cost: USD 1,244.00
- Land area: Thuchila Wakhuya plot (2.5 hectares)
- Number of seedlings: 3,300
- Community tree nurseries: Two
- Seedling composition: 2,940 cedar, 360 indigenous
- Number of days to complete: 5

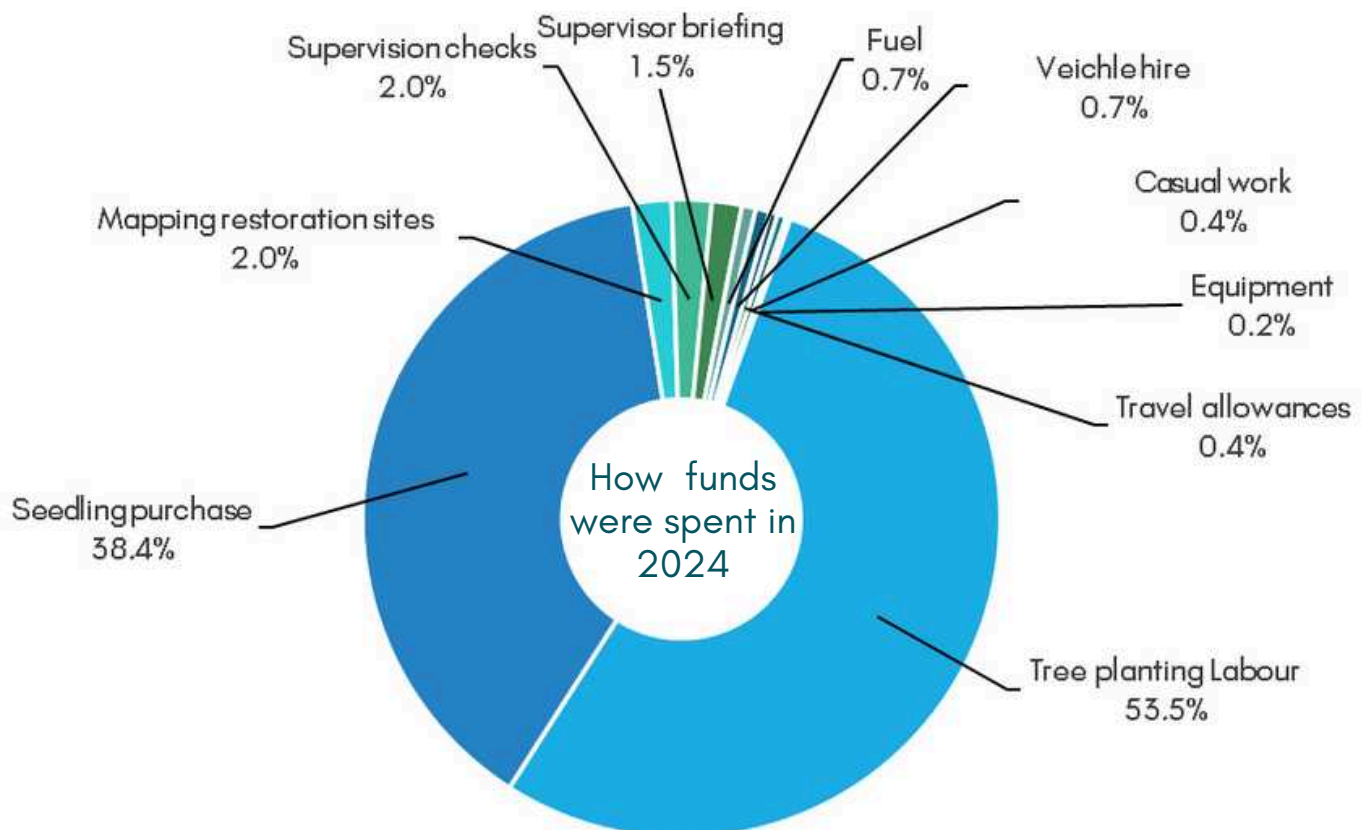


-  Thuchilla 2024 planting
-  2018-2023 Cedar planting sites
-  Historical Cedar cluster
-  Firebreak network
-  Rivers
-  Mountain hut

FINANCE

We secured just under **24 Million** Malawi Kwacha (**USD13,000.00**) in contributions from corporate and individual donors. **91.9%** of these funds were directed towards procuring seedlings from local tree nurseries and tree planting labour, directly supporting sustainable livelihoods in communities around the mountain.

In 2024, **84%** of our funding came from corporate and individual donors. **16%** of funding came from the MMCT Biodiversity Conservation, Research and Monitoring Programme.



POST PLANTING AFTERCARE

Ecological monitoring

We have set up multiple **permanent monitoring plots** (PMPs) throughout the mountainous terrain to evaluate and track the survival rates of seedlings. These PMPs serve as specific study locations where we observe and gather ecological data to monitor seedlings, and to understand factors that affect survival rates, such as soil characteristics, climatic conditions, and vegetation composition.

Fire management

To ensure that our restoration sites and strategic parts of the mountain are protected from fire, we have established a vast and complex network of firebreaks, covering a distance of **722** kilometres.

As we approach the fire season, we will start to clear the firebreaks of overgrown dry vegetation, conduct controlled burnings, and mobilise our teams for fire stand-by duties.



NEXT STEPS

1. To enhance our campaign promotion and fundraising for the upcoming season, we are intensifying our marketing strategies. Our focus will include more proactive use of social media platforms and continued production of a short film showcasing our work from the past few years.
2. We will assess and collect data on existing permanent monitoring plots that have been established over the past five years. Methodologies and best practice from the Global Biodiversity Standard will be utilised.
3. We will collaborate with national and international experts to improve our Cedar restoration strategy, focusing on different propagation techniques. We will also trial a living green firebreak network, using indigenous fast-growing species.





Thank you

To all the individuals and corporate donors that supported the 2023–2024 Mulanje Cedar Restoration campaign. You made this possible!



To find out more about the work we do visit

www.mountmulanje.org.mw

If you would like to get involved in the Mulanje Cedar restoration efforts for the 2025–2026 season, you can find us here:

Email: info@mountmulanje.org.mw

Facebook: [mountmulanje](https://www.facebook.com/mountmulanje)

Instagram: [mountmulanje](https://www.instagram.com/mountmulanje)

Twitter: [@mount_mulanje](https://twitter.com/mount_mulanje)