



Iceland, WG3 Understory plants
Lilja Magnúsdóttir, Matis Ltd.
Agnes Geirdal, LSE

Iceland has the least forest cover in Europe

Iceland is 103.000 km². Forest cover in 2015 is natural birch 1.506 km² and planted forests 380 km² total of 1.886 km² or 1,83% of the country



Degradation of forests in Iceland

- Forest area has decreased since settlement
- Likely 25% of Iceland forested at settlement
- Forest cutting, forage and weather conditions have left the land eroded
- Since 1907 both Iceland Forest Service and Soil Conservation Service of Iceland have been working against erosion and land degradation
- Still a lot to be done but we have high hopes....
- Little knowledge or tradition of forest products
- Interest is increasing along with growing forests

Non wood forest products in Iceland

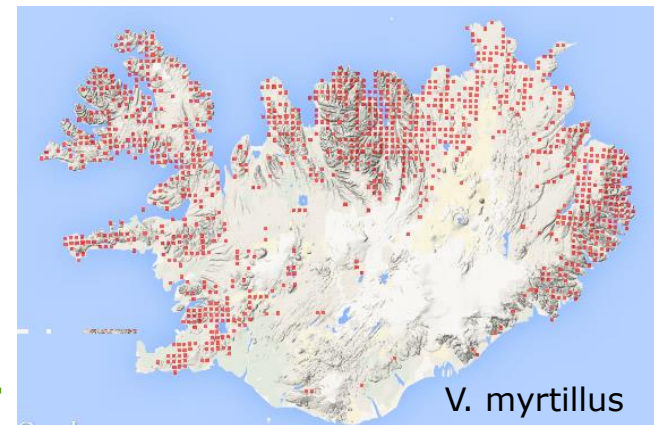
- Mushrooms in small quantities, mainly households and personal use – will change in future
- Berries and herbs not necessarily from forests
- Cultural knowledge based on tradition still used
- Berries widely used for food
- Herbs used for medicinal, aromatic and colorants and dyes but also for drinks and ornamental use
- Books based on tradition, popular for personal use
- Growing interests in using the forest products as more forests are planted and they keep on growing

Non wood forest products in Iceland

- Little economic value in forest products – yet
- Social importance for those who have knowledge
- Innovative importance unknown – lack research
- Ecological knowledge of where the species grow
- No models or management system – simply collected for use wherever the collectors find it
- Landowners can forbid picking but seldom do
- Increasing interest as herbal medicine get more popular – increasing use but no regulations
- Can lead to overexploitation

Understory plants for food

- *Vaccinium myrtillus* and *V. uliginosum*
- *Empetrum nigrum*
 - berries used for food, juice, jam etc.
- Widely picked and used in households
- No public figures of amount or value
- Long tradition for use
- Socially important for users
- No models of any kind
- No management systems but has increased cover because of less forage and warm weather



Understory plants for medicinal use

- *Geranium sylvaticum*
- *Galium verum*
- *Juniperus communis*
- *Alchemilla vulgaris*
- *Filipendula ulmaria* etc. among many other plants
- Used in traditional herbal medicines and salves
- No public figures of amount or value
- Long tradition for use, picked wild where found – rarely cultivated
- No models, data of distribution area
- No management systems



Understory plants af colorants and dyes

- *Geranium sylvaticum*
- *Galium ssp.*
- *Juniperus communis*
- *Alchemia vulgaris*
- *Filipendula ulmaria* etc. among many other plants
- Used as traditional colorants and dyes
- No public figures of amount or value
- Long tradition for use but few have the knowledge
- No models but data of distribution areas in Iceland
- No management systems



Non wood forest products in the future

- Planted forests are growing – forest products also
- Increased interest from the forest owners
 - How to manage, utilise and get income
 - Little knowledge but willing to learn
- Customers are interested – health and clean nature
- Research lacking – mostly because of financing
 - Iceland can learn a lot from other countries
 - Willing to participate in projects and research
 - Willing to learn from others more experienced
- We believe in the possibilities in the forests

Our national flower in Iceland



Dryas octopetala

Photos: Lilja Magnúsdóttir