



UNIVERSITY OF MALTA  
L-Università ta' Malta

### **LifeMedGreenRoof Project Mid-term press release**

The LifeMedGreenRoof project is now approaching the half-way point in its four year life span. The project has progressed well and results to date are encouraging. The feedback from the general public has been positive. This means that the building industry is a step closer to creating more energy efficient buildings and alleviating problems related to urban areas.

The aim of the LifeMedGreenRoof Project is to create a baseline study on the performance of green roofs in a semi-arid Mediterranean climate such as that of the Maltese islands and to encourage the adoption of green roof technology in Malta.

During the course of these two years, 15 species of native plants able to survive the harsh microclimate of the roof environment have been identified. Roofs tend to suffer from high solar radiation and are very exposed to winds. The use of native species is important as they are more adapted to surviving the local climate. In addition, roof greening provides habitat for local wildlife and replaces (to a certain extent) the natural habitats lost to development. Finally, native flora can be as aesthetically attractive as exotic plants. Exotic plants however do have a role to play in urban areas and can further prove beneficial and useful.

The Italian partners Minoprio Analisi e Certificazioni and Fondazzjone Minoprio have conducted a series of studies on inorganic and organic materials to establish two growing media which are adapted to the Maltese climate. An investigation was carried out locally on possible waste material which could be used as part of the growing media. Unfortunately, none were suitable.

Meanwhile on the roof of the University of Malta's Faculty for the Built Environment, tests have been carried out to verify the performance of the two growing media and the plants selected. The plants grew well with very little maintenance. Watering was carried out over the summer months but ceased between October and April. During the course of the year, the progress of the plants was recorded through overhead photography.

Numerous beneficial insects have also been recorded including various bees, hoverflies, spiders and butterflies. Last October a handful of endemic Maltese swallowtail butterfly caterpillars were observed feeding on one species of the test plants. One of these butterflies was observed on its maiden flight (see Facebook post-dated 5<sup>th</sup> November 2014).

A design has been produced for the construction of a demonstration green roof. The green roof to be constructed over the Faculty for the Built Environment will be open to the public to allow people to experience first-hand what a green roof looks like. The demonstration green roof will also be used to conduct further studies on green roofs.

Roof greening is an important tool in combating urban related problems. The successful development of this project means that green roofs will be able to be constructed using technology which has been tried and tested locally. Benefits from green roofs include the reduction in energy costs mainly in terms of cooling and heating. They can also help in the reduction of flooding; acting as a sponge absorbing rain water. Green roofs also create

attractive spaces where people can socialise and relax; this will increase the value of the property concerned. Green roofs can also provide habitats for beneficial wildlife. All in all, green roofs have the potential of improving the quality of life of the urban dweller and rendering our towns and cities more sustainable. The project is set to continue for the next two years.

The project is managed by the University of Malta and is part-financed by the EU through the Life+ programme. All data and deliverables will be made available to the public to encourage the dissemination of green roof technology. For further information refer to the project facebook page ([www.facebook.com/lifemedgreenroofproject](http://www.facebook.com/lifemedgreenroofproject)) and visit our website [www.lifemedgreenroof.org](http://www.lifemedgreenroof.org) for more information.

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