



Nature: Species Protection: Sea Pea (*Lathyrus japonicas* subspecies *maritimus*).

Carnoustie Golf Links

THE CHALLENGE

Sea pea is one of the most attractive of Scotland's coastal plants and also one of the rarest. Over the past 60 years sea pea has declined from over half of its known localities in the north and west of Britain and there are now only two localities where sea pea has been recorded: Angus and Aberdeenshire. Sea pea was first recorded in Angus in 1875 and it still grows at Carnoustie although its long term survival will depend on continued availability of suitable habitat. It disappeared from the only other known Angus locality, the dunes at Elliot Links SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) by Arbroath Artisan Golf Club, as recently as the mid 90's.



Sea pea colonise sand dunes and coastal shingle but its success is short lived once the dunes stabilise and a continuous sward develops. The remaining Carnoustie population of Sea pea is susceptible to trampling and vulnerable to the effects of developments which disrupt the natural processes of dune formation and restrict the opportunity to spread.

THE SOLUTION

In 2007, sea pea plants were transplanted from Carnoustie to Broughty Ferry in an attempt to re-introduce the species to other suitable locations. In 2008, sea pea seed was extracted from plants present on the coastline of the Carnoustie Golf Course. This work was led by Alisdair Hood (University of Dundee, Botanic Gardens Curator) with Carnoustie Golf Links Management Committee (CGLMC) and Scottish Golf Environment Group (SGEG) staff.

The Botanic garden staff, with their extensive knowledge and experience of sea pea re-introduction, propagated the seeds under controlled conditions and the new plants were planted out at Carnoustie the following year. The planting was carried out by Botanic Garden, CGLMC and SGEG staff, all of which provided their time and expertise free charge – all in all about 8 days work.

THE OUTCOMES



Photo shows from left: Alisdair Hood, Steve Mitchell, Clare Reaney of Dundee Botanic Gardens and Lynn Jopling of the Scottish Golf Environment Group, planting out the propagated sea pea plants.

The Outcomes

The sea pea population at Carnoustie is currently being monitored. Unfortunately, quite a lot of the beach has been eroded and there were not many plants remaining. However, on a positive note, on the Headland which has sea defences there were a few new plants. This does not mean that the seed collection and propagation was unsuccessful – only that storm damage at high tides made it difficult last year for any plants to establish on the eroding dune system. Therefore, any future planting sites need to be selected with this in mind.

Graeme Duncan, CGLMC General Manager, said “CGLMC are delighted to assist with this very worthwhile project. We are committed that, as well as maintaining the golf courses, we also try to enhance the natural environment, and we look forward to these plants maturing and adding colour to the coastline of the links.”

The Carnoustie Golf Links Management Committee website details other environmental projects underway on the links:

<http://www.carnoustiegolflinks.co.uk/category/environmental-news/>