Native ornamental species for landscaping and xerogardening in semi-arid environments

J. Ochoa1; M. Muñoz2; M. J. Vicente1; J. J. Martínez-Sánchez1; J. A. Fernández1,2; E. Conesa1; J. A. Franco1,2;
1 Dpto. de Producción Vegetal. Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena. 30203 Cartagena
2 Unidad Asociada al CSIC de «Horticultura Sostenible en Zonas Áridas»
e-mail address: jesus.ochoa@upct.es

INTRODUCTION
Vegetation is the most important component of any landscape project. Knowledge of plant ecology, growth characteristics, aesthetic and cultural aspects, are key to sustainability and functionality in green spaces and for selecting the right plants.

Over the last decade the use of native species has increased in landscaping and xerogardening projects under semi-arid conditions, because of their ability to adapt to abiotic stresses and their usefulness to create connectivity within urban and sub-urban ecosystems, promoting biodiversity. Furthermore, they are becoming increasingly popular as they promote low maintenance costs for public administrations.

Despite the above mentioned, native plants are still little used in landscaping projects because of a lack of knowledge, are difficult to obtain in local nurseries and the lack of experience about their suitability to different urban and sub-urban spaces and conditions.

The Region of Murcia (SE Spain) is a territory of a great biotic diversity, most of them with ornamental and ecological features of great interest for landscaping and xerogardening.

The purpose of this project is to develop a guide of use of native species with ornamental value for landscaping and xerogardening in semi-arid regions via web.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
The project has been performed by the "Mediterranean Horticulture" Research Team (Dept. of Production of Cartagena (Spain)) throughout the collaboration agreement signed with the Dirección General del Medio Natural (currently Dirección General de Patrimonio Natural y Biodiversidad).

The home page explains the site map, the involved partners, the species forms, links to related websites and scientific references that support all the information contained in the web. The web structure is shown below.

RESULTS
The web site is www.floramu.com

* Expand the list of native ornamental species database and edit the forms information in printable format in order to enable their direct inclusion in the landscape projects.

* The web will be updated with a powerful search engine that provides real-time data and advice in selecting the most appropriate to each type of project and landscape design.