



Ficus carica

European Phenology Campaign Spring 2019



GOZO COLLEGE *Middle School*
L-Iskola Medja fil-KULLEGG T'GHAWDEX

European Phenology Campaign Spring 2019

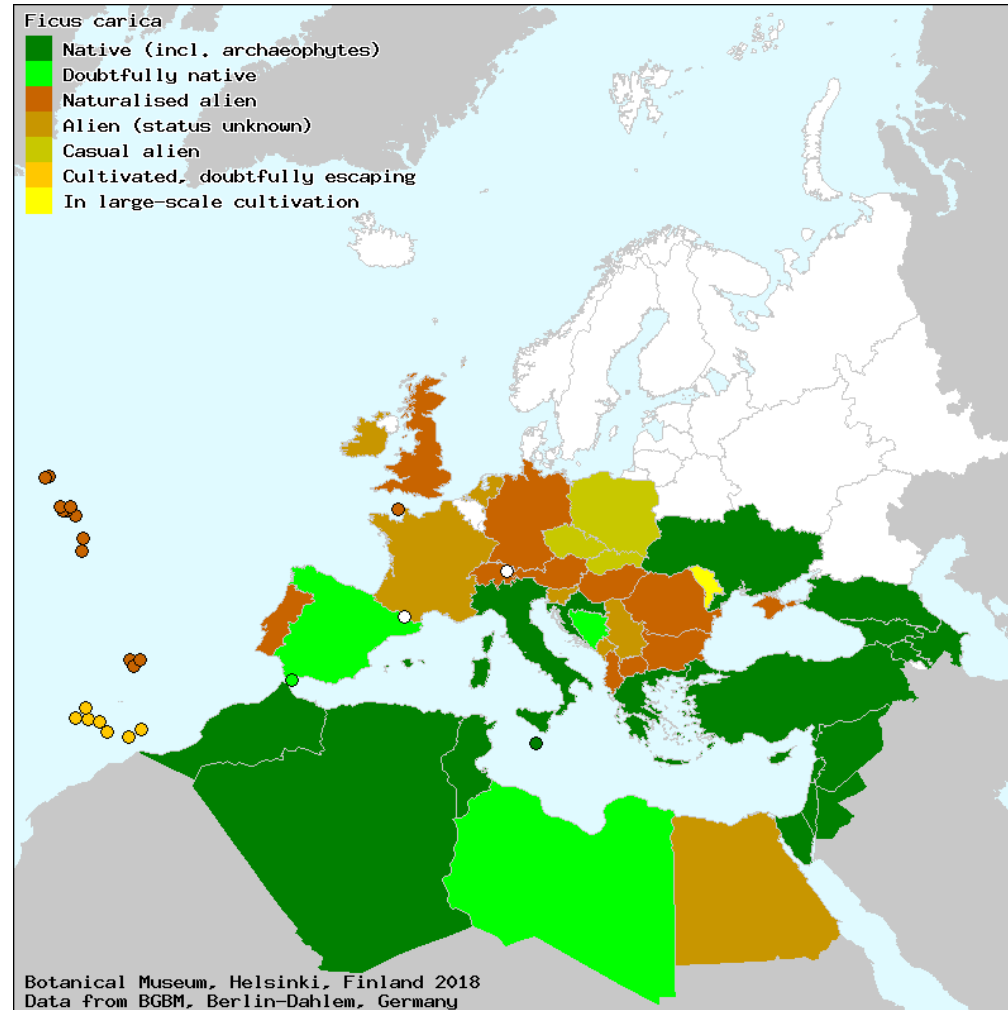
- ▶ This is the first year that our school is participating in The GLOBE Program and the European Phenology Campaign.
- ▶ We decided to observe the growth of a Fig Tree. We chose this tree because there is one growing close to our school.
- ▶ It was really interesting to watch the tree wake up as the days got longer and warmer.
- ▶ During our observations we noticed that a section from the tree was dying including a branch holding one of the leaves being observed. Click [here](#) for video.
- ▶ Back at school we started doing some research to find out what was happening to the tree.
- ▶ We looked up information on the internet and interviewed some farmers.
- ▶ Our findings are explained in the following slides

Background information - The Fig Tree

Ficus carica is an Asian species of flowering plant in the mulberry family, known as the common fig. It is the source of the fruit also called the fig and as such is an important crop in those areas where it is grown commercially. Native to the Middle East and western Asia, it has been sought out and cultivated since ancient times and is now widely grown throughout the world, both for its fruit and as an ornamental plant. Figs trees do well in a Mediterranean climate (with long, hot dry summers).



Fig Tree distribution in Europe and the Mediterranean region (2018)



Growth stages of our Fig Tree

Stage 1 - Dormant



Growth stages of our Fig Tree

Stage 2 - Swelling & Budburst



Growth stages of our Fig Tree

Stage 3 - Leaf getting bigger



Sad discovery....



What is happening to the Fig Trees in the Maltese Islands?

We were shocked to learn that

‘The 20,000 fig trees spread across Malta are just a fraction of what one found in the past, according to farmers.’

And this does not include the trees growing in the wild!!!

As one farmer said ...

“I remember there being fig trees everywhere. I myself had at least 15 on my land; now I have four healthy trees that still produce figs. The rest are all dead.”

Why is this happening?

- ▶ The fig tree borer, known as '*susa*' in Maltese, eats its way into fig tree bark, feasting on the tree's nutrient-rich sap to the point of starving the plant.



Solutions

- ▶ There is no treatment for fig tree borers. They are immune to chemical treatments. Branches can be removed that suffer borer damage, but the odds are high that the borers are already spread in other parts of the tree too though not showing their mark yet. Removal of the branches also leaves an ideal area for the adult beetles to lay more eggs even if the wound is sealed.

- ▶ But....

In Malta state help is being given to farmers and other land owners by distributing fig trees, to make up for these losses across the island, in a bid to counter the devastation taking place.

Reference

- ▶ http://www.maltawildplants.com/MORA/Ficus_carica.php
- ▶ https://www.timesofmalta.com/mobile/articles/view/20180514/local/pest-decimates-fig-trees-just-a-fraction-remain.679008?fbclid=IwAR3GYswNKenx98bMAWaM3hXVMkpJHwqoHmFJtjhtQB_9HRHo1Y57PjVZey4
- ▶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_fig
- ▶ <https://www.gardenguides.com/90555-borers-fig-trees.html>



Students:

Isaac Piscopo
Shaun Sammut
Lara Bajada

Teacher:

Ms Ramona Mercieca