SENS PROJECT · SOILSCAPE · La Réunion

“Les Sens du Sol” (The Senses of Soil)

A sensory workshop to help people discover living soil and raise awareness of the importance of conserving soil biodiversity (free and open educational kit).

Learning through the senses

Soil biodiversity is particularly threatened on tropical islands. In La Réunion, one of the main challenges for soil conservation is to raise awareness among citizens who often see soil as nothing more than a surface covering. The SENS project (Sensory Exploration of Nexus in Soils), funded by the European Union (Horizon programme – SoilScape project), aimed to develop, together with stakeholders from La Réunion, a workshop to raise awareness among the general public and school pupils of the importance of conserving soil biodiversity. The resulting workshop reaches non-specialist audiences through an immersive, sensory, playful and creative approach. Its main goal is to change how people see soil, often regarded as an inert substrate, so that they discover a living, dynamic ecosystem that is essential to human health and ecosystem resilience.



Workshop at La Nouvelle school, Mafate, May 2026

A tool co-created with local stakeholders and field-tested

The workshop was designed with stakeholders from La Réunion – scientific, technical and institutional – involved in soil management and conservation and in citizen awareness-raising. This approach anchors the workshop in the partnership context of La Réunion and adapts it to the specific features of the island’s soils.

- **8 April 2026 –** co-creation day with 38 local stakeholders from 24 organisations.
- **Test sessions –** at CIRAD (Saint-Pierre) and the Botanical Garden (Saint-Leu) to test the beta version of the workshop with the general public, and in the schools of Ligne Paradis (Saint-Pierre) and La Nouvelle (Mafate) to test it with school pupils. The tools were adjusted based on participants’ feedback, collected through drawings, interviews and questionnaires.
- **23 July 2026 –** training day for project partners to run the workshop, so they can disseminate and promote it within their own networks.

Grounded in local research

The workshop builds on work carried out by CIRAD in La Réunion within the TROPISM-Réunion project to develop a soil biological quality reference (615 soil sites sampled and studied through a citizen science approach – ADEME funding) and its related projects: SADur (supporting the agroecological transition on the island – ERDF/EAFRD funding), BÎLO (setting up long-term monitoring of soil biodiversity – OFB funding) and SEMSOP (understanding the impact of contaminants on soil biodiversity and functioning – Ecophyto funding). The results of these projects will make it possible to feed knowledge on the soils of La Réunion into the messages and content conveyed during the workshop in its future versions.

Key figures

4 senses engaged: sight, touch, smell, hearing, through creative, hands-on activities	**24** organisations from La Réunion involved in the co-creation stages of the workshop	**94** participants in the 4 test events of the workshop (general public and pupils)	**100 %** open access, adaptable to other territories

Five activities to discover life in the soil

The activities engage sight, touch, smell and hearing around life in the soil. They help participants grasp the central role of soil biodiversity and the consequences of human activities (intensive agriculture, biological invasions, human transformation of environments, etc.) on the sustainable functioning of soils, by observing a gradient of soil degradation. They also open up avenues for reflection on simple actions that individuals can take to protect biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides.

1	**Observation of different soils of the island**	**Introductory activity**
2	**Hunting for soil insects**	**Sight**
3	**The sniffers**	**Touch and smell**
4	**Who can you hear beneath your feet?**	**Hearing**
5	**Other related activities.**	**“Draw your soil”, “action cards”, etc.**

The educational kit: a ready-to-run workshop

The kit brings together all the educational, facilitation and presentation materials for the workshop, along with a facilitation guide and the necessary equipment. It is freely and openly available, online and in physical form at the Mascarin National Botanical Conservatory (CBNM). It makes it possible to run the workshop independently and to adapt it to other territories and local contexts. The educational kit of the “Les Sens du Sol” workshop is available in two forms:

- Online, with all the resources needed to run the workshop. These resources are designed to be easy to take up and can also be adapted to other contexts, territories or audiences (CC-BY-SA licence).

Resources to download:

- Poster – Classification of soil biodiversity in La Réunion (French version)
- Poster – Discovering the soils of La Réunion (French version)
- Facilitation outline of the “Les Sens du Sol” workshop (French version)
- “Les Sens du Sol” educational booklet (French version)
- “Les Sens du Sol” action cards (French version)
- Game cards – Classification of soil biodiversity in La Réunion, “Les Sens du Sol” (French version)
- Identification key to the soil macrofauna of La Réunion, “Les Sens du Sol” (French version)
- Description of the “Les Sens du Sol” workshop kits (French version)
- Promotional flyer of the “Les Sens du Sol” workshop (French version)

- In physical form at the Mascarin National Botanical Conservatory, with two kits available for people wishing to run the workshop as part of their own activities. The kits can now be borrowed on request (panxionnaz@cbnm.org).

Links and contacts

- **Educational kit and facilitation guide:** afes.fr/ressources/kit-pedagogique-de-latelier-les-sens-du-sol-guide-danimation
- **Project presentation video (in French):** youtu.be/77gOp_9V34k
- **To borrow the facilitation kit:** Perle Anxionnaz (CBNM) – panxionnaz@cbnm.org
- **Project coordination:** Anaïs Hany (CBNM) – ahany@cbnm.org
- **Contact and information:** Caroline Brunel (CIRAD) – caroline.brunel@cirad.fr

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