

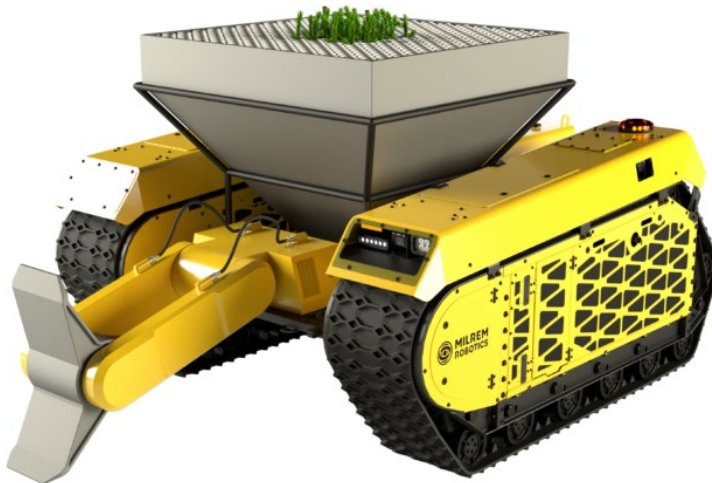
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This robot could help plant 1 trillion trees

10 Feb 2021

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Robot foresters could help to speed up reforestation projects across the world. Image: Milrem Robotics

- Conservationists say we need to plant one trillion trees to help slow climate change.
- Now a robot forester has been developed to help speed up reforestation.
- The robot is capable of planting a hectare of trees in under six hours.
- The vehicles can also be used to prepare the ground for planting, and can even plough snow.

Robots help us in many ways – from assembly lines to looking after the elderly. Now they’re turning their attention to combating climate change by helping to plant trees.

[Milrem Robotics, an Estonian company](#) which started off building autonomous tanks, has developed an autonomous robot forester that can plant and nurture young trees.

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The new [robot planter carries up to 300 saplings and can plant a hectare of forest in less than six hours.](#)

Although the robot forester is primarily designed for working in commercial forests, the designers say they believe it could be used to restore natural forests too.

Tackling deforestation

[Deforestation contributes 15% of all global greenhouse gas emissions](#), yet, according to the World Economic Forum's platform for the trillion trees community ([1t.org](#)), [the amount of carbon captured by existing forests could be doubled](#) simply by adopting sensible forestry practices.

[We lose 10 million hectares of trees every year to agriculture and logging](#) and conservationists say we need to plant a trillion trees to reverse forest cover loss and help slow climate change. A mature tree can capture an average [of 0.62 metric tons of carbon dioxide](#) over its lifetime – equivalent to the carbon emissions from driving a car 2,400 kilometres.

Tree planting is just one of a range of measures needed to combat climate change and scientists say [it's important to plant the right trees in the right place](#) for it to be effective. So reforestation efforts need all the help they can get.



Mock ups of robotic forester designs. Image: Milrem Robotics

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Faster reforestation

The robotic planters are equipped with [Lidar \(Light Detection and Ranging\)](#) which uses laser pulses to build up a three-dimensional image of the robots' surroundings and global positioning (GPS) to navigate precisely across the terrain.

The position of each sapling is logged in a database as it is planted, which means that a specialized brushcutter version of the robot forester can cut back competing growth without harming the young trees.

The robots were [developed in partnership with the University of Tartu, Tallinn University of Technology \(TalTech\) and the Estonian University of Life Sciences](#) and the project has been backed by a \$2.4 million grant from the European Union.



Preparing the soil: an autonomous vehicle demonstrates its ploughing skills. Image: Milrem Robotics/Estonian Research Council

A trillion trees

Makers Milrem Robotics say their robot vehicles can also be used to prepare the ground for planting by towing ploughs. In addition, they have been adapted to carry ploughs of a different kind, [clearing snow from the streets of the capital Tallinn](#).

These robotic planters are just one of the many new solutions beginning to surface in time for the decade of delivery on climate change. The [World Economic Forum's UpLink platform](#), alongside [1t.org](#), is helping innovations like this scale their efforts to conserve, restore and grow a trillion trees by 2030.



31 December 2021



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