

# Communities of heavy metal-rich soils in the Harz mountains



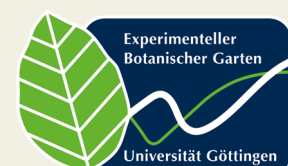
Communities of heavy metal-rich soils

High concentrations of heavy metals like lead, cadmium, copper or zinc are toxic for most plants. However, some plant species have developed adaptations that enable them to colonize heavy metal-rich soils. These plants are also referred to as metallophytes, and originally only occurred in very small patches where heavy metal-containing ores leached to the surface.

## Photos:

- 1** Mining activities, which began in the Harz over 3000 years ago, have destroyed most of the natural heavy metal-rich habitats (the plant community of the *Armerietum halleri*). Today, spoil heaps of disused mines or the waste from ore smelting are important man-made habitats of this plant community. Photo: L. Köhler
- 2** The rockcress *Arabidopsis halleri* is a typical metallophyte. The plant was named after the botanist Albrecht von Haller, who founded the Old Botanical Garden of the University of Göttingen. Photo: L. Köhler
- 3** The spring sandwort (*Minuartia verna*) mainly occurs in the higher elevations of the Alps. However, it is also found in heavy metal-rich habitats at lower elevations in Central Europe, where it can escape the competitive pressure of most other plants.

Photo: L. Köhler



Experimental Botanical Garden

More information

