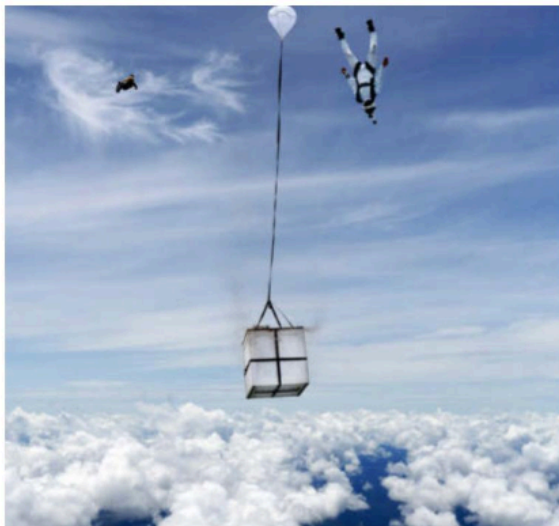




**LUIGI CANI**

# Jump for the trees

The skydiving legend has set new heights of green activism: planting 100 million trees at once



The germinator: Luigi Cani skydives to release 100 million seeds above the Amazon rainforest (pictured top)

Despite holding the world record for a skydive with the smallest parachute, and being the first person to wingsuit-jump into the Grand Canyon on a motorcycle, Luigi Cani's most nerve-racking stunt was his most recent.

"It was the only jump in my life that I held my breath the entire time," says the Brazilian, who has set 11 skydiving world records and completed around 14,000 jumps. "My heart was beating really fast. I felt like I was going to have a heart attack."

In January this year, Cani leapt from a plane flying over a deforested area of the Amazon rainforest; jettisoned with him was a box from which he released 100 million seeds from 27 native trees. Deforestation has ravaged the world's largest tropical rainforest for decades, and in 2021 the damage reached a 15-year-high, according to Brazil's National Institute for Space Research. There was no better time for Cani to make

a difference on the 100sq-km patch of land, situated 130km from Novo Aripuanã in the north of the country.

Five years of careful planning led to this project. Enormous effort was required to secure permits from Brazilian aviation authorities, build a biodegradable box that would distribute the seeds correctly, and transport 3.5 tonnes of equipment – plus a film crew – into the Amazon. Each seed was collected by hand from nearby rainforest two months before the jump to ensure an optimal chance of growing.

Of the numerous things that could go wrong, many did. Three test boxes each failed just days before the final drop. "We were running out of time," says Cani. "We stayed up all night trying to find a way to seal a leak in the box." On the day of the jump, he was under intense pressure to get it right. "I struggled to hold the box. I nearly broke my wrist and fingers. I managed to stabilise myself at about 6,000ft [1,800m] and the seeds were released precisely where we wanted them to be. It was complete ecstasy."

Once the seeds hit the dirt, the degree of germination is more than 95 per cent, and the resulting trees will grow as high as 50m tall. "We can watch the site by satellite. It will take around two years to really see the difference."

But Cani's environmental efforts are far from over. Planning for his next stunt – weaving together skydiving with cleaning up plastic from the ocean – is already underway. "I've been jumping for 25 years and I've always pushed the limits with risky jumps," he says. "Now, I'm 51 years old and I don't have that drive for danger any more. I want to do something to help. Like the seed drop, this next project will have real meaning behind it." [luigicani.tv](http://luigicani.tv); Instagram: @luigicani