



# Hyphen 68

News from the Office

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# The garden as diversity engine

Roel Deseyn

President Tuinhier



Roel Deseyn  
President Tuinhier

Diversity means variety. There is even a large diversity of derivatives of this word: variety, change, alternation, variegation, multiformity, multeity, and diversification.

Everyday gardeners get in touch with diversity. They even depend on the huge biodiversity for healthy plants.

Social diversity provides different challenges, but the garden can still function as an ideal binder.

The need for a durable vision and policy on diversity is necessary in this multicultural society. Associations that forget both to look around and to try to incorporate other target-groups are doomed to shrink and perhaps to fade out.

To reach different target groups you need a large diversity in approaches. Every situation is unique and demands a different approach. The garden has the capacity to connect, hence it is the ideal diversity engine!

Tuinhier wants to create a solid strategy. Like always it all starts with a plan or in our case a field study (general method collecting data about users, user needs etc. involving observation and interviewing). We created a digital brochure packed with tips, examples, collaborations and practical approaches. It is meant to inspire people. All tips are meant to be copied and used to create new stories.

*In our brochure we incorporated different areas of diversity:*

- Ethnical diversity
- Gender diversity
- Intergenerational diversity
- Different garden styles
- People with disabilities
- People with financial problems
- and more.

*The goals of our brochure are the following:*

- Promote the garden as a diversity engine.
- Show that working with diversity isn't that hard.
- Get to know the sector and create a long-term vision and strategy.

*Our n°1 rule is 'work with the target-group' and 'not for the target-group'.*

*Remark: The Hyphen 68 and 69 also present different areas of diversity both to inspire the readers to take action and to motivate the authorities to also promote our allotments as a "diversity engine" throughout Europe and Japan.*

# Allotments – Oases of diversity

Stephanie Mayerhofer Bakk.phil.



Many nations have joined forces in the International Office to pull together in the same direction. Already for this reason alone, diversity is an important issue. However, great diversity can also be seen within the individual countries.

In his editorial, Roel Deseyn, President of Tuinhier, explained why the topic of diversity is relevant for allotment gardeners, how different target groups can be reached and with what strategy.

But what is meant by the term diversity in allotments? First, this only means that there is an abundance of different kinds, forms or the like. Basically, almost everything can be diverse. In this Hyphen and the next one we will, however, concentrate on three areas.

## Social diversity

This often refers to the diversity of nations, which is frequently already apparent on the individual allotment site. People from different countries and cultures meet, exchange ideas and learn from each other.

However, also the wide range of social commitments, which are actively lived in many allotments, cannot be dismissed. Be it that the surrounding neighbours are given the opportunity to relax on the allotment site or the integration of the oldest and youngest people in our society or people with disabilities: The allotment gardeners prove again and again how important they are for the community.

## Gardening diversity

However, diversity can also mean different garden forms, cultivation methods and projects that are implemented in the individual gardens. Different cultures often also mean a different understanding of the allotment garden in itself: What are the priorities of the individual gardeners, what vegetables do they grow, how they grow them or whether they grow any at all.

The different sizes of allotment gardens in the different countries alone are manifold: There is plenty of scope between the small Japanese gardens with 10-30 m<sup>2</sup> and the gardens in Ger-

many or Austria with often several 100 m<sup>2</sup>.

## Biological diversity

Last but not least: diversity also means diversity of species. This means not only plants, but also animals, microorganism and fungi. Biological diversity is what makes life on earth possible for us. Preserving biodiversity should therefore be a top priority for all of us, but especially for gardeners who can in particular ensure that diversity remains alive by gardening as close to nature as possible.



This year, the report on global diversity by the World Biodiversity Council, which comprises more than 1700 pages and in which more than 500 experts participated, was published and was widely discussed. The fact is that biological biodiversity is declining everywhere. This makes the allotment gardens, which have been proven to be green oases in the city and thus make a major contribution to diversity, all the more important – studies from Germany (2008) and Austria (2019) confirm this.

## Allotments are diversity

In theory diversity in the allotment garden has many aspects. In summary, however, one can say: whether large or small gardens, young or old gardeners, in Europe or Asia, diversity are lived in the allotment gardens, under the umbrella of the International Office. The following examples from the individual countries are intended to illustrate this.

# Our allotment gardeners in Belgium have much diversity to show in their social engagement



## Onzen hof (Our garden)

### General info

“Ter Hovingen” is a residential care centre for elderly people and is the initiator in this garden project. They combined two needs with each other. The first: they did a survey with their inhabitants and they asked for more interaction. The second need came from a group of neighbours. The people in the surrounding streets have small gardens and wanted to create a neighbourhood garden on the grounds of ‘Ter Hovingen’.

The backyard of the centre is large and there were plans to reconstruct this garden. An allotment in the backyard was the ideal solution for both needs. One after one, new partners joined in on the project. The health centre of the neighbourhood, a family replacing home for people with a mental disability “GVT Gandae” and the local school all joined in, each adding extra value.

### Method

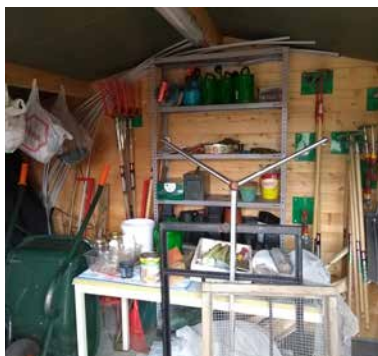
There is a steering group with volunteers and professional employees who communicate on an equal level and propose projects. Activities are organised and discussed there.

The garden itself is only 100 m<sup>2</sup> but an extension is on its way, doubling the size. There is a small greenhouse and a communal shed. There is a list of ‘to do’s’ and a logbook which records all done chores. Everyone who passes can perform some jobs and participate. Every partner has his

fixed gardening time, which overlaps to create interaction between the target groups. Most people just pass by and make a little chat. The steering group communicates their activities to the whole neighbourhood so new people can discover this project.

### Tips

- Participate in neighbourhood events and open up the garden (e.g.: garage sales). This makes the terrain more accessible and lowers the fear of trespassing.



- Every partner is responsible for his group and motivates new people
- Work together! Make sure all partners are convinced of the benefits.
- Create a match between the different motivations
- Do a yearly search for new volunteers
- Keep the tasks manageable and clear. (Logbook and to do's)
- Volunteers can pick up tasks according to their talents and free time.
- Work bottom-up, this way you create a strong basis
- Look for partners that support garden projects and know how to get extra funding through subsidies.

### Advantages

- You create a spontaneous and relaxing environment.
- The garden is not the goal but the means to create a social project
- Integration and creation of a sense of neighbourhood
- Healthcare promotion
- Helping volunteers within the healthcare sector
- The gardens are more used and there is more passage through the garden and thus more interaction with the inhabitants.

### Wishes per partner

- **Ter Hovingen:** interaction with the inhabitants, more passers-by in the gardens
- **Neighbourhood health centre:** an easily accessible meeting space in a healthy environment. Offer their patients a useful pass-time

where they can learn from one another, be active and meet new people.

- **GVT Gandae:** offer activities for their inhabitants in close proximity of their buildings.
- **Neighbours:** create an active neighbourhood that clings together and organises activities.
- **Primary school:** education in a healthy and green environment.

### Challenges

- Make sure that the project remains accessible for everyone. E.g.: no costs
- No obligations towards the volunteers.
- Keep convincing the management directors from all partners of the added value
- Constant communication about the project and its activities
- Mix people from different target groups.

### De Kroeme riek (the crooked pitchfork)

#### General info

This neighbourhood allotment was an initiative from the district Berendrecht-Zandvliet-Lillo. They wished to bring the people from the neighbourhood together. They also wanted a neighbourhood area where people could perform a shared hobby. With the allotments in the rise, their choice was easy!

#### Method

A group of volunteers from the neighbourhood was formed to start this project. These volunteers added a multicultural touch to it. The neighbourhood and the district are a multicultural environment. The board wished to see this cultural diversity reflected in their gardeners. To be-

come this healthy mix they started to work together with other partners. E.g.: vzw gezin (an association for the local Muslim community), KWB (socio-cultural association) and the service centre.

### The garden

The lay-out is made to promote integration and cooperation. There is a shared shed, a mutual herb garden and two shared water pumps. Mainly the water pumps are social meeting points. All 55 gardeners have to get their water from them, so occasionally there is a queue. All garden tools have to be shared. Then there is a special rule: everything that grows through the fence is for the passer-by and the neighbourhood. They purposely planted 60 apple and pear trees outside the fence.





## Tips

- Create a lot of smaller gardens close to each other which are not separated by a hedge. This creates a tremendous amount of social contact.
- Work with associations or the local community centre to reach other target groups.
- Create an open communication for everyone. E.g.: there was a gardener who had difficulties with the immigrated gardeners surrounding his garden. He reported this to the board and expressed his desire to get another garden. The board communicated this to all surrounding gardeners, to interpret his possible behaviour. They also informed the local community centre, so that they knew the situation, if they would get questions or complaints.
- Search for financial means to keep your project up and running. They subscribe in multiple subsidiary funds.
- Make sure that the volunteers can orient themselves at an easy pace and that they can choose their own duties. They will feel more at ease and the chance for a durable engagement is larger.
- Cooperate in local initiatives. They participate with "roefeldag": On these days schoolchildren visit companies, associations and shops and look what happens behind the screens.
- Create a welcome package for gardeners. In this project they offer a folder with the magazines, their own flyer, the agenda, seeds list for the group purchase and the regulations. Every year they receive a plant package with a price value of 7–8 Euros.

## Obstacles

- Kids that hang around in the summer vandalising the gardens  
**Solution:** at the moment there is no all fixing solution yet. The kids aren't interested in gardening; otherwise they would try to involve them. They try to find their parents and talk with them.
- Communication with gardeners of other cultures is harder because of the language barrier. They often don't have e-mail as well.  
**Solution:** they work together with the community centre for the Muslim community. They receive all mails and pass it through to the gardeners and other interested people. They also help in explaining the info.
- The target group is difficult to attract on activities  
**Solution:** On official meetings there is an official part where there is no alcohol served. After the official part alcohol is served. Offering alcohol is 'not done' in the Muslim culture. Because of that these gardeners tend to avoid events with alcohol, so they don't have to explain themselves constantly.
- More involvement of the entire neighbourhood in the project.  
**Solution:** Organise a fixed harvest moment for the orchard. This way there will be more social control and less vandalism.

## Success story

The gardeners are invited to the "iftar" for four years now. "Iftar" is the meal the Muslim community takes after sundown during the Ramadan. These meals are meant to be shared with friends and neighbours. For that occasion the gardeners are being invited.

**Licht en Ruimte Roeselare (Light and space)**

Roeselare knows a strong inflow of refugees and new Belgians. Tuinhier Roeselare saw multiple opportunities in working together with an OKAN-school on their new allotment site. This new project is situated next to a neighbourhood of a social housing company 'The Mandel'.

Every week the classes go to the gardens under supervision of their teacher and confidant. They can use six garden plots. The school has 12 classes which are split up in two groups; the first group goes to the garden from September to December and the second from February to June.

- **Winter jobs:** cleaning and refilling the paths, distribute compost
- **Early spring jobs:** sowing plants in the greenhouse and making the work and planting scheme.
- **Spring, summer and autumn jobs:** maintaining the plots, sowing, planting, harvesting ...

**OKAN Class for foreign speaking newcomers**

OKAN Roeselare gets about 150 new



students between twelve and eighteen per year. Often these kids are unaccompanied minors who reach our country. They come from all over the world e.g.: Syria, Somalia, Kurdistan, Romania, Poland, Afghanistan, etc.

OKAN guides and helps these youngsters in their integration process and teaches them the Dutch language. They try to offer a humane care with support towards the individual. They guide these youngsters to adulthood in a foreign country.

**Tips**

- Make sure you have a clear mission when starting a similar project.
- Make your mission sharper with the expertise of your partners.
- Search for achievable goals and use them as building blocks. Work step-by-step, don't try to achieve all goals in the first year.
- Make sure your project is seen and accessible.
- Try to involve the parents of these children, to reach an even bigger target group.
- Plants that are easy to use:  
Radishes  
Spinach  
Potatoes  
Peas

- Make sure there is a balance between learning activities and pass-time activities. This keeps the mood casual.
- Write accessible regulations with visuals.





- Communicate clearly with the neighbourhood
- Make sure there are enough helping hands. If someone drops out there are enough hands to catch up and it makes the work lighter.
- Give each partner a clear role: the local board offers technical advice in the gardens, OKAN offer their didactical skills and student guidance.



- Make a curriculum
- Offer garden tools for the classes. This lowers the threshold and makes the project more accessible:  
Boots  
Shovels
- Make sure there are enough partners in your project.
- Divide the harvest evenly amongst the students. This prevents possible tensions between students.

**Challenges**

- Lure the students to the garden after the class hours is tough.

**Solution:** the allotment is always accessible for all gardeners and involves the parents.

- Create more interaction with the neighbourhood.

**Solution:** organise more activities together with the neighbourhood.

- Not all students are equally motivated

- High need for extra volunteers to guide the regular allotment jobs.

- Create a sense of security to make the park more accessible and attractive.



# Switzerland: Integration on a day to day basis

## A diversity of nationalities in our gardens

Simone Collet



The preservation of biodiversity has become the major concern of a growing number of citizens. While plants and animals around the world are drastically declining in number and variety of species, there is one area, where diversity is incredibly high: that of the countries of origin from which the gardeners who cultivate allotment garden plots in Switzerland come from.

This is an authentic biodiversity, because these gardeners transform their garden plots into a truly alive place, where everyone brings with him the customs, plant varieties and cultivation methods, which are specific to his country of origin.

### The evolution of the allotment gardens

The allotment gardens created during the last century were destined to enable economically underprivileged families to get fresh and healthy products. However, the situation of these gardens, later renamed as family gar-

dens, has largely evolved along with the entire society over the years.

The proportion of Swiss gardeners cultivating the plots has gradually decreased. Having become old, they left their gardens, often without their children taking them over. Since then, they have been gradually replaced by families from elsewhere, sometimes coming from very far. "There are still many native gardeners here, however, there are now often many who come from Italy, Portugal and the Balkans" says Fredy Doser, president of the Allmend Blindenheim association, in the German speaking part of Lucerne. He successfully organised the recent 2019 delegates' meeting of the Family garden federation, held in Lucerne on June 15th.

### Situation in the French speaking part of Switzerland

In the French speaking part of Switzerland below the Sarine, the gardeners of the five regional sections of the Romandy (Aigle, Fribourg, Geneva, Lausanne and Morges) have today very

often a foreign origin. They arrived in Switzerland with their ancient practices and they brought along a great diversity of often unknown varieties, sometimes cultivated in earlier times by our grand-parents and later fallen into oblivion. What a pleasure to rediscover for example old vegetables, that we did not see for a long time and that are now back in the allotment gardens! These gardeners coming from elsewhere are thus returning some of the rich biodiversity of the past to us, which we had thoughtlessly lost. May they be sincerely thanked for this!

The impressive number of national flags proudly hoisted on the plots of the various groups in the Romandy testifies of the rich diversity of the gardeners' countries of origin. Floating in the wind above the plots, they are a distinguishing mark to find one's way while looking for a plot. One only has to look up and one sees sometimes from far an abundant forest of flags accompanying with all their colours the flag of the Swiss federation.



**In the capital of the canton VAUD**

In Lausanne, the association of family gardens (ALJF), chaired by president Jean-Marie Brodard, comprises 570 plots regrouped on eight allotment sites.



According to the accurate count of nationalities of gardeners of the ALJF, regularly updated by Albert Massard, president of the beautiful site of Rionzi, Swiss gardeners represent 34% of all the gardeners. They are closely followed by the impressive group of Portuguese nationals, who reach 33%. Next are the gardeners from Italy (15%), Spain (7%), Eastern European countries (5%) and various other countries (3%). Kurdish (2%) and Turkish people come at the end (1%).



One can quote one extreme case: the smallest group in Lausanne is Petit-Flon with only 17 plots of which only 12% are cultivated by Swiss gardeners. An overwhelming majority of 88% of the gardeners is therefore of foreign origin.



We are not at the Care Bears and all is obviously not always easy with all these nationalities gardening close together. All the flags do not flow at the same time. A gardener from a Middle-Eastern country whispered into my ear that he flew the flag of his country only when his neighbour, a national of a country fighting his own, was absent. Another admitted to quickly fly the flag of a region wishing autonomy, when the official flag of his country was not flying!



**The gardens of Fribourg and surroundings**

Spread over four sectors, 297 plots are cultivated by the gardeners unified in the allotment garden association of Fribourg and surroundings (AJFFE) chaired by Numa Courvoisier: „If, in 1992, nearly 80 % of the members were retired people, all age classes are now represented, with retired people forming only 20% of the



total. Many gardeners, which are still working in professional life, come to the garden and work here with their families”. More than 20 different nationalities are represented. Of the 273 members of the association, 111 are Swiss, 51 from Portugal, 27 from Italy, 14 from Turkey, 8 from Spain, 7 from Vietnam, 4 from France, 3 from Bosnia, 3 from Serbia-Montenegro. Other gardeners come from ancient Yugoslavia, Tunisia and Macedonia. At the end of the list we find with one single national, the following countries: Albania, Algeria, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Iraq and Kosovo.

**The section of Morges**

The group of Morges has 127 tenants. As on most French speaking sites, gardeners come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Half are Portuguese and only one third are Swiss. The others come from Italy, Spain, Turkey, France, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro. "It is really not desirable that plots are grouped by nationality; this would be



contrary to the spirit of the gardens which privileges sharing, exchange and diversity” declares the president Jean-Claude Colombara.

### The section of Aigles-Riviera

„In recent years the family gardens have undergone a profound change. Before, there were many families with young children. But today, society has changed dramatically” commented president Alexander Dalla Costa. “Children have more outdoor sports activities and there are proportionally fewer families here” says committee member Willy Kovar. “Today we give priority to young families; we must

give back the cultivation of gardens to the children” concludes the president.

### Extraordinary diversity in Geneva

At the Western end of Switzerland is located the largest association of the French speaking part of Switzerland, the Geneva allotment garden federation (FGJF) which is chaired by Jean-Paul Gygli. The FGJF has 2.136 members coming from an incredible number of different countries, where Portugal again dominates (474 gardeners) followed by Italy (292). Then comes Spain (105) followed by far by France (30), Turkey (15) and Bos-

nia-Herzegovina (11), the latter being merged today.

We then find Germany (7), which is followed very closely by Great-Britain, Rumania, Uruguay, Serbia, Morocco, Iraq, Croatia, Chile, Afghanistan, the USA, Tunisia, Russia, the Netherlands, Honduras, Algeria, Denmark, Canada, Bolivia, Zambia, Vietnam, Thailand, Rwanda, Poland, Peru, Mauritius, Libya, Latvia, India, Japan, Iran, Eritrea, Brazil, Bulgaria, Austria and Armenia.

In short, only few countries in the world are not represented in the gardens at the end of the lake!

## All are welcome: allotment gardens especially adapted for people with reduced mobility in French speaking Switzerland

Frédéric Schär



The year 2000 marked a turning point for the Geneva allotment garden federation, which, under the impetus of a visionary president, decided to create plots for people with reduced mobility. At the beginning, it was necessary to convince the most hesitant members of the committee, cantonal and municipal authorities, architects and project managers, because this project was not a foregone conclusion.

Fear of the other, technical problems, specific standards to be respected for this type of equipment, mobility problems inside the allotment garden site, who will take care of the support for these people, etc.

In 2002, a new extension of the site Plan-les Ouates was on the horizon, following the closing down of the allotment site of Pinchat. It was the per-

fect opportunity to create something new and to put the federation's decision into practice. We met people interested in our project and received the support of the authorities in general. The work on Plan-les Ouates began in 2004 and two garden plots for people with reduced mobility were immediately integrated into the project.

At the same time, in 2004, the munic-



ipality of Grand-Saconnex launched the allotment garden project on its territory. Here again, the Geneva federation was involved and was able, from the beginning of the project, to propose the integration of a specially laid out plot.

During the two inaugurations, in the presence of the authorities and the press, the federation's leaders were widely rewarded for their efforts. They were able to measure the joy and happiness by receiving the large smiles of these new, somewhat unusual gardeners, who were able to take possession of their plots.

All the speakers welcomed this original initiative of the Geneva federation and all underlined the vision of inte-

grating these people with reduced mobility in the allotment garden world.

From a construction point of view, two different systems of raised beds have been installed. For Plan-les-Ouates, these are containers assembled from wooden beams, lined with a special canvas, while for Grand-Saconnex for cost reasons; the municipality opted for containers made with concrete borders. Later, this concrete received wooden cladding thus allowing a better integration in the gardens as a whole. The three thus equipped plots allow wheelchair access on all sides of the beds.

A small difference, the garden site of Plan-les-Ouates received two small chalets of 2.5 x 2.5 metres, each one equipped with an access ramp for wheelchairs.

Both garden sites are equipped with a common building with a toilet especially adapted for wheelchairs.

Later, in 2014, a new allotment garden area "Champ Bossu" was created. Here too, some plots have been reserved for people with reduced mobility.

Many associations and homes for the elderly have shown interest in the project, developed by the Geneva federation. It provided them with all the specific data and the required standards for these equipments, as well as the costs. These organisations created then themselves similar facilities for the great happiness of their inhabitants.

If today we talk a lot about diversity in allotment gardens, what about human diversity! Young and old, all nationalities, devote themselves to their passion for gardening, which is enrichment for everyone. People with reduced mobility have their place in our contemporary society, and, therefore, also in allotment gardens. This is what triggered the Geneva federa-

tion's reflections, which can congratulate itself for having been a pioneer in this field.

### *A little downside*

For the almost twenty years, that these special facilities have existed, it sometimes has happened that these gardens do not immediately find people with reduced mobility ready to use them. On the other hand, they can bring happiness to the elderly, who do not need to abandon their hobby as gardeners, at least for a while. They can maintain a precious contact with their contemporaries, practice a healthy outdoor activity, without forgetting the importance of the social and friendly contact that reigns in allotment gardens. This occupation prevents isolation, which too often becomes a major problem as age progresses.

Thus, the allotment garden plays a role of intergenerational, multicultural, multinational cement, which contributes to a better understanding in all this human diversity.

We hope that through our project we will arouse the interest of other allotment garden associations to create specific spaces for all these people, who do not or no longer have the chance to move without auxiliary means and who are limited in their daily lives. Should also elderly people be able to continue their gardening hobby until an advanced old age.

We would like to express special thanks to the authorities and to all those who have contributed directly or indirectly to these wonderful achievements.

# Luxembourg: The gardens of Matgesfeld – an open space for children to discover nature

David Hengen

Amis des fleurs Belvaux



The community gardens “Matgesfeld” are open, without fencing and with a transition to the open nature. Moreover, they are surrounded by meadows and groups of trees, pastures for horses, cows, donkeys etc., a small animal breeding facility...

If you plan to go into nature to explore it, you don't need a key. Areas of unspoiled nature are usually freely accessible at any time without a ticket. So are the Matgesfeld Gardens in the village of Beles in the municipality of Sanem in Luxembourg. It is an open place where children are encouraged to experience nature around the vegetable gardens.

Thus, the children, who accompany their parents to gardening, use the surrounding nature to let off some steam. The climbing trees are particularly popular. Animals can also be observed, like the bees which can



be seen through a glass pane at the bee house. Ducks, geese, chickens and rabbits are kept in the small animal breeding facility; donkeys, horses and cows on the adjacent pastures. The large chicken aviary belongs to the garden itself. This is freely accessible so that you can experience the chickens up close. Is there something in the egg flap?

School classes also use the garden for nature lessons. The school garden of the primary school, which is not far from the garden, is integrated here. Clearly arranged with high beds for the children and seats, there is a lot growing here. The nursery from the French town of Rédange also has a garden plot. Here the members of the horticultural association help the children with words and deeds. The new greenhouse as well as the work room in the bee house makes year-round activities in the garden possible.

The direct contact between gardeners and children should be emphasised. Older plot holders can also be found in the garden during school hours and are happy to answer the children's many questions. The children are also happy to show their parents the garden and share what they have learned. Hence, the concept of an open garden for all seems to work.



# The method of vegetable cultivation in the allotment gardens in Japan

Yoshiharu Meguriya



European people may think that the allotment gardens in Japan are different from those in Europe. However, when we established allotment gardens in Japan, we took the “Kleingarten” in Germany and the allotment garden in England as models. Therefore, I think that the allotment gardens in Japan are not fundamentally different from those in Europe.

However, the natural environment of Japan is warm, and we have an oceanic climate, so the plant growth is very early. We can thus cultivate vegetables throughout the whole year.

Moreover, the social framework of Japan is based on free economy with little regulation. The population is concentrated in the big city areas and the city land price is very high. Here some examples of the present land price: Tokyo, Ginza 4-chome: 55,500,000 yen/sqm; Chiba, Before JR Chiba Station: 1,650,000 yen/sqm.

Therefore, a plot on an allotment garden site has a size, so that weeding is possible. Furthermore, the plot will have a size of which, people using the allotment garden, can pay the fee. For these reasons the size of an allotment will be about 10-30 sqm.



The situation in which people use an allotment resembles to that in England and France. In almost all allotment gardens, people are performing vegetable cultivation. The kinds of vegetables grown in all allotments are potatoes and tomatoes. However,





er, I also tried to cultivate cabbage. Sweet potatoes and watermelons are very popular, but because a large area is needed in a general cultivation method, many people have given up. Then, I decided about five years ago to grow these crops in three dimensions.

### First the cultivation of sweet potatoes.

I prepared on my plot the 1-sq m place in which I wanted to plant sweet potatoes. I firmly put 4 props (2 m in length) in the four corners of the place. Furthermore, I also placed one prop in

the centre. I planted the seedling of a sweet potato inside a prop from the end of May till early June. I planted one seedling next to the central prop. A vine will begin to extend about one week after the planting of the seedlings. I bundled the vine, which came out of one seedling, with one prop, and lengthened it upwards. As for the root of the five stocks, space is maintained till the middle of their growth. So, sunlight shines upon the stock, and since it is airy, a vine grows well. By October, the branch-vine will also have extended and the five stocks will have become entangled in one and they will have grown thick like one tree. By the end of October and beginning of November leaves will begin to change from yellow to brown and there will be the time of sweet-potato digging (harvest). Before digging up the potatoes I cut down the vine and all the vines spreading from the five stocks can pile up to a mountain of over 1 metre. Sweet potatoes can also be cultivated in a line. In this way bigger sweet potatoes will be harvested and children are very pleased. When the harvest was gathered two years ago, I measured the full weight of the potatoes from the stock which had most yields. The result exceeded 4 kg. I would like to spread this method to the allotment gardens.

### Second, the cultivation of watermelons

The area needed for the cultivation of watermelons is still larger than the one needed for sweet potatoes.

Watermelons like sweet potatoes are planted into the ground and then taken upwards. However, a watermelon attaches heavy fruits to the vine. For this reason, after planting five props like for sweet potatoes, I attach the prop to several steps connecting these five props horizontally. Furthermore, I also attach a slanting prop so that the vine of the watermelon can gradually reach upwards. So an area of 1.8-m-high solid space is made from 1 sqm, and I can harvest

5-8 watermelons, if it rises favourably. I have been trying for five years now: The first year I harvested three watermelons from two shares of seedlings. However, the 2nd and 3rd year, I suffered vermin damage just before harvest, and then I was the victim of external theft. I failed in seedling rising last year. The purchased seed this year had a bad germination rate, and the growth of a seedling was also delayed.

### Third, the cultivation of broccoli, cauliflower etc

I will try to grow a seedling for broccoli or cauliflower in July. I'll cultivate a seedling on a house veranda. The cauliflower seedlings are six species of white, orange, purple, violet, green, and Romanesque.

If we have various kinds and even if we are cultivating only one kind of vegetable, we can also enjoy ourselves. The allotment garden in Japan has only few plantations in which the user (Gardener) can organise himself freely. I have my organisation and I enjoy being able to create the world in my allotment garden according to my fantasy.





# The allotment association “De Smallen Entrée” in Torhout (B) received the diploma for ecological gardening



The project is only 3 years old, but is already a lively park with a good, sociable and cosy vibe. The park is well hidden behind a typical Belgian ribbon development. It was an unused open space enclosed by houses. An old remnant of an orchard was on the premises.

The city counsel was looking for a new spot for a new allotment in 2014 because of the long waiting list on their first project. This old orchard was the ideal spot, nearby the city centre and ideal soil. Their first condition was to create an ecological allotment. In 2015 the project was realised and they immediately candidate for the Ecological garden label Tuinher launched the year before.

## Actions

The trees that were still alive from the old orchard were saved and incorporated in the plans. To ensure the life of the trees, they were pruned by profes-

sionals and an area around the tree trunk had to be planted with perennial plants to protect the roots.

A long-term plan was made for all green areas separately e.g. trees, floral borders, the ditch, etc. These plans described the annual jobs that have to be done to make them richer in biodiversity. E.g.: annual mowing, etc.

A complete garden was sacrificed for a mutual green area with bee-friend-



ly plants and host plants for wild animals. With the pruning of the trees a dead hedge was made to lure hedgehogs and other useful animals.

Some more experienced gardeners started a demo-garden. Good practices and experiments are done here. Every weekend a garden expert visits the park and the gardeners can come over to ask questions. Diseases or plagues can be spotted very quickly this way.





Every 3 year they do a soil analysis to prevent over-fertilizing. The analysis provides advice and a general view on the health of their soil.

During 2 years they were guided in the project 'Ecological garden label'. In 2018 they were rewarded 3 out of 4 stars for their efforts.

# The allotment garden association "KGV Steinfeld" in Graz (A) received the diploma for ecological gardening



This allotment site was founded in 1914. The well-known beer brewers from Graz, the brothers Reininghaus, created this site for their workers.

Of course, the development of allotment gardening are continued here. After several changes of ownership, the property is now owned by a Viennese real estate company. The tenants can also look back on a general lease agreement that is over 100 years old.

The site has a surface of 34.150 m<sup>2</sup> and the association has 243 members. This means, that the individual plots have a size between 100 and 150 m<sup>2</sup>. Because of that, but also because of tradition, these gardens are characterised by a lush vegetable cultivation. Here, gardening in the original sense is still highly valued. In the by-laws of the association an obligatory cultivation of vegetables and fruit is prescribed. Of course, we pay attention to ecology. So it is just natural, that every gardener grows his own compost. But also, by the setting up of three to four rain barrels on each plot and the associated water saving, resources are handled very carefully. Of course, all of the paths of this site are not paved, but only gravelled.

What was smiled at a few years ago and was considered as backward is now very much in demand again among young gardeners, who want to grow their own vegetables. It is a green, ecological oasis in one of the most heavily built-up areas of Graz.

It is for this reason that we applied for the allotment association Steinfeld, for the diploma for ecological gardening.



# The Herttoniemi Allotment Garden Association “Herttoniemen siirtolapuutarhayhdistys” in Helsinki (FI) received the diploma for innovative projects



## “Give the Flowers and Plants a New Life” -project

The project “Give the flowers and plants a new life” is carried out in cooperation with the municipally owned Itäkeskus service home for elderly.

This unique project is a good example of how an allotment garden association can also enrich the environment outside the area it manages. By hard work and with plant donations, the allotment gardeners of the Herttoniemi association have improved the habitat of the more than 100 elderly living in a service home.

The project will further continue in



2019, but the Finnish Federation wanted to apply for a diploma already now – on one hand, in order to thank the association for the work already done and, on the other hand, to give encouragement for the future tasks.

## The association: Herttoniemen siirtolapuutarhayhdistys

The Herttoniemi Allotment Garden Association, founded in 1934, manages a 7.5 ha area with 182 plots, all equipped with a small cottage. The allotment site was originally established outside Helsinki, in the city's rural municipality that nowadays is a city called Vantaa. Herttoniemi was annexed to the city of Helsinki on

1946. Today the allotment garden is located next to the Metro track and the bustling Eastern highway, adjacent to both the old and new Herttoniemi living areas, and the conservation areas of Kivinokka and Viikki.

The nine allotment gardens in Helsinki are unique and historically valuable green areas in the urban structure. All the gardens are classified as public parks. On their own site the allotment gardeners in Herttoniemi delight the bypassers with beautiful flowering gardens. The plots also include several apple trees and other fruit trees, raspberry benches, berry shrubs and a diversity of herb and kitchen gardens.



### The service home: Itäkeskuksen palvelutalo

The Itäkeskus service house, owned by the city of Helsinki, consists of 3 group homes and 51 service apartments, as well as a daytime unit. The group homes – called Calendula, Cornflower and Dandelion – each have 13-14 inhabitants with memory disorders. The service house has common lounges, a dining room and sauna facilities, as well as outdoor activities in the yard and garden.

### Project background

The social instructor of the Itäkeskus service house actively searched for partners, who could help in the vast and wild garden area of the facility. The city of Helsinki did not allocate funds for this purpose. The facility wanted donations of seeds and perennial seedlings to create a comfortable garden to enhance the wellbeing of the memory disordered and other elderly inhabitants.

A request for assistance was sent to the Finnish Federation that further directed it to the allotment garden associations in Herttoniemi and Marjaniemi, located near the service house. Both associations welcomed the request and met the challenge.

### Carrying out the project

The Marjaniemi association provided the service house with some plants, but unfortunately the association did not have resources to participate in the project more broadly.

After discussions and a visit to the Itäkeskus facility, the allotment gardeners of Herttoniemi stated that the desolated garden needs soil, watering, new plants and a big amount of work. It was agreed to first renovate the largest planting area in the yard. It is a visible ensemble and the inhabitants are often seated beside it. The Herttoniemi Allotment Garden Association promised to help with planning, perennials, work and counselling.

The experts at the Allotment Garden Association made a garden plan for the service house and gathered, within their allotment site, plenty of plants that were delivered to the facility. The plantation area was renovated with 'talkoot' (voluntary work), to which in addition to the Herttoniemi allotment gardeners also the service house residents and staff were invited. The hard work was done by the allotment gardeners, the service house instructor and her family. The residents of the service house participated in planting flower bulbs and overseeing the progress of the work.

At the widest point of the planting area, large plants of flowering perennials of different colours were placed. Otherwise, the planting area was filled with plants giving variety and attractiveness. Altogether more than forty different varieties of perennials were planted.

In addition to the Herttoniemi allotment gardeners, plants and seeds were also donated by Marjaniemi allotment gardeners, Hyötykasviyhdistys (The Useful Plants Association) and private persons.

Besides the renovation of the planting area, a low-lying area by the wall was rebuilt, with herbs and perennials planted. A small tree was poured out of the garden and the berry bushes that were already there were moved to give the garden a clearer space for the residents of the service house – for playing and staying.

The project continued in the spring of 2019, with the intention of renovating smaller planting areas and adding compact cultivation of herbs to the garden.



# The allotment garden association "KGV Schönau" in Graz (A) received the diploma for innovative activities



The allotment site "Schönau" founded in 1915 is one of the oldest in Graz. It is a 104 years old.



With 520 members and 134.672 m<sup>2</sup>, this site is and always was the largest allotment site in Styria.

Managing such a large site has always been a big challenge for the volunteers. Therefore, these women and men, who have taken on this work up to now, deserve our biggest thanks.

By constant improvements of the infrastructure, but also by changes of the Graz allotment garden regulation, the self-catering gardens, which at the time served to feed the population, became today's leisure paradise for many people in Graz.

It is particularly worth mentioning that already in 1989, in an ecologically far-sighted way, a club-owned apiary was built.

Today, 30 years later, there are discussions everywhere in the cities about the protection and possibilities for the promotion of the bee population. So, we cannot thank the pioneers of that

time enough for their farsightedness in preserving the ecosystem.

At present there are 4 beehives with approx. 800,000 bees on the site. These are professionally cared for by a beekeeper, and the harvested honey can be bought cheaply from the association by the members.

For this reason, the diploma for innovative activities is granted to the allotment garden association Schönau in 2019.



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