



# Allotments – discover nature with children

Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux





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# Allotments – discover nature with children



MALOU WEIRICH

In 2004 the Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux published a booklet entitled “Allotment gardens – discovery areas for children”. The aim was to make everyone aware of what a garden can bring to children who are the world of tomorrow.

The booklet demonstrated that allotment gardens form areas for children to discover and experience; they contribute to their development, teaching them to be respectful of other people and of nature. They help them discover birth, growth and death in the garden and hence contribute to their understanding of the circle of life, teaching them the concept of democracy, solidarity and tolerance thanks to community life, and protect them from a number of dangers in the city.

Many things have happened since then. A number of innovative projects have been put in place.

However, the environment in which children grow up is often deteriorating. On the one hand, it is due to the increasing population in built-up areas, and to the disappearance of plants, animals and green spaces in urban areas. On the other hand, it is due to often spending too much time in the virtual world, playing vi-

deo games, replacing direct interpersonal communication with sending text messages, using Facebook etc. The number of problem children has risen.

This second booklet, called: “Allotments – discover nature with children” which discusses the topic “to sensitize children for nature and through nature in allotment gardens”, has two objectives.

The first objective is on one hand to give hints on how to make children aware of nature and the circle of life and on the other hand the need to protect and respect it – as it constitutes the basics of human, animal and plant life – through activities in the allotment garden and/or in the allotment garden association. The central motto is “He who sows knowledge will profit from an abundant harvest”.

The second objective is to give ideas on how to reintegrate children and young people into school or work through connections and work in nature and, especially, in the allotment garden. This objective is based on a statement by an Austrian social worker: “He who builds a children’s nest makes prison walls crumble” or, in other words, “He who accompanies children in the allotment garden, in

a place of peace and beauty, and makes it possible for them to experience it, protects them from the many dangers they will face in the future”.

Read this booklet carefully. Familiarise yourselves with the allotments’ potentials in order to build a bridge for children’s futures via the allotment garden, so they can see that nature must be protected and become a solid cornerstone for the future.

The development and the preventative preservation of the Earth and society for tomorrow rest on our shoulders.

Let’s tackle this challenge head on. The allotment garden is a tool to make it happen.

Malou WEIRICH  
General Secretary of the  
Office International du Coin de Terre  
et des Jardins Familiaux



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FERNAND ETGEN

**L**ess and less children have the opportunity to help in a vegetable garden within their family. The reasons thereof are manifold.

First of all families simply do not have a garden anymore. In many towns this is not a new problem. However, also in rural areas the number of those who do no more have an own garden at their disposal is increasing due to the pricing pressure on the housing market. Allotment sites present an ideal answer in this context. However, there are often not enough plots at their disposal.

Attitudes like for example: "Why should we cultivate food ourselves, if we can buy it without any efforts at any season and generally at a good price in the supermarket" are now shared consciously or unconsciously, by an increasing part of our society.

The parents' professional life and the lack of the necessary knowledge prevent many families from investing time in cultivating a vegetable garden.

Nevertheless, this brochure shows in an impressive way what an allotment can offer especially to children. Hereafter just a few keywords that have to be underlined in this context: healthy food, comprehension of the cycles of nature, appreciation of food, awareness of the environment, physical activity, patience, self-esteem, internal calm, reduction of stress, social contacts or just simply pleasure. However, it is also certain that not only children can benefit from the projects presented in this brochure.

It is great to see how the allotment movement faces these new developments. I am fascinated by the excellent ex-

amples, realized in different countries, with different starting points and innovative methods.

Therefore my call upon all: Imitation absolutely required!

Fernand ETGEN  
Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture  
and Consumer protection Luxembourg



CAROLE DIESCHBOURG

One cannot harness enough the great openness of children: their curiosity as well as the facility by which they can be impressed, astonished and fascinated. It is important that they recognize that their own roots are those of the life surrounding them, of the nature feeding and protecting them.

This nature will be an integral part of the precious souvenirs of their childhood, which they will wish to protect and to transmit themselves once they will be adults.

The Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux works with this precise aim. It is a pleasure and an honour to support these efforts. I invite the reader to discover the wealth of the projects described in this brochure, which by their great diversity are a real source of inspiration. Many of these elements can be easily implemented by the family or integrated in a school or a commune.

I rely above all on children to safeguard our natural heritage and our quality of life. It is our task to help them to deve-

lop the consciousness which will guide them on this path.

Carole DIESCHBOURG  
Minister for Environment  
Luxembourg



VIVIANE REDING

A new era is upon us. The men and women of the 21st century are digital. Digital intelligence has invited itself into our lives and those of our children, ranging from goods to services, transport to energy, phones to cars, and from school to leisure. This permanent connectivity sometimes disconnects us from real life. No aspect of our daily life has escaped. We want to be able to consume all products, all the time and everywhere, including food products. When shopping isn't done online, it's fast food or supermarkets that do take-away. Whatever the season, wherever we live, we want strawberries or asparagus. This digital revolution redefines our space-time.

Faced with these changes, society needs to find its bearings. Allotment gardens are one of these, because they were thought of at the beginning as a response to the second industrial revo-

lution. At the end of the 19th century, in France, it was Father Lemire, great defender of socialist Catholicism and driver of a great number of avant-gardist reforms, who was the first to create allotments, in order to give the head of a family a patch of land to grow necessary vegetables to eat at home.

Times change, but the importance of allotment gardens is no less essential. Not anymore to feed workers and their families, but to teach our children about how to feed themselves, about healthy, local, balanced and biological produce. They also reinforce the social ties between neighbours of differing generations or cultures.

In an increasingly digital world, allotment gardens have a very high added value in social, dietary, environmental and educational terms. It is a place to share, where you can pass on the love for the planet and where you can teach

the benefits of nature. It is essential for future generations to be aware of the world that surrounds them and it is the responsibility of parents to urge them to preserve it, to make it live and pass on its heritage.

The 21st century is digital. Yes, but to be sustainable, it must also and especially be environmentally friendly."

Viviane REDING  
Member of the  
European Parliament  
Former Vice-President  
of the European Commission



Belgium:

# A vegetable garden for our children

J. P. Quartier

A vegetable garden without a garden, nobody finds that abnormal anymore.

Growing vegetables and spices in a one meter square tray is the latest thing. Even an old wine crate will do...

Playing outside is healthy and fun!

You become creative and skillful, and that stimulates all of a child's senses. Give children space and some materials, and the party can start in a natural setting.

Let them discover their own (im)possibilities.

What's better than having your own little garden?

To grow your own vegetables like father does!

Gardening together, that is a new trend.

Working in the garden is more pleasant and healthy.

A vegetable garden for your children is the best present you can give them. A small patch of earth (one square meter) where they can learn to sow, plant, touch, taste, smell and harvest; a small taste of the planet, for which they care and are responsible. It is a fundamental part of their education.

They can gain a lot of sensory experience there: the smell of the earth, the feel of a leaf, the structure of compost, the way water works. They can learn to watch plants, their growth and their flowering up to the discovery of the harvest and the taste of the freshness in the roots, fruit, leaves and flowers. In that way they learn to appreciate what is grown and they feel the link with nature, the weather, the seasons, but above all with the environment, the idea of the cycle of life and basic knowledge of self-sufficiency.

How do we do that?

We help them by working together. A few squared meters or some pots are enough to start with.

It's not about harvesting kilos of vegetables, but above all about arousing the pleasure of watching the growth cycle, the adventure of growing something for yourself to eat.

We start with some simple radishes, which we sow a centimeter apart, using the colours red, white, purple or a mix of all colours; long, short, round, oval, or a mixture. The harvest follows a few weeks later... and isn't the taste delicious?

We do the same thing with mange-tout peas, salads, cherry tomatoes, sunflowers, nasturtiums and finally some red currants, with which mum makes a pie...!



At the start of the photo shoot the children have a five meter square plot and we diagonally place six trays of one square meter.

Join in with us and register with the Tuinhier/allotment gardeners.

Germany:

## Nowinka: Young, but deep-rooted

When you arrive in Cottbus, you can't help but notice that here German isn't the only spoken language, and many official signs are bilingual. In fact, Cottbus is the political and cultural centre of the Sorbian people in Basse-Lusace, a recognised minority of the country with its own language and culture also, Cottbus is not only called Cottbus, but Cho'sebuz.

Cottbus is the only region in Germany that is officially bilingual. The name of the "Nowinka" allotment garden association is a testimony to this. In Sorbian, it means "New earth". In fact, this allotment site is one of the youngest in Germany, dating back barely 25 years ago. This also explains its location on the outskirts of the town, which makes it a major part of Cottbus's green belt, nestled at the heart of an allotment garden site that contributes to the wealth of the whole town. Although the town of Cottbus has for a long time fought against exodus and a falling population, no garden is vacant. The people know how to appreciate the beauty and numerous advantages of having their own garden. As soon as a garden becomes free, it is handed to families with children as a priority, preferably to those living close by.

If the residents of Cottbus enjoy gardening, is it certainly not only because of the good fruit and vegetables that they can grow themselves. The gardeners' engagement is in fact so varied that they are considered, especially at the highest political level, as the second social force of the town, just behind sporting associations. For example, the

gardeners voluntarily take part in the "Cottbus associations' day" and, if at the time of the harvest there are more fruit and vegetables than they can eat themselves, they give the surplus to the Cottbus food bank. Emphasis is also placed on transferring knowledge about nature to the younger generation. For that reason, a partnership agreement was signed with the primary school from the UNESCO project. Thanks to this project, the children can learn a multitude of things about nature and the environment from experienced allotment gardeners, directly on site, so to speak. To keep the harvests abundant, a discovery garden with bees and bee keeping have been set up. People who are interested can find all the necessary information about the small working insects and their rearing there. The sugary honey is a delicious by-product.

However, the bees are not the only things that prove that the Cottbus gardeners are as engaged on an environmental front as a social one. Situated on the edge of the river Spree and in close proximity to the main Schmellwitz River, "Nowinka" is also part of a true biotope. Thanks to measures put in place by the gardeners such as a frogs' migration path and the little streams – left partly in a natural state – form an essential resting place for amphibians and other aquatic animals. It is therefore no surprise that the Cottbus gardeners are appreciated by everyone, as they enrich the town in so many different ways.



Students from the UNESCO-Project School.



Germany:

# The allotment association “Am Südhang e.V.” is very well placed in children’s hands

Zwickau in Saxony had a tormented history. Martin Luther narrowly escaped here an attempted murder by finding refuge in an inn. Two very different celebrities characterize perfectly well the town’s diversity. On one hand the romantic composer Robert Schumann was born here and on the other hand the town is famous for its more than a hundred year old tradition of car construction. The town is in fact also the birthplace of the “Trabi”.

The urban area of Marienthal hosting the allotment site “Am Südhang” has only belonged to Zwickau since 1900. Before, it was an independent locality. Today you cannot notice much of this fact anymore, because Marienthal is situated close to the town centre. The name “Am Südhang” already constitutes a whole program: The site is situated on a very nice slope – offering the best conditions for gardening. However, above all the site is completely in the hands of children. Work with the youngest is the allotment gardeners’ priority and they can show impressive results.

In the “Schreberino-Garden” the young gardeners work to their heart’s content. However, they do not only plant and harvest. They also learn how to prepare tasty dishes with the garden products. There is no better way to make children learn from their youngest age onwards to appreciate the value of our food. There is also a playground to let steam off and a barefoot path where children can discover nature with all their senses. This project was realized in cooperation with the

day-care centre “Anne Frank” situated nearby. 127 children stay all day long in the day care centre. Approximately 20% come regularly to visit the garden and the allotment gardeners like this; especially the cooperation between the members, the children, the parents and the educators which is characterized by a relaxed living together.

Not only children are appreciated guests on the site “Am Südhang”. Some empty plots are in fact cultivated by unemployed people in cooperation with the job centre of Zwickau. Here they can have a meaningful occupation within a pleasant community. The harvest is offered to the food bank of Zwickau and is thus given to people in need living in this town.

The people using the site for a walk cannot only look: Tasting is absolutely required on the site “Am Südhang”.

There is a meadow with fruit trees. It constitutes a tasting garden in the real sense of the word. Everyone who wants to can try these nice pieces of fruit. Not only allotment gardeners are happy about this, but above all the visitors without a garden of their own who use this mouth-watering offer.

With all these offers, “Südhang” is much more than a picturesque allotment site in a great location. It has become an important institution for the whole community. Their activities reach much further than the limits of the allotment site.

**„The ‚Schreberino-project‘ is a blessing. Our little one brings home another plant every week, and I have to pot it then in our garden. Here he learns, that cucumbers don’t grow in a shelf at Aldi.**

*Tina Spranger, mother of Jan-Ole*



Japan:

# The child of the garden project

## 1. The city environment for children in Japan.

In Japan there are many big cities with only few green spaces. This environment is not good for children.

In the schools, there are neither vegetable gardens nor small flower gardens and consequently children cannot see the natural environment.

In the schools, the education to experience the natural environment is not sufficient.

Thus, parents make their children participate in the nature experience study event that the volunteer group organizes.

## 2. A Child project organized by the allotment garden group.

The Chiba-ken youth association, the Chiba-ken allotment garden association, and the Chigusadai Gardening Club cooperate to organize the nature experience study event.

In this project, the youth association manages all the work, the allotment association plans the project, and the gardening club supports the children and their parents.

The participants are children who go to 5th class of the elementary school around Hagidai allotment garden as well as their parents.

The youth society decided to have 15-18 participants.

The first day: Beginning of May: The child project starts.



Lecture about the food chain.



Planting of sweet potatoes.



Planting peanuts.

The second day: Beginning of July: Observation of crop growth. Weeding.



Explanation on the growth of sweet potatoes...



...and weeding.



The third day: Middle of September: The cultivation management.



They tend the vine of sweet potatoes.



Children at work.

The fourth day: End of October: The harvest and the meal.



The members and the harvest.



They cook Tempura with the harvested vegetables.



Lunch time.

*We would like to awaken the children's interest for nature, agriculture and food.*



Germany:

## Discovering of vegetable dye within the Trinenkamp allotment garden association (KGV Am Trinenkamp e.V.)

The project is carried out in partnership with the Seven Gardens network, the Gelsenkirchen Protestant School and the GAFÖG (German job centre). It has already been recognised on two separate occasions, by UNESCO first in 2011/2012 and then in 2013/2014, as an official project of the decade for “sustainable education”. Its main audience are children and adolescents and thus its objective is not to let the art of dyeing become extinct.

The participants learn to extract colours from plants in a fun way. They also increase their knowledge about the growth, upkeep and transformation of plants. We promote the project by organising conferences in the association as well as in other organizations.

***The production of plant colours is a lot of fun, especially when it ends in dyeing eggs for Easter.***



Get more information at  
[www.kgv-am-trinenkamp.de](http://www.kgv-am-trinenkamp.de)

Germany:

# The “vorGElesen” reading project by the Trinenkamp allotment association (KGV “Am Trinenkamp e.V.”)

We created the “vorGElesen” reading project in order to make a “new” part of society aware of allotment gardens. The project has the following objectives:

- Convey the pleasure of reading to children
- Encourage allotment gardeners to read stories to their children/grandchildren
- Encourage allotment gardeners to get involved as a reading sponsor in nurseries and primary schools
- Get sponsors to present nature's cycles in “their” allotment garden associations

We ourselves have made an agreement with the “Auf der Hardt” nursery, which notably includes having the children visit our allotment site, as well as regularly organising reading hours in the nursery. These projects are organised with the support of Mrs Gabriele Preuß, deputy mayor of the town of Gelsenkirchen.

Get more information at  
[www.kgv-am-trinenkamp.de](http://www.kgv-am-trinenkamp.de)





Germany:

# Research project in the federation of Saxony: Biodiversity in allotment gardens

The “Biodiversity in allotment gardens” research project moved onto the next level in 2013. We had already prepared the basis of a big exhibition on “Biodiversity in allotment gardens”, which was going to be presented at the 7th Land of Saxony horticultural exhibition in Oelsnitz in 2015. Some of the first parts of the exhibition were presented in Reichenbach in 2014, at the Land of Saxony’s “Small horticultural exhibition”. Now, for the first time, we had the option of creating a film, so that these often “hidden worlds” could be seen by all.

Since the idea was launched in 2008, an important piece of background work has been carried out. The target group of youths was made up of future biologists, teachers, foresters and youths interested in nature. However, we also needed youths with graphic design skills, so that the knowledge acquired could be presented effectively to the public. Today, in our world that is saturated by information, it is difficult to reach these young people.

One method that proved successful was creating work groups near schools that are open all day. Since 2011, we have been carrying out a two-pronged project: for secondary school and college students, a work group on “Nature trails” has a clear research objective, whilst primary school students focus on the habitat side in their work group on “Garden and habitat”. In addition to all of that, the West Saxony centre for nature and gardening in West Reichenbach proposed, starting from autumn of that year, an open work group focusing on nature and aimed at all young people interested in nature. We constantly promoted this

project through nature activity days organised by the Saxony allotment garden associations as part of projects for children, and we introduced children to the tropical cousins of the animals that live in our gardens.

The long term objective of the “Biodiversity in allotment gardens” project is to document the complete fauna, flora and fungi and enter them into a database. The subject is so vast that we consider that the work will last for 20 years. The research is led by professional techniques alongside Saxony’s research

specialists on “Nature and environment training”. It is vital that the results don’t disappear at the bottom of a filing cabinet, and that on the contrary they will be useful on a number of levels. On the one hand, we are documenting the essential contribution of allotment gardens to the preservation of species and, on the other hand, we are showing the way to use this contribution in an even more efficient manner.

Tommy Brumm  
Landesverband Sachsen  
der Schreberjugend





Germany:

## Federation of Saxe-Anhalt: The Junior Ranger garden project presents itself

In the large protected zones of the Saxe-Anhalt region are organised special programmes for children and adolescents. Coordinated by the EUROPARC Deutschland association, the “Junior Ranger” ecowarrior project offers activities and workshops for children in nature. The goal is to make children aware of environmental protection and the importance of the protected zones in Germany.

As a “Biosphärenreservat Karstlandschaft Südharz” (a biosphere reserve in Saxe-Anhalt) we have been taking part in this programme since January 2009.

In fact, in this biosphere reserve, children can learn for themselves – over a long period of time and thanks to various projects and real-life experience – about the large protected zones as well as about the species, habitats, individuals and cultural history that constitutes part of their environment.

We launched our “Junior Ranger” garden in 2010. We contacted M. Schwarz, president of the local allotment garden association, “Goldene Aue” about the project. We were very well received by the association, and the majority of the allotment gardeners responded very positively when we arrived at the allotment garden site with our zealous assistants. Right at the very start it was hard for us to imagine the transformation of the gardens into a luxurious oasis. Therefore, we divided the gardens into several zones:

One for the future grass wheel, one for the potatoes, carrots, kohlrabies, corn, tomatoes, strawberries, shrubs and of course our meadow of wild flowers and its insect hotel. Once the layout was decided upon, it was time to take the first step, during which our budding gardeners first of all created new paths in the garden. The weeds were ripped out and the first seeds were planted in the soil.

This gardening project aims to show children and adolescents where food comes from, how it grows and is harvested, and of course also to show them how to discover its taste. At the end of our first year of gardening, our harvest was very satisfying. Once the work was finished, our budding gardeners fully appreciated the potatoes that they had harvested themselves, and

they tasted them as jacket potatoes with fromage blanc and herbs.

The main idea of the programme rests upon conserving the nature for future generations, that's to say for our “Junior Ranger” ecowarriors. In this way the children and adolescents learn to take responsibility, to develop ideas and to work in a concrete way. By these means we hope to convey general information to them on how everything is linked and help them discover plans of action.

Our ecowarriors truly have green thumbs that's why we took part in the 13th Gardening Olympics.

Information about the German “Junior Ranger” ecowarriors: [www.junior-ranger.de](http://www.junior-ranger.de)



Introduction to the “Junior Ranger” ecowarrior project.

Austria:

# Children on the eco-crop estate of the central Allotment Federation

When the Central Allotment Garden Federation of Austria started the eco-crop estate project, it had no idea of the positive added value the project could have for children. Obviously, the main focus was on how best to manage the implementation of an ambitious plan.

There was immense satisfaction when a kindergarten class expressed interest in renting an allotment. The initiative came from a child's mother in the kindergarten who had heard of our project and was inspired by it. In the end, the Central Allotment Garden Federation decided to offer the kindergarten group the allotment free of charge. Since then, it has been wonderful to see how much excitement it has brought to the little ones, working outside and in the midst of nature.

However, what is really special about it, and which actually should go without saying, is namely that children know about the processes of nature even when, of course, not all of them have had the opportunity to work in a garden or anything similar.

The fact is that today not every child knows where the vegetables or fruit which are available in the supermarket actually come from and how they grow. This basic knowledge was lost with the progress of modern society and it no longer exists in this context. In fact the idea that fruit and vegetables grow in the supermarket is unfortunately not uncommon.

Fortunately, it is possible to do something to teach children this know-



ledge again. The allotment in the eco-crop estate of the Central federation intends to contribute to this - at least for the kindergarten class, but also for the many children and grandchildren of the other eco-crop estate members, who also have much to learn. That children can learn about the cycle of nature in such a clear way is certainly a special opportunity that is offered as part of the eco-crop estate. For children can see here fruit and vegetables develop from seed to finished fruit. In the course of a season, they will learn that water is a precious commodity, which is essential for the growth of plants, and that one should therefore not be wasteful with it.

The kids really like to see how different berry bushes (raspberries, strawberries, blackberries) begin to bear fruit,





and cannot wait for the time when they can finally harvest these sweet bounties of nature. Of course, there are also a few overhasty ones, who cannot wait and so have to experience the taste of unripe berries.

Obviously, the children also learn that there is a lot of work to be done before you can finally enjoy a well-earned harvest. Until the harvest itself, months can pass, in which it is essential to keep the bed clear from weeds in addition to watering. This is all the more difficult because it is not particularly easy to distinguish the germinating seeds and young shoots from the weeds. But this experience - with all its setbacks, if instead of weed the child uproots a young shoot - is important and increases the children's understanding of the hard work that is necessary in order to get edible fruit and vegetables in the end.

Another aspect is that children learn from their own bed that not every piece



of fruit looks the same and that nature produces quite a lot of different forms. This raises the hope that a process of rethinking in our children will be set in motion, so that tonnes of food are not

destroyed just because the fruit does not comply with the „norm“. Showing children the cycle and the diversity of nature is certainly a step in the right direction.





Switzerland:

# The project: Child of the garden



The main objective is to create the highest number of gardens possible for children in Switzerland, so that they can discover the interdependence and cycles of nature by growing their own little patch.

The project is headed up by the organisation Infoklick, Kinder- und Jugendförderung Schweiz. Infoklick puts in place projects across Switzerland in the domains of citizen participation, health enhancement, guidance and training for children and young people. Bioterra is the project partner. The project is executed in co-

operation with the Swiss allotment garden federation.

## Recreational lessons

Gardening classes, which take place from mid-March to the start of October, are the basis of each garden. A group of 6 to 12 children is assigned to the garden for 1.5 hours a week to grow and maintain its own little patch under the supervision of a course instructor. The children also get to know many different topics related to nature. The lessons cost 100 Swiss Francs per child and only take place during school term (around 20 lessons).

## Learning goals for the children

- During one gardening season, the children learn about nature's cycles and the interdependence between the different elements of nature.
- The children learn – through practice – the principals of biological growth and see the links between humans, animals and plants.
- By growing their own vegetables, the children learn to recognise a healthy diet that is full of flavour and will benefit their family.



After winter, the patches are prepared.



Each child has its own patch – planting the seeds.



Defined growth rotation with a mixed culture.



Gardening is good for health.

## Course instructor

### Tasks / Paid expenses:

- To supervise a group of children during the gardening lessons
- To prepare the lessons and the materials, and to plan their implementation
- To attend the introductory lessons (4 Saturdays)
- The course instructor will receive expenses of 150 Swiss Francs per child per season

### Pre-requisites of the course instructor

The most important requirement is to enjoy being around nature, gardening and working with children. Prior gardening experience is an advantage but not a pre-requisite.

### Regarding school gardens

The majority of pedagogical gardens have vanished. Gardens that are part of

the project Child of the Garden and are situated near a school can be used by schools. With time, the garden should become an integral part of school lessons.

### Role of the project managers

- To train the course instructor via an introductory lesson (fundamentals of gardening and teaching)
- To present a manual containing a lesson plan and ideas, a planting plan and ideas, a practical guide on planting
- To accompany and coach the staff during the gardening season in case of questions and problems
- To research the sites and to secure financing
- To manage the seeds, materials and tools

### The garden

The garden's location depends on the individual possibilities available: a school-

yard, a patch dedicated to agriculture or even private land. A garden association is responsible for the local garden.

To date, these gardens exist within the Mooseedorf Berne allotment garden association and in different school settings in the cities of Zurich and Berne.

### Costs

No garden should fail on the grounds of financial difficulties. The project managers work with the local people responsible to finance the cooperation as well as the tools and gardening material. The Swiss allotment garden federation also provides financial support to the project.

### Contact

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[www.gartenkind.ch](http://www.gartenkind.ch)



The little gardening gang.



The big harvest for the house.



France:

# The Mazargues allotment site in Marseille: The children discover nature and real life

Since spring 2013, 150 children (6 classes) aged 5 until 10 accompanied by their teachers have come once a week to discover nature in the allotments on the site of Mazargues (South of Marseille). The tutors of the site who have undergone a solid training welcome the children in a remarkable space that has been especially set up for them.

## **An exceptional garden site created in 1905**

The pine tree forest of 4 hectares in the town centre has a great historical and patrimonial value.

## **A conservation space for biodiversity is at the disposal of the children**

The allotment plots occupy only a third of the surface which has allowed to preserve numerous tree species, some of which are more than a century old.

Marseille is a port open to the Mediterranean and the allotment gardeners, at the image of the population, have multiple origins and cultivate a great diversity of vegetables coming from all over the Mediterranean region.

The site hosts numerous species of birds, insects and small animals.

## **Educational plots which are very welcoming**

The equipment is painted with bright colours which creates a festive setting that the children like very much. They like to come to garden, to meet the old allotment gardeners and listen to their stories with much interest.

Every child has got a small square of garden in which it can sow some seeds, plant or transfer a variety of flowers, vegetables ... It can observe the seeds grow and can taste



the planted vegetables with its class friends and/or parents.

## **A green house heated by solar energy**

Today in order to gain time many plants (salad, cabbage, tomatoes, pansies..) are prepared in the green house by the allotment gardeners of the site.

A green house heated by solar panels is the project for 2015. It will be realized in cooperation with a national gas distribution society. It will allow the children to learn how to prepare the seeds, to transfer them into buckets during the winter months and





so to study the complete cycle of vegetation of the different plant species cultivated in the educational garden.

**An insect hotel** was built by the allotment gardeners and installed in the educational garden.

Nesting boxes have been placed in different places within the pine tree forest.

**A bee house** with six bee hives enables the children to get used to bees and to discover the bee keeper's work.

## Therapeutic garden

Several plots have been equipped for disabled people.



Among the pupils taking part in the garden activities there is an autistic child. Its teachers and tutors say that its behavior has much improved due to this activity which the

child likes very much and which allows him to be equal to its class friends.

The people in charge of the allot-

ment site consider creating a garden of smells close to the pedagogical garden. This garden will be created above all for blind children.

Luxembourg:

# The communal authorities of Düdelingen and the allotment gardeners...

*...unite their forces in order to sensitize children for nature*

**Result: A school garden and the extension of the allotment site situated in Düdelingen in Zoufftgen street**

Several years ago, the communal authorities started a large project aiming at the creation of school gardens situated all over the communal area. Thus, the children don't only have the opportunity to discover nature, trees and plants, but above all they have the possibility to cultivate themselves their own vegetables and fruit! Both the gardening service and the commission dealing with family matters within the communal authorities initiated these projects. So today there are already a large number of gardens next to the schools "Deich", "Centre", "Ribeschpont" and "Lenkeschléi".

The school gardens enable the children to cultivate their own vegetables. This special and innovative project has several territorial aspects.

Next to the town hall, on the grounds of the former tennis courts, there is the most recent project called the "Forest of wonders". Every visit in this forest will be a real adventure for the children because they cannot only discover a large number of fruit, vegetables and plants, but they can also take part in public lectures in the fresh air. A bee-keeper will initiate them into the secrets of the honey production. There is an insect hotel which will make them discover this fascinating microcosm. The

teachers are highly encouraged to visit this site with their classes.

## **An allotment site situated in Zoufftgen street**

An allotment site has already existed here since 2001. In September 2012 it was decided to enlarge this site by using a ground acquired by the commune of Düdelingen. The aim of this extension was double:

- to answer the increasing demand by offering 6 additional allotment gardens each one having a shelter
- to create a school garden on this site covering a surface of 8 acres and easily accessible to the pupils

The layout of this school garden was mainly realized by the CIGL of Düdelingen under the leadership of the technical services of the communal authorities and lasted for approximately one year.

## **A garden, an orchard, a shed and much more...**

In September 2014 the school garden was completed. The school garden includes numerous elements, all of which aim at the children's education and development: a wooden shed with water and electricity aimed at welcoming the visitors, a vegetable plot created on raised square garden plots, an orchard to discover fruit, a path for the senses, a greenhouse and an amphitheatre.





Luxembourg:

# From the project elaborated by three associations to the school garden „BILLEK”

The idea to plan and realize a school garden is the fruit of a discussion concerning the attractiveness and the future of our local allotment associations in a more and more stressful and fast world in which both partners of a living community have to work in order to be able to have everything that is considered an absolute necessity in our consumer society. And so, at the end of the day, there is no energy left to create an own garden and to cultivate it all year long.

The idea of the school garden became more and more precise, because such a concept would in fact allow to combine several needs. On one hand, in such a garden, members of our local associations could participate according to the time they had, without taking on the responsibility to cultivate a garden alone and so to be able to rediscover the pleasure of gardening. On the other hand the members of our associations could make the children of the school “Billek” situated in Dreibern - therefore the name school garden “Billek” - aware in a local garden that salads, fruit and vegetables do not grow on the shelves in the supermarkets.

The realization of this idea showed, however, that the project was too important to be realized by one single allotment association. Therefore, the allotment associations Niederdonven-Oberdonven, Wormeldingen and Ehnen, as well as the non-profit association “Nature and Environment” of Wormeldingen unified and founded a non-profit association, the “school garden Billek asbl”.

Five years went by from the planning until the start of the work. The total project is divided into three areas.

In the first area, there is an orchard with more than 50 fruit trees, all species that were cultivated in earlier days in the Mosel region by horticulturists.

In a second area, there is a grass landscape with several smaller hedges. This is a place for the school children to let steam off and to play. This area is closed by a small humid biotope, an element to be maintained as such.

In the third area there is the real garden. The work on this part is still ongoing. In this area there will be raised beds and low beds, as well as flat plots in order to show the different possibilities of gardening. In this part of the garden there will be a large table with benches for 25 children so that during summertime school lessons can be given here in nature. A pergola covered with climbing plants, a pavilion, a spiral with aromatic herbs and a hedge with berries complete the equipment of the whole area.

It has to be mentioned that during the different working phases the school children were included, as for example when planting the trees and hedges, while constructing the raised beds etc.

The union of schools from the communes of Flaxwei-

ler and Wormeldingen finance this project.

By the end of 2015 all the work will be finished, so that the real gardening work can start next spring. Of course, this gardening work will be done together with the school children who have always been very enthusiastic when they could help. This is in fact also true for their teachers.

School garden Billek asbl



France:

## An early experience in Gradignan

Since 2007 the children of the nurseries (2 – 3 years old) in Gradignan have been able to discover the pleasures of garde-



Site of allotments

ning in a favorable space in the middle of allotments and vineyards: we are in fact in a suburb of Bordeaux

**A space for nursery children combined with a meeting place for the residents of elderly people's homes**

In 2006 a home was built in order to host both the meetings of the allotment gardeners' association and elderly people. In 2007 and 2008 this equipment was completed by the creation of a gar-

den for children, thanks to the financial support of the savings bank and the town of Gradignan. The mayor of Gradignan in fact understood from the start the importance of making very young children meet elderly people in the same place around a common activity like gardening.

All the planning was realized by the allotment gardeners of this association in cooperation with the users, so that the layout would be perfectly adapted to



Children of the nursery

the age and the size of the future small gardeners.

**The site welcomes numerous pedagogical activities around gardening.**

**Visit of the gardens**

Pupils (5 - 11 years old) are invited several times a year to visit the allotment gardens. They can talk to the old gardeners, who make them discover and taste organic fruit and vegetables cultivated by themselves (strawberries, carrots, peas, broad beans.....). The children are astonished by what they

discover and they have many questions. Most of them totally ignore the origin of what they eat every day.

**Reading activities**

During the environment week readings are organized in the gardens for the children of the schools.



Readings in the gardens

**Pedagogical pool**

In 2013 the association laid out a pedagogical pond near the children's garden.

Children and adults can admire the frogs and the dragonflies, which quickly established themselves in the pond as well as fishes introduced by the gardeners. The gardeners also added nesting



Pedagogical pool



Children's garden



boxes and insect hotels on different plots of the allotment site. All this gives the possibility for numerous lessons and practical work in the gardens and in class with the teachers.

### Chicken house

Finally, in 2014 the association created a chicken house with 6 chickens on the allotment site. They are delighted by the healthy food they get from the gardens. They entertain all the visitors and especially the children of the nurseries and schools. So the little city dwellers can get contacts with nature. In this way they can see the link existing between these animals, the garden and their plate as well as the work done by the men and women who raise these animals or cultivate these products.

Children, teachers and elderly people are delighted and very interested in visiting the allotments, where there is a real opening towards the others and towards life in nature.



Chicken house



Garden for elderly people

Netherlands:

## Child day care on an allotment site (BSO)

If you combine the perseverance of two female staff members at the Komkids children's day care with the vision of the governing board of the Vijfsluizen gardening association in Schiedam, the result is the first out-of-school care group (BSO) in an allotment park.

The two female staff members are Claudia de Raay and Zeynep Korkmaz. Both are lovers of nature and outdoor living, and both recognise the importance of the outdoor experience for children. Both talk enthusiastically and engagingly about the adventure they started by establishing a child day care centre on an allotment site. There was no model to follow; they had to invent the facility for themselves. Their thoughts soon turned to Vijfsluizen, an allotment park both knew; Claudia from excursions with children and Zeynep because both her parents and sister have an allotment garden at the park.

### What is fun about an allotment BSO?

The ladies came up with a waterfall of examples: The BSO allotment enriches child development, it encourages children and makes them creative. Here, they can spend time outside, something they all enjoy doing. Moreover, all the activities are related to nature: sowing seeds in pots, pattern stamps with broccoli, building a hut of twigs and branches, cooking together using ingredients from the allotment garden. Not to mention journeys of discovery: looking for worms, feeling

worms, then digging a new hole because worms have to be returned to the soil...

The space around the BSO is set aside for the children. Without supervision they are not allowed to take to the paths or visit the gardens, but they are permitted to use the children's playground next door, and the allot-

– has been ploughed and made ready for use as a garden.

The BSO is located on the edge of the allotment park in a building that formerly housed a small local supermarket, but which had been vacant for some time. Claudia and Zeynep's original idea was to rent one or if possible two allotment gardens



Photo (from left to right): Claudia de Raay, Peter Meijer und Zeynep Korkmaz in the Kleingarten-BSO.

ment garden's own playing field. At any other BSO you can also play football, but it's more fun at this location. At any BSO a whole range of building blocks and materials such as duplo and lego and other toys are available. At the allotment garden BSO, all the toys are outside. The children also actively become involved in gardening – an activity they all enjoy. For the time being they can make use of a vacant trial garden, at least until the grass field in front of the BSO – which easily takes in a couple of hundred square metres



Cooking together



with their own shed, but this approach was hampered by legislation and several practical objections, such as noise nuisance for gardeners in adjacent plots, looking for a peaceful environment. Peter Meijer, chairman of the Vijfsluizen allotment association who was keen to avoid the initiative becoming smothered then came up with the great idea of offering the supermarket building at a very attractive rent. Mr. Dragstra, Director of Komkids responded by pre-

paring a carefully considered action plan, but implementation still required considerable effort. A change had to be made to the zoning plan, the building had to be adapted to meet the requirements of its new purpose (including a small kitchen area and two toilets) and although the BSO met all the standards, the procedure for obtaining an environmental permit proved difficult. However, everything came together and the BSO was officially opened on 21 March 2012.

The governing board of Vijfsluizen does not like to think in terms of limitations but instead looks for opportunities and possibilities. "These children are the future of our association and future members," suggested Meijer. The board is also keen to accept its social responsibility: a child day care centre in the allotment garden is healthy and good for the children's development. Social interaction between the children and the 'elderly' gardeners is also in everyone's favour. There have been plenty of friendly and positive get-togethers. "This collaboration with Komkids is innovative and the combined use generates added value for the allotment park. It makes us stronger to resist threats to our space both in the future and even today; there are persistent new rumours that ours is an attractive potential building location, and that it is time for us to move on ..." concluded Meijer.

For more information visit  
[www.komkids.nl](http://www.komkids.nl) or  
[volkstuintso@komkids.nl](mailto:volkstuintso@komkids.nl)  
 or [voorzitter@5sluizen.nl](mailto:voorzitter@5sluizen.nl)



**Building of a cabin out of branches for the BSO.**

Denmark:

## A prize for child-friendly allotments

The prize scheme for well-kept individual gardens also envisages prizes granted to “child-friendly” gardens.

The evaluation of gardens is taken care of by our local horticulture consultants in collaboration with the association in question.

The basic conditions are that the garden

offers specific possibilities for children to sow and plant, cultivate and harvest seeds, berries and other fruit. The federation has not yet fixed more precise criteria to be fulfilled in order to obtain the prize.

It is up to the horticulture consultant to judge whether a garden should be characterized as “child-friendly” or not.





Netherlands:

# Page for the children in the Dutch allotment magazine, homepage and Day of the Garden



[WWW.PIEPERSTEK.NL](http://WWW.PIEPERSTEK.NL)

In every issue of our magazine, De Tuinliefhebber, we include the section “Pieperstek”, aimed at children between 6 and 12 years old. This section covers 2 pages and contains fun facts, tips, and ideas concerning the garden and nature in the garden. The topics depend on the season and have a practical quality, for example in the autumn „looking for mushrooms“ and „the difference between wild and sweet chestnut trees“. Many topics are in the form of little tasks, puzzles or discovery tours, by which the children are taught respect and love for nature.

Be amazed and admire is also the focus of the spin-off of the section in our magazine De Tuinliefhebber, which can be found on our website [www.pieperstek.nl](http://www.pieperstek.nl). On “Pieperstek” children can read all about nature friendly gardening, but can also find all kinds of information on nature and the environment: about plants, animals, and natural phenomena. Per season a number of topics is briefly explained, often with an associated activity or assignment. There are tips for growing vegetables, sowing a flower garden, fun games in nature and there is also information on animals:

How can you take good care of the birds in the garden, which creatures

live in the ground, what about bees, butterflies, snails. The AVVN intends to help improve the quality of life in the community. The approach here is education on natural gardening. With “Pieperstek” the AVVN hopes to encourage children to be outside, in and with nature, in order to gain experience and thus get a basis for an environmentally friendly attitude with respect for nature.

## DAY OF THE GARDEN

In addition to the European Day of the Garden on 30th August 2014, which was organized during the International Congress “Focus on Allotments” in Utrecht, we have also introduced a nationwide Day of the Garden. Garden parks across the nation opened their gates for interested people and proudly showed their achievements and added value for the environment. There were all kinds of activities, such





as garden markets, guided tours and exhibitions. Various garden parks presented themselves with workshops specifically for youth. At “Rust en Vreugd” in Amsterdam and “Eigen Tuin” in Den Haag, for example, building an insect wall together was on the programme. A pretty heavy job which was done by the children with a smile on their face. Stones, roof tiles, trunks and everything else that could be used, were collected. The children were treated on all kinds of delicious snacks and drinks during the breaks. And because it was very hard work, there was a break with an interesting research of the ditch water.





Finland:

# The allotment gardeners from Vallila support workless young people

Cooperation between the Vallila allotment gardeners and an association for promoting gardening among children and youths.

The association "Lasten ja nuorten puutarhayhdistys ry" promotes gardening among children and youth and they have a workshop activity geared towards 16-29 year old unemployed youths. The objective is to support them in getting into work life or education. The young people are acquainted with gardening and sustainable development principles. Their self-esteem is boosted through joint work in a garden with the sense of community that it provides, as well as through socially empowering work and personal coaching. The young people receive individual guidance to education, work life and other relevant support services. In this way young people in risk of marginalization can be helped.

The activity has been running since its start in 2011.

An entry requirement for the workshop is the interest of the young persons to take part in gardening work. No advance experience or skills related to gardening are required; all the activities are guided. There are three guides available to supervise the work, together with visiting experts. A workshop work day is six hours long, of which the working time is



five hours. The workshop undertakes commissioned works around the city in different yards and gardens.

During the year there are two workshop periods, one starting in August and one in March. Vacancies may be requested at any time. The young people receive a diploma for their work in the workshop and support in looking for further education and work opportunities.

One of the gardens where workshop work has taken place is the Vallila allotment garden. The collaboration spans the summers (May to September) of 2013 and 2014.

The work is undertaken in small groups. The group in Vallila consists of four people: a coach and three young people. The work in the allotment garden consists in caring for the public joint areas of the garden. The work is mainly undertaken using machinery owned by "Lasten ja nuorten puutarhayhdistys ry". The allotment garden is billed for materials and consumables needed. "Lasten ja nuorten puutarhayhdistys ry" insures the workers. The small group gets paid according to working hours. The allotment garden is billed monthly for the working hours performed.

Great-Britain:

## The Cold Barn farm allotment site is an activity centre for young people

Cold Barn farm is a youth activity centre, which is dedicated to children and young people and making a difference in their lives.

The allotment project started in 2006 when a group of young people showed an interest in growing their own vegetables. Cold Barn farm allotments are working closely with Abersychan comprehensive school and Torfaen youth service.

At first the young people adopted a

small area at the front of Cold barn farm, but this, although very successful, proved to be too small an area for the interest shown.

We were fortunate to own some land around the building so we set out to set up a larger area for our allotments. We fenced off the area in question and the young people spent a few hard days digging to achieve five allotment areas.

These allotments served for two years

and produced some great crops of vegetables and salad. We did, however, have a few problems: firstly, the young people did not enjoy all the bending and we were also unable to work the allotments during wet periods due to grass paths

After consultation with the young people and volunteers we applied for funding to build raised beds and stone paths so the site would be useable in the wet as well as the dry. By making the allotment area much easier







to work in, the young people showed much more interest in the project and really took ownership of it. The vegetables were and still are cooked by the young people in the centre for the young people of the centre ensuring that all the young people who use the

centre get to eat healthy home grown produce.

The young people are currently working on erecting an additional polytunnel on the site. Although each young person comes with their own issues they are all engaging well and enjoying the gardening work. We have learned that even the most disruptive young people will work hard when given a leadership role and a project they can be hands on with. The school teachers have noticed a marked improvement in the young people's attendance and behaviour since they started the project.

We planted a willow and bamboo plantation on site 4 years ago with the view to use them in the allotments and youth centre. Due to much interest from other community groups and community allotments we now supply two allotments and the play and youth services with free willow. Our young people harvest and also show other allotment holders the many uses willow have on allotment sites. We also use it for arts and craft activities.

The young people also built a bird hide from willow. This has come from a big interest in bird watching amongst our youth club members. We have installed a very busy bird feeding station that is attracting many different species.



Austria:

## A therapeutic garden for the clients of „Workshop 28“ of the association KoMiT

In April 2004, the association KoMiT approached the Central Allotment federation with the request to make a cultivatable patch available to it at low cost, since the area on which the „Workshop 28“ clients had been able to work up until then was no longer available due to the creation of parking spaces. They pointed out that there was a serious shortage of options for outdoor work. The association KoMiT enables people, including children and adolescents, with mental and multiple disabilities to

engage with their interests and skills, while providing appropriate opportunities for employment and activity. The therapeutic garden gives members of the occupational therapy group „Workshop 28“ the opportunity to grow vegetables themselves and to plant and maintain their own flowers.

For this reason, the Central Allotment Federation decided to assign to the association KoMiT an area in the „Ödenburgerstrasse“ allotment

for free. It also handled the relevant permits, so that the group's clients could keep various objects in a small shed, which was made available at a very affordable fee, as well as sewage, water and electricity connections, which, like all the other infrastructures, were provided by the companies concerned free of charge. With the financial support of many companies, but also with the help of some energetic volunteers, the children and young people in the „Workshop 28“ group were able to





begin running their therapeutic garden as early as the summer of 2004 and have created a really beautiful spot, thanks to a lot of individual initiative.

Ten years on, the therapeutic garden is an indispensable part of the „Ödenburgerstrasse“ allotment and still offers the young clients of KoMiT the opportunity to work in a natural environment. However, the therapeutic garden has offered and continues to offer also for members of the

allotment site, the opportunity to get in touch with clients and employees of the association KoMiT. This communicating and sharing is also a very important aspect. Precisely because people still have reservations and indeed fears about meeting disabled people in our society, such informal meeting places are particularly important to break down prejudices and allow integration. For it is not just a matter of giving money to an association, or an organisation. In order to inte-

grate people in our society, it is necessary to meet and get to know these people. That is the only way that peaceful coexistence can work.

Of course, allotment holders know the therapeutic benefits of gardening, both for the body and for the soul. Who hasn't wanted to clear their head after a busy day at work by doing some weeding or rejoiced at being out in the fresh air after a week in the office? Even more so does the therapeutic garden give children and young people working there a field of activities which trains their skills and allows them to work outdoors. They also learn how the harvested products can be further processed. These are all important skills that give these children a bit more independence and personal responsibility.

