Vienna 19th August 2016

Diplomas

NINE ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATIONS WERE REWARDED AT THE OCCASION OF THE 38th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS IN VIENNA.

I) The diploma for ecological gardening was awarded to:

1) The allotment association "Ons Buiten" in Leiden (NL)

The allotment association "Ons Buiten", Leiden (NL) received the diploma for an ecological gardening

Garden association "Ons Buiten" was founded on 2 January 1957 and forms with its 420 gardens a green lung between the centre and the outskirts of Leiden.

"Ons Buiten" has a Committee Ecological Gardening that stimulates the awareness amongst the gardeners and an ecological development of the garden site in numerous ways. These efforts let to visible results. For example far most gardeners changed to an ecological way of maintaining the soil, plants and lay out of their garden. Facilities for birds, insects and mammals can be found in many gardens as well as in the public parts of the park. The increase in biodiversity is visible. They are proud of: wild orchids that appeared spontaneously in at least two gardens, stone marten, green woodpecker, great spotted woodpecker, long-eared owl, goldcrest (nested as well), water rail and several king fishers. By now garden association "Ons Buiten" has created a solid balance between recreation, education and nature.

The first National Quality Mark for Ecological Gardening was awarded in October 2001 and now again it was prolonged until 2019.

Some activities and achievements as an example

- ✓ The course 'The ecological vegetable garden' given by VELT was organized for the members.
- ✓ Fred Weber, beekeeper of the Hortus Botanicus in Leiden, gave a lecture on bees.
- ✓ A lecture on soil improvement and suitable plant for clay was given. "Ons Buiten" has heavy clay.
- ✓ Safaris are organized to acquaint gardeners and residents with the nature on "Ons Buiten" (birds, creepy crawlies and bats).
- ✓ "Ons Buiten" has a garden shop which is open every Saturday and sells ecological sound materials.
- ✓ Plants- and seed exchanges are organized on a regular base.
- ✓ Volunteers hanged 60 nest boxes in the public parts of the garden park.

✓ Observations of plants and animals are kept and published.
✓ Trimmed branches of individual gardens are collected centrally and are reused for dead hedges and as wood chips.

The estimation is that about 75 – 80% of the gardeners participate in one or the other way.

2) The allotment garden association “ATV Zonnegaarde” in Den Haag (NL)

The allotment association “ATV Zonnegaarde” (NL) received the diploma for an ecological gardening

In 1969, “ATV Zonnegaarde” was founded; it was located on the outskirts of The Hague. Nowadays, the expanding city of The Hague is incorporating the park in what the city council wants to become ‘the most ecological district in The Netherlands.’ The park measures 3.6 ha and is situated on one of the ecological strips of land connecting the larger green areas of the city of The Hague and those of its suburbs. Those strips are part of the national ecological network (Ecologische hoofdstructuur, EHS, ‘Main ecological structure’).

“Zonnegaarde” first applied for the Dutch hallmark of organic (i.e., ‘ecological’) gardening in 2010, which resulted in a 3 spot qualification in 2011 and a 4 spot (i.e., highest) qualification in 2015. Though the park does not have a lot of public green, we succeeded to make the most of its possibilities in several projects. Some 15% of the members are actively involved in the maintenance of the projects, although many others support the principles of organic gardening.

Following achievements can be quoted as examples

- ✓ Monitoring animal and plant life.
- ✓ Taking nature outside the park.
- ✓ Maximizing results in an economizing way by re-using and recycling materials.
- ✓ Creating different biotopes in the park:
- ✓ “Zonnegaarde” always tries to take part in national projects like the garden bird count, soil fauna day.

3) The allotment association “Moseley and District Allotment Holders Association Ltd Birmingham (GB)

A hidden gem in the centre of England’s second city

Hidden in Moseley, an urban village in south Birmingham, is an amazing oasis - the lungs of the City; around 250 allotment and leisure gardens enthusiastically nurtured by plot holders. What a gem the City has just three miles from the centre and what a haven for urban wildlife and city gardeners to share! Moseley and District Allotment Holders Association Limited (MaDAHAL), known locally as Moor Green allotments, began life as a redeveloped site in 1976, it was in that year that Birmingham City Council hosted an international conference launching the Thorpe report on the future of allotment gardening in Britain. Moor Green Farm and Russell Road allotments, which had existed side by side for many years previously, were redeveloped into a new site and opened as MaDAHAL by the then Princess Alice of Gloucester on 8 September 1976. Hence 2016 is an important year for MaDAHAL as we celebrate 40 years of allotment gardening on the site.

In addition to our Annual Produce Show, we are celebrating big time! Currently we are planning several commemorative edible beds around the site, we're capturing 'talking heads' videos for our website, adding a new section to our Show on poetry, photography and artistry inspired by allotment gardening and commissioning a booklet and calendar, working in partnership with Moseley History Society. But the highlight of the year will be on 3 September when plot holders and social members come together to celebrate and reward the 'fruits' of a years' hard work!

Inevitably, as the demographic and usage has demanded, the site has evolved and is now one of the most diverse allotments associations in the City. In 2014, as council austerity measures started to take hold we took over greater responsibilities for the day to day running of the site under the new management agreement with Birmingham City Council and with the support of the whole allotment community much as been achieved.

The revival of organic gardening and the need for greater self-sufficiency has resulted in a huge increase in demand. MaDAHAL has responded by encouraging inexperienced plot holders to take on half plots. Thoughtfully planned this can yield a novice gardener a good supply of fruit and vegetables throughout the year. Young families and retired gardeners alike recognise that from plot to plate is not only healthier, but gets them out in the fresh air and provides regular exercise.

MaDAHAL is fortunate to have a thriving licensed Pavilion, also enjoyed by social members. What could be better after a warm day working the plot than to drop into the Pavilion, have a drink and discuss gardening and other matters with kindred spirits? It is also the only allotment site in the City to have solar panels on the Pavilion roof and watering harvesting systems on eighty percent of plots. Ever mindful of our eco systems the Association has cultivated a bee meadow, in partnership with Friends of the Earth, to support and protect the increasing number of hives on site. Another area, mainly wooded, nurtures a colony of stag beetles, a species protected under The Wildlife & Countryside Act. And whilst not always welcome by plot holders, a cete of badgers frequently visit the site helping themselves, in particular, to root crops. Birdlife thrives at the allotment site, with some 40 different species identified, including green and great spotted woodpeckers, tawny owls, chiffchaff, black cap, long tailed, coal, blue and great tits, green, gold and chaff finches and various raptors on the look-out for a tasty morsel!

For more information visit our website www.moorgreenallotments.co.uk

4) The allotment garden association Feldkirchen, Graz (A)

The allotment area garden Feldkirchen near Graz (A) received the diploma for an ecological gardening

Feldkirchen is located in the suburban area of the city of Graz in Styria in the south of Austria and the allotment association was founded in 1946.

Initially the area was just simple farmland, subdivided in plots, separated by paths covered over by grassland. During the years, the whole area has changed, garden sheds have been built and today the allotments are mostly oases for recreation and leisure activity. However, the original grass paths have survived: they have never been asphalted or paved. To keep the paths in optimal condition, the garden rules provide a driving ban on all kinds of vehicles.

Except planting hedgerows, not higher than 1.50 m, fences are not allowed; this enables a broad view over the gardens without borderlines.

In spring time the meadows are covered with colourful flowers like yellow, rose or violet primroses daisies, violets, veronicas or chickweed. In late spring time the gardeners are very careful avoiding marguerites when mowing the lawn, so that groups of marguerites remain in the green.

During the last years more and more raised beds have appeared for growing vegetables. Thus large amounts of green cuttings can easily be reused serving as fertilizer and do not have to be removed by car.

Several types of herb spirals have been built in the gardens.

The board especially puts emphasis on nature near gardening. So some lots are more similar to cottage gardens. This is in contrast to other associations with strictly regulated allotment areas focussing more on aspects of urban gardening.

Insect-hotels, nesting boxes, dead tree trunks and branches are placed in the gardens. This results in a large variety of animals in the allotment garden area.

The allotment garden area Feldkirchen is also the home of aquatic animals: numerous wet biotopes have been arranged, hosting frogs, grass snakes and fishes.

Nowadays, 70 years after the establishment of the allotment garden area Feldkirchen, food production is becoming increasingly important. On one hand the newspapers are full of reports about food scandals. On the other hand health consciousness is increasing and ever more people are changing their nutritional habits. Ecological gardening is an optimal solution to meet all these requirements and for many gardeners, particularly young families, cultivation of high quality fruits and vegetables has gained a renewed interest. Freshly harvested food from the own organic garden is rich of vitamins and essential minerals and guarantees best qualities.

Moreover the gardens harbour an especially rich treasure of a large variety of kitchen herbs and medicinal herbs.

II) The diploma for innovative projects was awarded to:

5) The allotment garden association "Blumenfreunde", Vienna (A)

The allotment garden association Blumenfreunde and its bees received the diploma for innovative projects

The allotment garden association Blumenfreunde of Vienna's 21st district has always had a beekeeper among them and since its very beginning a bee house was part of the association.

The allotment gardeners, in particular the association's management team have always appreciated the work done by the respective beekeepers as the bees guaranteed rich harvests in times of scarcity.

And all of a sudden the bees became the talk of the town. All media was and is crammed with reports about the bees' struggle for survival. And of course the new friends of the bees came together and founded - with big applause and huge media coverage - associations like the urban beekeepers, the rural beekeepers and whatever other names they could find and sensitised hardly. However, the long-lasting efforts of the allotment gardeners were not and are even now hardly mentioned. Despite this, they continue to work even more motivated in this area.

The old bee house (a former allotment garden shed) of the allotment garden

association Blumenfreunde: was beyond repair; therefore the association decided to build a new bee villa.

Together they built the foundation and the supporting structure.

After the installation of the floor, they assembled the framework and the roof panels were mounted.
The roof sealing with bitumen sheets and the front door were next and the wall boards were fitted
The bee villa looks like once it is finished and hosts the first beehives, it is still a bit untidy inside but the bees, the beekeeper, the members and the board are happy.

The beekeeper could now take the first visitors for a tour, explains his work to them and let them taste fresh honey directly from the honeycombs.

31/08/2015

III) The diploma for social projects was awarded to:

6) The allotment garden association „De Doordouwers“ in Utrecht (NL)

The association De Doordouwers from Utrecht (NL) received the diploma for social activities.

The diploma was granted for the efforts made by the association to bring together many different cultures and to combine Dutch traditions with other cultures.

The Allotment Park ‘De Doordouwers’ created in 2006 is located on the outskirts of Utrecht-Noord, close to the Overvecht district. The majority of this residential district comprises apartments that house some hundred and twenty different nationalities.

Around half of all the gardeners have foreign roots. On the allotment site they can work together and enjoy their gardens and one another’s company.

The key principles are:

Assisting newcomers
On the site there is a plot for urban agriculture aiming at encouraging foreign women from the district to garden together. They receive guidance from a number of women from the allotment association. If all goes well, individual members can then switch to an allotment plot on the complex.

The importance of understandable language
A few of them speak no or only limited Dutch. A number of gardeners have never learned to read and write. It is essential to listen carefully to what they have to say, and communicate in an understandable language!

Gardening together

Eating and drinking together
The multicultural society is a positive experience. I enjoy eating and drinking together with my Turkish neighbours and others.

Learning to work with nature
The Natural Gardening project is an excellent means of providing more information and increasing awareness among the gardeners of gardening skills and interaction with nature.

The gardeners from De Doordouwers say:
- A garden means freedom
- Spending time outside and gardening are healthy and good for relaxation
- I could never live without flowers and plants
- The allotment has people from many different countries but we are all brought together by a shared hobby: gardening is something we can all enjoy together
- Gardening makes you happy
- The garden is a source of happiness which the gardeners like to share with others according to the motto: “Work together and enjoy together”.

7) The allotment garden association “De Driehoek” in Utrecht (NL)

The association De Driehoek in Utrecht (NL) received the diploma for social activities.

This association was nominated because of its efforts to bring refugees/asylum seekers in contact with a typical Dutch/north European phenomenon: associations and voluntary work.

Since 2014, a number of asylum seekers have been spending every Monday morning in the allotment park. They assist with the general maintenance (weeding), the maintenance of the scrub embankments (pruning) and help elderly and infirm gardeners carry out heavier work (for example sieving and transporting compost to the gardens by a wheelbarrow).

The Utrecht Volunteer Agency acts as the go-between. They recruit interested individuals from the Asylum Seekers Centre (AZC) and travel with them by bicycle right across the city to De Driehoek, and subsequently back to the AZC. This means that the recruitment process is taken out of the hands of the allotment association. The

allotment members are of course responsible for supervising the work at the allotment park.

Generally, the newcomers arrive in the morning they are given a tour of the allotment park. They are introduced to the gardeners on site and there is an opportunity to communicate in Dutch, English, or with hand gestures. After having had coffee/tea, they work together under the supervision of a small group of allotment gardeners, and receive instructions on weeding, raking and pruning. They also learn the names of fruit and vegetables in Dutch and are occasionally return home with small samples of the produce given by the gardeners.

It is a win-win situation. The asylum seekers are a welcome addition to the short supply of volunteers for maintaining the complex. They help enliven the gardens and offer the allotment gardeners an opportunity to get to know and understand the refugees, in a congenial environment.

8) The communal authorities of Feldkirchen, Graz (A)

The market town Feldkirchen near Graz (A) received the diploma for social activities

Feldkirchen is located in the Greater Graz area in Styria, in the south of Austria.

While other cities and municipalities burden their citizens with increasing taxes and charges, the market town of Feldkirchen gives strong social support to its residents by furthering local associations on different levels. Whereas it is common practice for many communes to financially promote their sports clubs, Feldkirchen traditionally also fosters its good relationship with the allotment garden association.

After the Second World War, in 1946, Franz Saringer, the founding president of the allotment garden association of Feldkirchen, suggested the commune to make parts of the dormant land of the former mill of Warnhaus available to families from Feldkirchen for cultivation purposes.

In March 1955, a general lease agreement with the regional allotment garden association of Styria was signed. The yearly rent for the whole allotment garden area amounted to 2500 shillings, e.g. 180 euros. The duration was initially limited to 10

years, but it was regularly extended until the allotment garden association Feldkirchen finally became a permanent garden area in 1976. A yearly rent of 6000 shillings, about 440 euros, was agreed upon.

Over the decades, the market town Feldkirchen continued to financially support the allotment garden association, as the small membership fees were not sufficient to provide the necessary infrastructure. In addition to member contributions and many donations from different companies, the commune promoted the construction of the clubhouse. It was agreed that the rents for the plots paid by the members should directly benefit the association to ensure its financial survival. Furthermore, the allotment garden association receives a yearly basic financial support from the commune.

In return, the allotment garden association and many other associations naturally take part in the different events and activities offered by the commune. They participate in the spring-cleaning as well as in the organisation of the cycle touring day in spring, with about 300 participants, and of the traditional walking day on the national holiday in autumn.

As a thank you for their collaboration and as a token of appreciation, the commune invites the representatives to diverse celebrations or receptions, such as the Premiere of the Passion Plays, which take place every four years in Feldkirchen.

It is particularly convenient that, some years ago, the commune bought the Feldkirchenerhof and makes the facilities available for free to the associations. Thus, the allotment garden association found an adequate venue for its annual general assembly.

Twice a year, the commune invites the associations' representatives to the Feldkirchenerhof. Information about current topics and trainings for important matters such as hygiene or association law, as well as the agreement on event dates, are central subjects of this meeting. This meeting facilitates the exchange between associations and opens new ways of cooperation.

This is just a brief selection of the myriad of activities that are organised in this area. The new Mayor, Eric Gosch, follows in the footsteps of the former mayor, Adolf Pellischek, thus enabling Feldkirchen to emerge from the shadows of Graz and represent a lively, attractive home and workplace for the local people, with an intact community and high living standards.

IV) The diploma for ecological gardening and social activities was awarded to:

9) The association "Zur grünen Insel", Bremen (D)

The allotment association "Zur grünen Insel" received the diploma for an ecological gardening and social activities

It is an association boasting exactly 100 gardens, which thanks to an almost perfect location make up the green lungs of the urban triangle of Horn, Oberneuland and Borgfeld. The association was established before 1969 by combining park and allotment land. The result – in addition to providing the benefits inherent in cultivating allotments – was to create grounds for inhabitants from the neighbouring residential quarter.

The allotment garden area itself is characterised by an unusual stock of trees seldom found in Bremen's public green spaces. Pioneer species have hardly been established here. Garden enthusiasts refrain from using any chemical pesticides and herbicides.

The allotment area borders a primary school and a kindergarten, providing resident children with great outdoor experiences, spacious natural areas and a good neighbourhood.

Not just the allotment area is firmly anchored in the urban neighbourhood of Bremen-Horn; the association, respectively association life, also has a positive impact on its

surroundings. The result is a supportive neighbourhood that sees association experts providing advice to domestic garden owners on sustainable and ecological gardening, gardening tools being lent out and gardening friends picking up the hedge trimmers when age or health reasons prevent others from doing so.

The communal parts of the association offer many large meadows, which children from the neighbourhood like to use. The benches provide an opportunity for urban residents to engage in a chat. And so children, mothers, people both young and old, individuals from different backgrounds, even senior citizens come together not just as allotment gardeners; they also live together in urban neighbourhoods and cross paths in the allotment site “Zur grünen Insel”.

The association community initiates joint activities. All these events foster contact with the residential neighbourhood, with personal invitations issued and specific projects created for children and senior citizens, so that nobody feels left out.