



# Hyphen 53

News from the Office

Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux  
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# Expert advice – a fundamental part of the allotment garden movement



*Wilhelm WOHATSCHEK*

**Wilhelm WOHATSCHEK,**  
President of the International Office's executive board  
and president of the Austrian allotment federation

how was it grown, have only organic products been used to grow it or have they resorted to pesticides, how far has it been transported?

All of these questions show that we, as allotment gardeners, benefit from a not insignificant advantage over other parts of society. If we wish, we can by growing our own products, follow the development of our plants precisely, from seed to fruit that is ready to eat, and we can rest assured that our harvest is 100% organic.

However, allotment gardens are not safe from pests that constitute a threat to our plants. How can we fight this scourge? What species should we plant to avoid certain damaging patterns? The list of problems and dangers is never ending.

So how should we as a federation react to allotment gardeners' problems? How do we prevent gardeners from making the mistake of resorting to certain treatments available in gardening shops because of a lack of alternatives?

Fortunately, it is relatively simple to answer this question: thanks to expert advisors who are perfectly trained to accompany allotment gardeners and offer their advice where ever it is needed. The expert advisors are an important part of our organization and that is why their work merits proper recognition and support.

With this in mind, in 2010 the Austrian central federation of allotment gardeners decided to organize the training of new expert advisors, and also to restructure the ongoing training of

The Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux encompasses about three million families of allotment gardeners from 14 nations. Even, if the allotment garden movements assume different shapes in these 14 countries, the wish to keep and maintain as best we can our little allotment unites us all. Yet knowledge on subjects as for example the growing cycles, planting and optimal up-keep is being lost over the course of the years. Knowledge dwindles, and people know less and less about how for example to grow their own vegetables. This trend is so strong that it is not uncommon for children to think that fruit and vegetables grow in supermarkets.

Fortunately, it should be pointed out that other trends are appearing. The organic approach is driving many people to question where their food is coming from and how it is grown. Where does the product come from,



existing advisors. The emphasis was placed on organizing an up to date training program characterized by professionalism and this also from a scientific angle. Distinguished scientists signed up to the movement and brought active support to the central federation by participating in the set-up of a demanding training program and by teaching courses designed for interested members. Thanks to this cooperation, the Austrian expert advisors have excellent training, which benefits all allotment gardeners. Some 70 new expert advisors have already been able to be trained. The Austrian central federation is proud of the praise that it receives from external speakers, which confirms that the level of knowledge of the expert advisors who have been trained corresponds to that of specialist schools. The two semesters of training covers, amongst other things, diseases that fruit and vegetables can get, the science of auxiliaries, compost and garden substrates, protecting plants, weeds and the science of soil. It goes without saying that the training also includes a course on fundamental legal knowledge, as well as a practical course on cutting fruit trees, to name but a few. But it doesn't stop there: after the training, which is recognized by an exam, ongoing training is organized regularly, which is compulsory to attend.

Owing to the importance of maintaining or even launching an effective expert advice service, this topic was selected for the 38th international congress of the International Office, which will take place in Vienna in 2016. At this event it will be possible to discuss at length the array of tasks that befall the expert advisors, as well as the possibilities for support by the national federations. Because we know from experience that the time in the workshops is always too short, that is why the topic of "expert advice" will be broached in 2015 at the study session organized by the Luxembourgish federation.



The fact is that expert advisors can make a crucial contribution to the environmentally friendly management of

our allotment gardens, and that we can all benefit from their vast knowledge.

# Decision protocol of the general assembly held in Luxembourg on 28th February and 1st March 2014

Were present: the federations of Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Great-Britain, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland.

Were absent: the federations of Denmark, Norway and Slovakia

- 1) The agenda is completed and adopted with unanimity.
- 2) The decision protocol and the report of the general assembly held in Berlin are adopted with unanimity.
- 3) The cooptation of P. PASCHKE as member of the executive board in order to finish the mandate of N. FRANKE is confirmed with unanimity.
- 4) The activity report is adopted with unanimity.
- 5) The Internet forum does not yet work. It is decided to insert the EU seed regulation so that everybody can read the text and comment on.
- 6) Every two weeks a piece of information is published on our homepage under the heading "News". Spontaneous contributions are highly welcome.
- 7) It is acknowledged that the International Office has reserved the domain names: jardins-familiaux.eu and jardins-familiaux.lu additionally to the domains reserved by the French and Swiss federations. The Belgian federation is invited to take the necessary steps for the reservation of the domain name: jardins-familiaux.be
- 8) On proposal of the executive board it is decided not to have the Office logo nor the Office logo with the name "jardins-familiaux" protected.
- 9) The delegates acknowledge the programme, the inscription fees and all the procedural steps for the congress in Utrecht.
- 10) Six federations and Japan have made a film that will be presented in Utrecht.
- 11) The delegates discuss the proposal for the resolution elaborated in common by the Dutch, Swiss and German federations. It is decided that P. PASCHKE will complete, respectively modify, the text according to the decisions taken and make the necessary linguistic amendments. H. BONNAVAUD will also amend the French text from a linguistic point of view.  
The text will then be sent to all the federations for approval.
- 12) The delegates are informed that a new Polish allotment garden law entered into force on 19th January 2014. It is a good law. Much could be achieved even if some compromises had to be accepted.
- 13) The contents of the Hyphens 54 and 55 are completed. In the future the federations are requested to send their articles as a Word document and to join the pictures as appendix. This also applies to all the texts to be used by the Office. The texts should additionally be written in an uncomplicated language in order to make their translation easier.
- 14) The contents of the Charter written by P. PASCHKE is accepted. H. BONNAVAUD will summarize the key points on one page as introduction. The lay-out will be optimized with pictures. The document should be an internal obligation and an external PR means. The text should be definitively adopted in Utrecht.
- 15) The executive board recommends to the general assembly not to change the regulation on innovative projects. This proposal is adopted with unanimity.  
C. ZIJDEVELD will give a DVD with the visited innovative projects to all the federations in Utrecht.
- 16) On proposal of the executive board it is decided that the Austrian federation will represent the Office at the next congress of Europa Nostra in Vienna and then report to the Office.
- 17) Following a decision of the executive board H. BONNAVAUD informs on the Cost Action. As this research project is very important, at least two "Office" rep-

- representatives should take part in every workshop. It is decided that the following people will represent the Office in the workshops:
- Urban development: W. HEIDEMANN & M. WEIRICH
  - Ecology: H.P. NIMMERRICHTER & mandate still vacant
  - Social: H. BONNAVAUD & mandate still vacant
  - Urban design: C. ZIJDEVELD & mandate still vacant
- The Dutch representatives still have to inform in which group they will participate.
- The federations have to be contacted once again in order to enable them to check if they have a representative willing to participate in the workshops (working language: English)
- The costs of this representation will be supported by the federations if they do not succeed in getting registered by Cost.
- 18) The Polish federation will give a lecture at a Cost Action meeting on Urban Agriculture in Warsaw. E. KONDRACKI will report hereon in Utrecht. It will then be decided if the Office also has to cooperate in this project.
- 19) On proposal of N. FRANKE an activity Children and Nature will be realized. A brochure with examples from all the federations will be issued. It is decided that the federations should send their examples to the general secretariat before 1st June 2014. (1 page per project text and pictures included)
- The brochure will internally be used as a working instrument and externally as a means of communication.
- 20) H. BONNAVAUD gets the mission to work out a message for the Pesticide Action Week. The aim thereof is to sensitize the allotment gardeners not to use pesticides. The message should as well indicate alternatives.
- This text will be put online on the Office Home-page and will also be put at the disposal of the federations.
- 21) The International Office and the BDG are going to take part in the IGA 2017. It is decided to continuously show the films on the national allotment garden movements during the action week on allotment gardening.
- 22) The treasurer J. KIEFFER presents the financial report.
- 23) The auditors inform that they have found no mistake. They ask the delegates to adopt the financial report and to grant discharge to the executive board.
- 24) The general assembly adopts the financial report 2013 with unanimity and grants discharge to the executive board with unanimity.
- 25) The draft budget for 2014 is adopted with unanimity.
- 26) The draft budget for the solidarity fund 2014 is adopted with unanimity.
- 27) It is decided with unanimity to give the diploma for an ecological gardening to the association "Dijkzicht" Amsterdam (NL); to the association "Nieuwe Levenskracht" Amsterdam (NL) and to the association « Tuinenpark Ons Buiten » Utrecht (NL).
- 28) It is decided with unanimity to give the diploma for innovative projects to the association "Allotment Museum in Vallila" Helsinki FI), to the association « De Hoge Weide » Utrecht (NL) and to the association "De Koekelt" of EDE (NL).
- 29) It is decided with unanimity to grant the "Golden Rose" to the town of Utrecht.
- 30) The written report concerning the cooperation with international organizations has been sent to all the national federations and M. WEIRICH gives the additional requested explanations.
- 31) The problem concerning empty plots on allotment sites is discussed.
- 32) The delegates unanimously agree that the EU seed directive cannot be accepted in its actual wording. The choice of the seeds/plants at our disposal cannot be limited.
- It is decided that as far as possible the federations should sign the petition written by C. TURMES which is online on the Office home-page, use it nationally or support a national initiative.
- 33) The next general assembly will be held in Utrecht on 28th August, 2014 at 09.00 a.m. The next statutory general assembly will be held in the City Hotel in Luxembourg on 27th and 28th February 2015.

# Germany: The allotment garden site an der Vils (Am Schießstätteweg) AMBERG / BAVARIA received the diploma for ecological gardening

M. Rist, jury member, manager of the LBK

## Facts:

Size: 4.1 hectares  
Number of gardens: 127  
Founded in 1917

## 1. Town planning and design of the site

### Town planning

The allotment garden site is located in an ideal urban location between general residential neighbourhoods, those with a mix of houses and apartments, and the Vils valley with the Amberg associations' sports centres. Members and visitors to the site can access the flood protected weir path on the edge of the Vils river plain which is threatened by flooding through two entrances. They can walk without crossing up to the north of the old town or along the green track that goes south towards Regensburg. Outside the site, but in the immediately adjacent public space, there is a playground with quality equipment for children aged 3-6 years and 6-12 years.

The site, which is open to the public, is part of a sustainable urban development strategy. It has the joint protection of the urban planning/landscape plan and the "Südliche Vilsaue" regulation on green spaces.

In 1996 the site was partially cleaned up as part of the "Landesgartenschau (horticultural exhibition) and has been totally integrated into its design.

### Design of the site

The site is – in line with the year of its creation – designed in a classic style in a rectangular square. The communal space with the association's headquarters and a managed square (paved by concrete) are on the edge of the weir path on the south side of the site. The paths are fixed by a cover

bound by water (stone shavings). The hedges (mainly privet) line the paths and there are no communal green spaces. The hedges are looked after by a collective effort and are around 80cm tall so that the gardens are easily visible without obstacles and therefore give the impression of a harmonious garden landscape. Old fruit trees, mostly in a good condition, outline the site. The gardens are demarcated from the public path by a metal trellis the gardens aren't individually demarcated, or separated by fences.





## 2. Society and social issues

The age of gardeners on the site is in the upper third of the average Bavarian. All age groups from 25 years to 80 years are represented on the site, and the presence of young families with children has risen to around 30% (a growing trend). There is a strong demand for gardens with applicants' details recorded on a waiting list. The site's sphere of influence concerns all of its immediate surroundings. The social mix in the association includes single mothers, academics and employees from the nearby Siemens building. The proportion of immigrants

is between 15 – 20% with the majority being Russian-Germans. The association's committee includes four women.

Social activities organised by the association include an annual garden party held over two days in summer, a Christmas party and group excursions. The high point is the external Thanksgiving Day. This is organised centrally by the town's association and includes many disabled persons. At this occasion garden produce from the Amberg allotment garden sites is handed out. Groups of students and residents of the nearby retirement

home regularly visit the site on the edge of the Vils.

## 3. Ecology and the urban environment

A drinking water system is in place; each garden's water supply includes a water meter both for control and ensuring sustainable use of water. Water pumps allow non-drinking water to be collected in each garden using the underground water levels from the Vils. The management of green waste vegetation to produce compost, green plant fertilisers, mulching and crop rotation are some of the common good gardening methods used on the site.

An integrated process for plant protection and renunciation of artificial or chemical pesticides is encouraged and practiced. Twelve experienced and trained advisors – of which six are active - observe and direct ecological improvements on the site. There are a number of nest boxes on the site, and a bee garden with nine colonies. The town's environmental association carries out a soil analysis once a year.

## 4. Project

In 2005, the association participated in a project as part of the "Soziale Stadt" ("Social Town"). This project launched in several selected areas of the Amberg town, comprised a plan to help the unemployed back into the workforce. It was sponsored by the national pilot programme "Lokales Kapital für Soziale Zwecke" (Local fund for social needs) promoted by the federal minister for family, the elderly, women and children and the European Union's social fund.

The "micro-project" established by the allotment garden association offered workers the opportunity to gain skill based qualifications in building paths. This meant that any work carried out on the site to build paths (new builds and repair work) was done by 8 long-time unemployed people under the supervision of a business that designs gardens and landscapes.

### 5. Design and use of individual gardens

The design of individual gardens is classical (mostly in a rectangular square) but rich in variation. Most of the gardens are maintained to a very high standard of cultivation as a vegetable garden way above the norm of 50-80% average for the Bavarian. Biodiversity is high; the principles of “good technical practice”, crop rotation, mixed plant cultivation and green waste composting are encouraged and practiced in an exemplary manner. Impermeable soil is lower than the average found at the sites visited, and environmentally friendly materials are used as a routine standard.

The location, size and construction of the sheds conform to the national law on allotment gardens. The local and past types of building are characteristic and the use of stone sheds should be noted. Electric connection feeds are controlled by consoles on public paths. The gardens/sheds themselves are – as usual in Bavaria – without electricity.

The management designs for paths, walls, water points and fences are well-suited and their creation sometimes shows a certain amount of imagination. The general impression of the allotments is above average. They represent an important contribution to the maintenance and development of gardening culture in Amberg.

### 6. Extract from the logbook concerning the visits for the state competition

“At 8.30 a.m. under a bright sun the president of the local association,



Rudolf Pittroff, came to find us at the hotel. He took us to visit the old historic town and lead us on a short trip towards the site that won the Bavarian competition, which is virtually on the edge of the old town. This allows the jury to be shown the site’s urban integration in an elegant manner. After a welcome from Amberg’s town mayor and a technical introduction from the town planning department, the town’s association and its president, we started a guided tour of the 4.1 hectare site with its 127 allotments. In comparison to the sites visited up until now, we noticed a lack of fences in front of and between the gardens.

Waist-high privet hedges that are used to line the paths allow the eyes to look across a flourishing garden landscape. Small entrances across numerous allotments are open, and friendly people invited members of the jury in to visit their small paradise. We watched a group of children being trained by the site’s bird specialist and were able to admire a gardener’s nine colonies of bees, which had just produced 150 kilos of honey in the previous days. Even the blazing sun seems well placed for Amberg’s gardening friends and casts a joyous and colourful light across the gardens...”

# Netherlands: The garden association De Driehoek in Utrecht received the diploma for an ecological gardening

De Driehoek is situated at its present location in the northeast of Utrecht since 1963, however the association is older than that. The site contains 137 gardens of an average size of 250 m<sup>2</sup>.

In 2003 the board of the association wrote a vision paper aiming among other things to convince the city of Utrecht of the importance of garden sites. The garden site of De Driehoek is part of the ecological main structure in The Netherlands.

Characteristic for De Driehoek are the two parallel ditches, the remains of the historical layout of the meadow. Along these ditches there are apple and pear trees, some older than 50 years. There is a belt with high trees and a wide ditch all-round the site.

In 2010 De Driehoek started the road to the National Quality Mark. This led to a beautiful four dots on the ladybird in 2012.

De Driehoek has developed a considerable number of projects, for example:

- A special brochure for gardeners and neighbours
- A quarterly newsletter for the gardeners
- Information signs at special locations describing water life, fruit trees, birds, grass snake and butterflies
- Organizing courses and workshop

for ecological gardening, making insect hotels, duck stairs and nesting boxes, composting, trimming etc

- Floating islands and duck stairs in the ditches

- Marshes
- Butterfly wood with dry stone wall
- Nameplates for all old fruit tree varieties
- Nesting boxes for different kind of





- birds
- Bat boxes
- Owl nest
- Insect hotel
- Kingfisher wall
- Baskets for earwigs
- Wooded bank
- Mutual composting heap, including a grass snake
- Ecological techniques for mowing of the banks of the ditches
- Collecting and shredding of trimmings

The international diploma will give the association great pride and will be an extra stimulant for the many volunteers of De Driehoek.



# Germany: The regional federation of allotment gardeners in Baden-Württemberg received the diploma for social activities for its park for generations

Alfred Lüthin

The plan was to overcome the loneliness of elderly people and integrate the retirement home situated in the centre of the city of Sinzheim as a permanent feature of the community...

... the solution was to create a "park for generations". This garden was designed and constructed to provide a place where young and old could gather together. This new garden is

a place where children, adults and elderly people can socialise.

A suitable location existed in front of the retirement home. There was already a large area with green spaces but this area was not very attractive for leisure activities. The plants and planting arrangements were too functional; the access paths were unsuitable for people in wheelchairs or using

walking frames.

Many developers and partners joined the project. In 2006 the construction phase of the park began. Now thanks to voluntary aid from associations and the retirement home's workers, several parts of the park for generations are complete and ready to receive visitors. Pathways have been widened, barriers removed and new walkways





created that pass alongside a newly fitted pond with a bridge to link the different areas. There is a small open air theatre, the “silent zone”, a dementia garden some raised beds and a place for barbecues.

In the plan there are areas for cross-generational activities for children and teenagers from the local schools and nurseries. One of our objectives is to extend the park, to create further activity spaces for the young and old; another idea is to create a garden with parterres, designed to be cultivated by partners made up from the elderly and young people. We hope this will encourage social skills and that children can benefit from the life experience of the elderly.



The other activities planned are a playground, a mini golf course, a zoo where children can stroke animals and an exercise course. Also an amphitheatre Sinzheim’s first “open air theatre” should be created here to be used later by schools for open air classes. Our aim of bringing generations together in Sinzheim has been achieved: this project has become a model scheme for cross-generational work on a national level.

# Bron Fair Allotments received the diploma on innovative projects



Bridgend County Allotment Association in conjunction with:  
Bridgend & District Visual Impairment Society.  
The Stroke Association  
and "Every Link Counts"  
have created a gardening Club for Bridgend Visual Impairment Society.

In late Summer of 2009 Bridgend County Association was approached by the Committee of the Bridgend Visual Impairment Society asking if we had a piece of allotment land on which they could hold a Gardening Club for their visually impaired members.

Allotments are very popular and we did not have a piece of land that was immediately usable. However, we did have a piece of very overgrown land which we thought might be suitable.

Luckily, our association had just been awarded some funding to enlarge the car park on our site in Bronfair, Maesteg so we added a little extra to the money we already had. While the machine was clearing the land for the car

park, we also asked them to clear a piece of overgrown ground.

By late September 2009 the ground had been cleared, and we now had 450 sq. metres of level ground ready for the project, but now the hard work began, looking for the funding. We applied to the local Town Council in Maesteg hoping that they would be able to help us.

At a Council meeting, Julie Thomas,

the Chair of Bridge VIS, made an excellent presentation, and John & Doreen Morgan explained the facts and figures. To our delight the councillors awarded us £9,200.

Now we have some funding, we can start looking for match-funding for this project which will be the first of its kind in Bridgend County Borough to provide a specially designed garden for the visually impaired and disabled in the Community.





The Glamorgan Gazette (our local newspaper) came along to do a photo-shoot and gave us quite a bit of publicity, which meant that more people offered their help.

In late October Bridge VIS was awarded match-funding from the Western Valleys Regeneration Fund, so we drew a plan for the whole site. The Stroke Association and Every Link Counts joined us and the match-funding meant that we can now have all that we want for the site. Twenty raised growing beds, a poly tunnel, a sensory garden, and a compost toilet, together with a meeting hut and

patio area. All the paths will be wide enough for wheelchair users, and the whole site will be fenced and secure.

Everything was coming together.

2010 all the funding was in place and planning permission granted. All the estimates were properly costed and agreed.

On 22nd February, 2010 the contractors moved in and by the beginning of April 2010 all the ground-works were completed, the raised beds and shed were in place, and the site was ready for the Gardening Club to begin.

On 23rd June Mr. Gareth Edwards, CBE, a famous rugby player and President of the Cardiff Institute for the Blind, officially opened the Bron-fair Garden for the Disabled.

Beautiful sunshine greeted the many guests, who were serenaded by a group of youngsters from Garth Primary School with a selection of songs from "Grease".

Julie Thomas, the Chair of Bridge VIS said in her speech:

"Gardening is something that is enjoyed by many and taken for granted, but when you lose your sight you often lose your identity and your ability to join in a hobby that gives real pleasure. This amazing garden means that we can now overcome these difficulties. Gardening can be an all sensory experience from when you first plant the crops to the moment you experience the thrill of the first harvest of the crops. Thanks to the design of this garden, this is a hobby that is now fully accessible to us."

Thanks.....

We would like to say a big thank you to all the people and organizations who have helped with this project:

- MAESTEG TOWN COUNCIL.
- B.C.B.C. REGENERATION TEAM.
- BRIDGEND ASSOCIATION OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS.
- O2 "It's your Community".
- BORG WARNER WORKFORCE CHARITABLE FUND.
- THE NATIONAL LOTTERY.
- ZURICH COMMUNITY TRUST.
- BRACKLA TABERNACLE CHURCH and finally

Special thanks to Mr. PETER OWEN (Project Manager)

# Can the Ambrosia invasion in Germany be stopped?

Conclusions of the Julius Kühn Institute Ambrosia conference 2013



Common ragweed or annual ragweed has been spreading out in Europe for years. The annual plant was imported in the 19th century from North America to Europe, where it started to populate warmer regions such as Hungary, Northern Italy and the south of France during the 20th century. As a consequence of climate change, one can expect an increased spreading in Germany. Although a mainly ruderal plant, it is also infesting some agricultural crops. The main issue however is the significant amount of highly allergenic pollen, which is known for causing hay fever and asthma.

The Julius Kühn Institute (JKI) in Berlin organised interdisciplinary discussions with biologists, meteorologists, physicians, conservationists and agricultural scientists, focusing on the highly allergenic ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*). The conference participants presented the current spread of the plant, as well as the latest research results from Germany and its neighbouring countries. As a conclusion, they formulated the need for research and action to prevent the spreading of Ambrosia on a sustained basis. The 3-day conference took place in September 2013 in the context of the

EU-project HALT-AMBROSIA, which is coordinated by the JKI and where the latter is involved as the German research partner. The JKI's interdisciplinary Ambrosia working group was also involved in the project. Experts' conclusions of the Julius Kühn Institute's Ambrosia conference 2013:

1. New results of research on allergic diseases have improved the understanding of this plant, respectively of ragweed allergies. The research shows that Ambrosia poses a considerable health threat due to its high allergen content. For this reason it is essential to avoid that ragweed spreads out further and establishes itself in Germany.
2. Other research shows that ragweed is spreading out significantly in Germany due to man-made routes of transmission. There is an urgent need for the development and especially the implementation of measures that are effective on a quick, large-scale and sustained basis.
3. Ambrosia is a feared type of field weed, which is difficult to control. Of particular importance and ur-

gency are systematic measures to prevent the carry-over of Ambrosia through earthmoving during road maintenance works and through farm machinery.

4. The measures hitherto applied on a local basis have yielded measurable success. This shows that it is possible to successfully prevent the introduction and the carry-over of the plant, and to control it.

5. Measures are only effective on a long-term basis if they are implemented across biotopes (roadside, fields, fallow land, construction sites, et al.) and if they are applied consistently in the areas of responsibility of the affected ministries, departments and public authorities, at the level of the Federation and the Länder.

The participants of the interdisciplinary meeting concluded:

The prerequisite for a comprehensive and long-term application of measures to prevent the spreading of Ambrosia is the **ordinance of a duty of notification and fundamental control in every Bundesland**.

#### Links:

[www.halt-ambrosia.de/](http://www.halt-ambrosia.de/)  
EU-Projekt HALT AMBROSIA (in English)  
<http://pflanzengesundheit.jki.bund.de/index.php?menuid=60&reporeid=118>  
Meeting of the JKI's interdisciplinary Ambrosia working group (since 2006 – in German)  
[www.jki.bund.de/fileadmin/dam\\_uploads/\\_veroeff/faltblaetter/ambrosia.pdf](http://www.jki.bund.de/fileadmin/dam_uploads/_veroeff/faltblaetter/ambrosia.pdf)  
Leaflet on ragweed (in German)

# Are vegetables grown in towns bad for our health?

PD Dr. Heide Hoffmann, Bsc St. Hebold and A. Frömel,  
Humboldt Universität in Berlin

heide.hoffmann@agrar.hu-berlin.de

## Summary:

Are vegetables grown in towns bad for our health? This question has been raised today with the growing interest in urban gardening both by amateur gardeners and also by consumers of vegetables and fruit grown by themselves. At Humboldt University, where urban agriculture and horticulture are amongst the subjects taught, the students have a new type of lesson with the University, in the form of a “Q-Tutorium” where the students look at a subject that they have chosen themselves, with a focus on research, and have analysed this topic during the summer term.

Based on the study of literature and individual practical tests, the potential impact of harmful substances in the air on plants grown in urban areas had to be analysed. At the heart of this was the health of consumers, not the physiological effects of growing plants. For plants grown in urban areas, it is particularly important to study heavy metals such as cadmium, copper and zinc with regards to higher emissions and their ready availability for plants.

For the analyses, a raised bed was created in four places in Berlin with exposure to different emissions: (Mitte [LGF], Südkreuz, Karlshorst and Stahnsdorf). The same types of plants of the following mixture (plants with deep and shallow roots) were grown: lettuce, rocket, nasturcium, radish and kohlrabi. The raised beds were filled with a certified substrate so as to guarantee the same soil con-

ditions. Even so, the substrate was analysed beforehand on the following basis; likewise the irrigation water and the harvested plants were analysed for the amount of heavy metal: cadmium, zinc, iron, copper and lead.

The results revealed that the environment has a significant influence on the contamination of the soil and the harvested plants. The flowerbed in Stahnsdorf had, on average, the highest number of plants with the most

significant concentration of heavy metals. In general, it can be said that the lettuce and partly the rocket had on average the highest concentration of heavy metal. Apart from lead on the Landwirtschaftlich-Gärtnerischen-Fakultät (Berlin-Mitte) site and zinc on the Südkreuz site, the lowest average concentration of heavy metals was found in the kohlrabi.

In general, the results showed that on average none of the maximum limits



of heavy metals were reached. Without doubt, one of the reasons is the use of the certified substrate in the raised flowerbeds. Moreover, the construction and vegetation act as a barrier, and a greater distance from the road reduces the limit of harmful sub-

stances in the plants. Combined with the use of certified earth, the risks of too great an accumulation of harmful substances in the plants can be kept at a lower level. On average, leafy vegetables were found to have a higher level of heavy metals than root veg-

etables or flowering plants. It can be implied that this amount of heavy metals in leafy vegetables comes mainly from dust. It is strongly recommended to wash vegetables thoroughly before eating them. However, this is true for all types of fruit and vegetables.

# The allotment gardeners from Great-Britain present themselves

## Structure

Head Office - approx. 60 County bodies, Regional panels and federations, 2,500 associations, 120,000 members

## Allotment gardens

Approx 400,000 allotment gardens, with an average size of 250 sq metres majority of which are statutory allotments

## Administration

Mainly voluntary and a few paid employees

## Ownership

89% local authorities, 11% private



As the leading authority on allotments for the past 100 years, the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) actively encourages the formation of Allotment Associations in partnership with Local Authorities.

We are a not-for-profit organisation representing over one third of all allotments in the UK. The average size of an allotment is 250 sq metres. Some allotments are connected to a water supply. The average rent is approx £ 25-£ 50 per year. For membership, individuals not in societies pay £ 20 per year; members of societies pay £ 2 each per year with a minimum total payment of £ 20 per society.

The majority of allotments are council owned as they have a statutory obligation to provide them under the 1908 Small Holdings and Allotments Act. The remaining 11 % are private-

ly owned allotment sites. Allotment land is used wholly for the cultivation of fruit and vegetables, but some tenants keep hens/rabbits on their allotments. This however is subject to local authority rules. Sheds/greenhouses and polytunnels are allowed on allotments, these are temporary structures and are not to be used as a permanent or temporary dwellings.

## How the NSALG are organised:

- NSALG are a nationwide body responsible for the promotion, protection, preservation and creation of all allotments.
- NSALG are the only full time professional organisation specifically representing the interests of allotment gardening, operating from a permanently staffed Head Office.
- NSALG are a registered Industrial Provident Society.
- We have a National Management

Committee who create the general policy, both nationally and locally via the regions. All work undertaken by our Regional Representatives is carried out on a voluntary basis.

- The network of ten Regional and County Representatives work with local groups and councils.
- NSALG have in-house Legal Advice covering all aspects of allotment, contract, tort, environmental and consumer law.
- We have 247 Local Authority members, 2,386 Association members, 1,335 Individual members, 951 Life members and 33 School members
- The National Allotments Trust has been established to operate as a charity. The prime objective is educational, to create awareness, to spread knowledge

## What the NSALG achieve at present:

- NSALG is the advisor to the gov-



ernment on the disposal of Statutory Allotments, is part of the official consultation process relating to the disposal of statutory allotment land, resulting in many saved sites.

- NSALG are recognised by other government bodies and major non-governmental associations, organisations and the media as the voice of the allotment movement. This gives us many opportunities to represent all members' interests and concerns both on official and unofficial levels.
- NSALG assist with leases, management procedures, allotment legislation, planning applications and liaison with local government.
- We offer our members a discounted seed scheme and also an allotment insurance scheme.
- NSALG provide a wide range of publications, with information on a variety of topic areas including self management schemes, rents and

leases, landlord and tenant issues.

- Our Regional Representatives work with local private landowners to encourage the release of land for allotment use, either by selling land or leasing to Councils or directly to Associations. They also work closely with councils and Tenants on Devolved Management Schemes, updating constitutions, leases and tenancies.
- Our Regional Management Committee offer support to local Associations and Councils concerning all matters related to allotment gardens.
- NSALG produce a quarterly magazine.
- In the Eastern Region NSALG have been trialling a programme of workshops in association with the Society of Legal Council Clerks (SLCC) on how to implement the allotment legislation.

### NSALG aims and objectives for the future

- To provide a continuous programme of workshops throughout the country, for tenants, associations and councils, to enable them to work together to improve facilities and to actively encourage more of the general public, to benefit from their association with allotments.
- To liaise further with community projects in schools and including specific projects for the deaf and disabled.
- To be able to provide further sites countrywide, at zero cost to the community.
- To have Regional Secretaries throughout the UK who could take the administrative burden off the Regional Committee members.
- To provide courses on fruit and vegetable growing throughout the UK.

# The allotment gardeners from Netherlands present themselves

## Structure

3 local federations, 187 local associations, representing 26,000 gardeners, approx. 235 allotments and leisure garden sites

## Allotment gardens

27,500 allotment gardens, with an average size of 250 sq metres

## Administration

Mainly voluntary. There are as well some paid employees in the central federation

## Ownership

99% communal authorities, 1% private. The AVVN is based in Utrecht and has its own Activity and Information Centre for Garden and Nature. The centre is located on Vogelvlinderweg 50, 3544 NJ Utrecht.

It has 3 local federations and 187 local associations, representing 26,000 gardeners.

Allotment gardens are found on leased land as well as on privately owned land. Most allotment gardens are on communal grounds. The private owners are either private owners who lease the plots to associations or associations who own their own land or even members of associations who own their own garden.

The average allotment size is 250 sq metres, and the overall total area of allotment gardens is approx. 1,000 hectares.

Some allotments are connected to a water supply, and few have electricity. However many gardeners use solar

panels as their source of energy.

There is no unique yearly rent. The rent can vary between 0.05 € and 2.00 € per sq metre. The annual contribution to the AVVN is € 24.10 per member.

The AVVN is a member of the Association of Dutch Voluntary Effort Or-

ganisations (NOV) and the Society for the Protection of Birds. At government level, the allotment gardens fall within the remit of the Minister for Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation. The AVVN also has close ties with the Minister for Infrastructure and the Environment.



The AVVN organizes 2 to 3 seminars a year for its members, on topics in the fields of law, society or social issues, the environment and public relations, 8 – 10 workshops a year on garden topics and several exhibitions related to gardening in Mea Vota (e.g. photo exhibition, sculptures of a local artist, animals in the garden).

A new tenant must pay their predecessor a handover fee between 200 and 15,000 €, depending on the size and quality of shed or chalet in the garden. The use of the land as allotment gardens is obligatory. The land is set aside for the cultivation of horticultural produce and recreational purposes.

Any work for the associations is done on a voluntary basis. Two local federations have paid employees.

The allotment gardens can be equipped with sheds or chalets with a maximum surface area varying from 6 to 32 sq metres. They must not be used as a permanent dwelling. In approximately ten Dutch cities overnight stays are allowed from April till October.

All buildings on allotment sites (sheds, chalets, meeting rooms, offices, restaurants and communal toilets) must be authorised.

The members of the AVVN organise numerous social projects. These include, amongst others, providing



homes for the elderly with flowers, providing food banks with vegetables, school gardens, gardens for children, the disabled and the elderly, educa-

tional and learning gardens as well as training and meeting areas for the users of both allotment gardens and non member amateur gardeners.



# Overview of the work of the Landesverband Sachsen der Kleingärtner e. V.

## A significant partner of the local communities 1st Part

Peter Paschke, President of the Landesverband Sachsen der Kleingärtner

With more than 210,000 members, Saxony's Landesverband der Kleingärtner (LSK) is one of the largest associations in Saxony with more than 20,000 volunteers making up the community of allotment gardeners, which is formed of almost 3,900 associations and 37 regional federations.

The promotion of the allotment garden movement, the creation of a framework that allows citizens from all areas of society to enjoy practical gardening activity and recreation, is the ideal foundation for our work. That's why Saxony can count on a rich tradition – whether it be with the allotment garden movement and with the changing lives, or the workers' gardens in the industrial conurbations.

Today, the allotment garden sites in Saxony are primarily places for an active social life. They provide an individual, communal and cultural service in harmony with nature. The activities organised in the allotment gardens are seen as of public utility and are protected by law.

One in five member gardeners lives in Saxony. Those who seek allotment gardens in our state can find them on foot, by bike or by public transport, easily accessible and right on their doorstep.





Numerous sites, with their gardens, plantations, nature trails and events, are wholly embedded in today's gardening and associative culture. Our organisation makes professional gardening skills available in towns and communities. Through our work, we contribute significantly to the sustainable and global principles of AGENDA21. We put forward innovative models of ways to use allotment gardens; we show the diverse ways in which they can be used and we advise local authorities on how to use green spaces in general town planning and building projects.

The organisations of allotment gardens are very important as a way of measuring social issues and for so-

cial well-being. Our federation has a positive and modern profile. It is seen as open, friendly, cheerful, tolerant, environmentally friendly, engaged, sociable and healthy. Awareness of the next generation is a vital concern for us.

We work closely with relevant ministers and administrations, especially during legal initiatives that affect our work. Suggestions that are useful and aimed at resolving legal problems are drafted under our care. It is a question of our significant contribution to society to safeguard the allotment garden movement.

Tradition and innovation are clear to us. We are open to new trends and

we look to exchange and collaborate with others, although we do so without losing sight of our own goals. This is because the rudiments of organising allotment gardens up until now are land rental relations and the association as basic structure and as self-managing body.

Collaborating with local decision makers in politics and the civil service as much as with Saxony's town and community congress is particularly important for the future and the sustainability of the allotment garden movement in Saxony.

### Objectively speaking, what makes us a partner?

- We commit ourselves to a sustainable allotment garden movement as an integral part of a social town;
- Our offerings are social, environmental and town planning contributions for a town that is good to live in and for the protection of the "allotment garden" heritage;
- We open up our garden sites with contemporary offers of leisure and training for everyone;
- We drive issues concerning the protection of nature and the environment with professional knowledge;
- We get involved on a local level in different competitions designed to improve and enhance the allotment garden sites;
- We want to help volunteers get the recognition they deserve;
- We fulfil a social mission by providing a space where people from different walks of life can meet, and we contribute towards dialogue between different generations and towards integrating different social and ethnic groups.

These offerings by our association form the basis of partnerships with local authorities that are sustainable and constructive. This fact is increasingly recognised and made use of. Adjudicating interests within the current restrictions needs greater acceptance and flexibility.

The LSK is committed to both. We thank those responsible from the local authorities and in parliaments who recognise us and honour us with their collaboration and promotion of our movement.

Our member gardeners live in Saxony. A flourishing free state, that remains our country of origin for us and our children, is the goal of our voluntary activities in the allotment gardens.

### **The future sustainable development of the allotment garden movement in Saxony**

#### **1. Development of allotment gardens – the allotment gardens are to remain in quantity and to increase in quality**



The Bundesverfassungsgericht (BVerfG – constitutional state court) has already stated in its declaration of 12th of June 1979, that allotment gardens are vital in town planning. They are important for the separation and ventilation of buildings; they contribute significantly to a better environmental balance; they have a positive effect on climate and form an important part of the structural layout of neighbourhoods. Through structural change, particularly on a demographic and economic level and the resulting consequences for town planning and urban redevelopment, new possibilities open up to the local authorities for an innovative design of green spaces and allotment gardens. This assumes that the interests of

the allotment garden movement are integrated into long term town planning and that the existing garden sites are secure, together with other urban green spaces. In fact the local authorities are obliged to make land available for allotment gardens. The local authorities can only fulfil this mission if they carry out town planning with allotment gardens in mind and reserve space in time for this purpose.

It is fitting to point out in this context that the Landesverband Sachsen der Kleingärtner, in its last “Kommunalpolitischen Konferenz” (community politics conference) on the 1st of July 2009, invited all of the towns in Saxony to draft a “plan for the development of allotment gardens” for 10 years together with the allotment garden federations. The last check as part of a big request to the Saxony state government revealed that in 19 towns and municipalities and in the three free towns of Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz, these “plans for the development of allotment gardens” existed or were in the process of being created.

Here we see a necessary point of reference for accepting the role of planning by the local authorities.

#### **2. Use as an allotment garden – to be secured as a key element**

In accordance with the dispositions of the state law concerning allotment gardens, the use as an allotment garden is the key point for allotment garden sites.

This use is also the distinguishing feature in relation to other gardens created in the context of leisure gardening. This is why the Saxony allotment garden federation has recommended in its regulations concerning allotment gardens since 1991 that at least a third of the allotment plot is used to grow horticultural produce for personal use.

The main strength of this use is the

growing of fruit and vegetables, as this justifies the lower land rental.

In accordance with the dispositions of the federal law on allotment gardens, the rental cost in the allotment garden movement is determined on the basis of the professionally growing fruit and vegetables.

This is why we depend on a third of the land being used to grow fruit and vegetables.

Obviously aromatic and medicinal plants, summer flowers and other plants can be grown. We also recommend plants that are useful for the fauna. A greenhouse, a plot for precocious plants and a compost heap are also part of an allotment garden.

Furthermore, we make the allotment gardeners who are part of our movement aware of protecting the diversity of flora and fauna. A key point for the future use of allotment gardens will

be gardening that respects nature in order to respond to the need to protect the environment and guarantee a pesticide-free use of allotment gardens. For this reason we launched an environmental project on the 25th of June 2011 with Saxony's minister for the environment and agriculture, Frank Kupfer, and representatives from all of Saxony's allotment garden associations: "Gardening in harmony with nature". Saxony's federal allotment garden federation will award an "environment prize" in recognition of remarkable initiatives carried out in this area.

In the coming years there will be an emphasis on managing communal areas within allotment garden sites, which must equally include aspects of kitchen gardens. Relaxation areas will be created to be amongst beds of plants and areas of flowers. Historical elements of the association will also be presented, such as historically sig-

nificant shelters, with presentations on the history of the association.

Associations should also make more use of sponsorship opportunities by institutions near the allotment garden sites, whether they are institutions for the handicapped, retirement homes, nurseries or schools. Empty allotments could so be used as meeting places, gardens for the disabled, nature classes or educational gardens. The support of the community and other sponsors is also needed for these activities, which respond to the changing needs of society, such as educating children about nature and the environment.

A special type of social commitment is the upkeep of gardens that provide food banks with fresh fruit and vegetables to give to people and families in need of fresh food.

***To be followed***

# One of Ten: The Structure & Work of the Eastern Region, National Allotment Society. Great Britain.

Jeff Barber

From Hackney in the south to Hunstanton in the north and from Lowestoft in the east to Milton Keynes in the west: just one region of the ten that form the regional structure of the National Allotment Society. The Eastern Region of the National Allotment Society, like all the others, has that idiosyncratic intricacy of the English physical and social landscape. Gentrified inner cities in Hackney and Islington cheek by jowl with much poorer areas in the same borough and the whole gamut of suburban London from Victorian Leyton through inter-war Enfield to the leafier spots of Chigwell before opening into East Anglia's arable heartlands in Suffolk and Norfolk, the flat fields and wide skies of the Cambridgeshire Fens, the internationally important bird reserves of the North Norfolk marshes and the very distinctive but anthropogenic Norfolk Broadlands. Such a variety so unremarkable in an area stretching no more than 210 kilometres by 190 kilometres. And within it a whole range of thriving allotment associations and sites both large and small and both urban and rural. All form part of the region with largest membership total of the National Allotment Society as well as the largest number of local authority members ranging from London boroughs to town councils and, at the smaller scale, parish councils.

The Eastern Region strives to serve



them all through its Regional Panel and Representative with representative members from each of the counties and federations. We meet four times a year always in Cambridge which is central for us all. The constituent Suffolk, Essex, Beds. Bucks. & Herts and the Barnet federation meet a week or so after that with members from their own affiliated associations attending.

Ideally information flows in both directions. The level of detail becomes

greater the further down the hierarchy you go. The wider and more general issues occupy the Eastern Region itself where a context can be provided more readily but the specific detail from a local issue can break through to the wider agenda and often does. At heart of any business of the meetings is the sharing of knowledge, issues, disputes, celebrations, disasters and triumphs of all within a framework which is neither confrontational nor judgemental but which can provide the keys to unlocking potential and

solutions. Specifically to matters such as tenancy issues, creation of new allotment sites. Drawing up and revising documentation, recruiting new members, dealing with councils at all levels from parishes upwards are all there. At the more disputatious end of the spectrum the advice and guidance of the Corby Head Office of the National Allotment Society provides an essential and supportive source of reference and resort.

Flows of information from the Region-

al Panel go to each of the constituent bodies so that they can know what business is being considered by the Management Committee. But from the bottom up the concerns of individual associations are not likely to be isolated ones and collectively they will feed through to the Regional Panel and to the Management Committee which has the Eastern Region Representative sitting on it. That's the way it should work but the reality is of course less than perfect. There are always misunderstandings and mispercep-

tions and always, always the feeling there is not enough or not enough good communication whatever media are being used. But static it is not. The processes go on and evolve, new issues get foregrounded, old issues fade like mist in the sun and above all there remains the engagement of committed individuals and groups. Everything familiar but everything different each year: just as it is for all growers everywhere at whatever scale they operate.

# The Flemish allotment gardens in 2013



Noël Ghesquière  
Secretary of the Flemish allotment garden federation

## Introduction

On 1 January, 2013 Mr. Bart Naeyaert took over the presidency of our association „De Vlaamse Volkstuin-Werk“ van de Akker from Mr. Alexander Vercamer.

During the term of the previous president, our association underwent significant changes. For the first time, we mapped the history of our allotment gardens with the support of the association and in cooperation with third parties, including the University of Leuven.

A century of allotment gardens was described in a book entitled „Les jardins populaires: une histoire“ (A history of allotment gardens).

The association also prepared a study in collaboration with Gand University concerning the requirements of allotment gardens, in which the requirements of all Flemish cities and municipalities were described. Furthermore, a guide was drafted to help municipalities create an allotment garden site.

The association has also been recognized by the Flemish government as a socio-cultural association for the period 2011-2015 and through this, significant financial resources have come to us.

Through these financial contributions and the support of 3.1 full time employees our association has had loads of prospects and has already been able to undertake numerous actions.

The most important projects of our association for 2013 will be reviewed below.

## Our growth package

This package was submitted to each local allotment garden association and is made up of two sections, a growth indicator and a growth range.

The **growth indicator** provides important addresses and gives another perspective on the procedures such

as organizing garden competitions, setting up participation in fairs, etc.

The **growth range** illustrates the four functional requirements to which each social-cultural association must comply to keep its subsidies, i.e. educational function, community training, cultural and social activation. Multiple examples of these activities are provided so that each local allotment garden association can comprise a balanced number of activities.



## Support for the construction and fitting out of allotment garden sites

Allotment gardens are small plots of land where inhabitants grow vegetables sustainably and for their own consumption. These plots are adjacent to each other and make up an allotment garden site. The „*De Vlaamse Volkstuin*“ association strives to stimulate the creation of allotment garden sites and offers support during their start-up and operations.

We provide appropriate opinions during the launch phase of various projects and we support various organizations throughout Flanders.

There are around one hundred allotment garden sites in Flanders, of which some fifty are under „*De Vlaamse Volkstuin*“ management. Apart from this, the association also provides instruction, training and information to all amateur gardeners.

We are the largest allotment garden association, hosting 25,000 members. Some 4,000 gardeners cultivate a plot of land in an allotment garden site that is under „*Vlaamse Volkstuin*“ management.

It has been shown through a 2007 University of Gand study that there is a very inadequate supply of land for gardening. In contrast to this, there is a huge demand, specifically in the outskirts of large and mid-sized cities.

In 2013, the Flemish government called on associations and public administrations to create allotment garden sites. A significant degree of financial support was set aside for construction or fit-out of such areas. Ultimately, ninety requests or applications were submitted.

Twenty five projects were approved after the first review, and another twenty-one were adopted after a second review. These will be eligible for subsidy in 2014.



Our association is providing opinions and support for eleven of the twenty-five projects approved during the initial review. Several projects are still on a waiting list while additional information is being provided. We are considering whether collaboration with our association is still possible.

### Below is a list of projects to which we are providing our assistance and support:

Antwerp province: Herentals and Antvers

Limburg province: Diepenbeek and Zonhoven

East Flanders province: Termonde and the City of Gand

Flemish Brabant province: Tirlemont

West Flanders province: Oostrozebeke, Langemark, Poelkapelle, Zwevegem, Zedelgem and Ypres.

What we mean by providing opinions and support:

*Vlaamse Volkstuin* provides advice and support for projects from the design through to management phases. Our work is tailored to the objectives and determination of individual project requirements.

1. Consultations with participants/ developers: the parties who are participating in the project, including associations, organizations, private owners, etc.
2. Financial resources: opinions on subsidies and other financing possibilities.

sibilities.

3. Support in achieving a detailed plan: a custom scenario for the project.
4. Lay out: opinion regarding optimal installation of selected sustainable materials.
5. Soil study and using manure consciously: collaboration with recognized laboratories.
6. Regulations: an opinion concerning the drafting of internal rules for using the garden.
7. Founding an association: how to establish an association or a de facto association: legal aspects, regulations etc.
8. Management: an A – Z management format and setting up a new local allotment garden association.
9. Activities and training: we have a list of around 400 different specialists for lectures.

In-depth knowledge and skills, as well as demonstration sessions.

### Opinions and support activities are free.

Apart from the applications that have been submitted, there are still projects underway that could be started but that are not on the agenda of Flanders Minister-President Peeters. We have also given our opinion and advice regarding the following projects at

Oudenaarde, Ninove, Ostend, Brede, Lissewege, Roeselare, Deinze and Merelbeke.

These are all new projects for allotment garden sites, shared gardens or CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) projects.

Significant budget allocations have again been made for 2014.

### Data base

An active working group has started setting up a data base, using all data from members of local associations, conference speakers, allotment garden associations, leaseholders of these associations, lists of presentations, activities of our association and data concerning allotment garden sites.

For example, it is possible to locate conference speakers who intervene on specific themes or to get the annual accounts of an association using this data base.

An association can easily submit a request to a provincial authority through a unique conference speaker to conference speaker link.

In addition, a link to our federation's internet site has been established that can be used to view requested lectures or activities – also present in the data base – that appear on the site for each visitor to see where and when a lecture will be held.

In the future, this instrument can be used more by all associations.

### Training

The association has been setting up two annual training sessions for its associations for two years now.

These training programs are intended

to assist and support our agents in their operations.

Training has been provided in the following areas: techniques for meeting, the insurance question for associations, internet/Email training, time-management, first aid, how to attract new members, how to appeal to young people, etc.....

These training sessions are widely attended. This demonstrates that training in these areas is truly needed to better organize and support the functioning of our associations.

### Communications and marketing

One point important to us is name recognition. Our operations are often little known or completely unknown.

In 2013, a working group was set up to examine ways to convey a positive image of our operations.

Some possibilities evolving from this work included finding a new name, a new logo and a new associative identity.

Our league submitted tenders to a number of marketing agencies and reviewed the various possibilities and proposals. At the end of December, 2013 we selected „Tuinhier“ as a replacement name, which was published and commented on in early January, 2014.

### Course offerings by our association

Our association has set up a number of themes for courses to be given to other associations and groups.

These are primarily square foot gar-

dening, growing your own fruit, worry-free indoor plants, pruning workshops, insects in gardens, and other themes.

This range of courses can still be enlarged.

### Monthly publication

Our league has issued a monthly publication form over eighty years now.

We try to comment on garden activities for the upcoming month in each edition.

We particularly stress the „Do-it-yourself and Grow-it-yourself“ aspects.

In a certain number of articles, we provide detailed discussions of plants, flowers and shrubs. Each month features a culinary section, a floral composition section and a kids' section.

It is clear that our federation, since its recognition, can achieve a much more dynamic policy that will be primarily beneficial for our provincial and local associations.

It is through the aid of the Flemish government that our association has been able to achieve what it has to date.

This would never be possible without its financial support.

Naturally, we must also recognize the disinterested enthusiasm of our 2,000 volunteer administrators which they demonstrate in their local and provincial allotment garden associations.

# TO INNOVATE AND TO COMMUNICATE in order to remain attractive

Hervé Bonnavaud



## A world in evolution

The world, in which we live, is not motionless. It is in constant movement and this movement has considerably increased during the last ten years.

When I was young it was easy for me to imagine my own future. Today this is nearly impossible. Young people have difficulties to imagine the future.

Our allotments have lived during a century without major evolutions as if time had stopped. Some ancient sites resemble much to the first allotments and the gardening practices are similar to those at the beginning of the 21st century. These gardens are condemned to disappear one day. They do not correspond anymore to the wishes of the new gardeners and they cannot be reproduced due to the development of the towns and the increasing scarcity of grounds in and around the towns. If grounds still exist their price has become prohibitive for the realization of allotments.

## The possibility to analyse the situation thanks to the International Office

The French allotment federation (Fédération française des jardins familiaux et collectifs) has analyzed this new situation during the last five years and has drawn the necessary consequences from this. In order to survive it is absolutely necessary to change, to adapt to the economic, physical and human environment of the towns of the 21st century.

We have integrated the ecological demands which we have discovered during the congress in York (UK) in 2002 as well as the necessity to protect biodiversity which we discovered during the congress in Lyon (F) in 2005.

We have taken advantage of all the congresses, seminars and study sessions organized in the different countries by the International Office. From



Lausanne (CH) in 2000 to Berlin (D) in 2013 I have not stopped to get information, to compare, to learn from the others in order to find the best possible solutions for the French federation.

### Research work is considered as a help

In order to help us to make the good choices we have to rely on researchers and sociologists who are better able to understand society. Therefore we resolutely require their help: On international level we take part in the programs COST and GESSOL (SNOWMAN) and in France in the programme JASSUR in which two of our national executive board members are major actors.

We develop as well exchanges with researchers of countries from the South of Europe with the hope to link the Italian and Spanish gardens with our international movement.

### New forms of gardens

We have imagined new forms of gardens, new communication strategies towards the public, the media, the local and national elected people and our members associations.

In Paris in 1998 we have created the first garden **at the bottom of flat houses**. It was a complete new concept, which we presented at the seminar in Bratislava in 2003. We understood that there are in the new towns and suburbs many green spaces that are

nearly not used at all and which can be transformed in proximity gardens: The future gardeners live in the flat houses situated around and above these spaces. These gardens generally have a surface between 20 and 50 sq metres. They are often destined to newcomers who have no experience at all with the gardening. This is so for the majority of the new gardeners. Our old garden sites with plots up to sometimes 400 sq metres are totally inadequate for welcoming these gardeners in good conditions. In such gardens the new gardeners are condemned to failure because they are physically incapable to cultivate them. This is particularly so for about women who more and more ask to get a small plot.

More recently in 2005 we created **"community gardens"** in the centre of Paris. These are individual plots between 10 and 20 sq metres and their equipment (shed to range the tools, water point, composter, gardening tools, basin to save rainwater.....) are shared by all the gardeners of this site which is very small (some hundreds of sq metres). These sites are integrated in the living area and are generally open for the population which comes here for a promenade and to exchange with the gardeners (in the proper and figurate sense of the word). Some visitors sometimes bring their kitchen waste to be composted in the garden and they return home with as present a nice salad or some strawberries.

In 2011 in Dijon (Bourgogne) we have created a site with "square kitchen gardens". This initiative was rapidly followed by other sites. These square kitchen gardens have a seize of 1,5 by 1,5 metres and are often given to very poor families of popular quarters, where workless people are very numerous: Nearly 20%. According to the number of family members they cultivate one, two or three squares.

End of 2013 the French federation



Parallel to this we have signed a contract with an important national society creating solar panel farms in the South of France. This firm wants to create allotment gardens under the structures supporting the photovoltaic panels.

We take advantage of all the opportunities that are offered to us by the modern society. There are many of such opportunities if one is receptive and open to the world.

### A changing of image and communication method

All these new forms of gardens have started to change the image of our federation which gets now an increasing interest by the authorities and planners. The image of an old fashioned and dusty federation is nearly forgotten.

We work to continue to improve our image by developing modern communication tools: Dynamic Internet site, films promoting the allotments and valuating all our innovations. These films also rely on testimonies from elected people (Mayors, members of Parliament) and of responsible persons in social housing societies.



### Open to new partnerships

The development of partnerships is another tool to gain influence and on which we relied since some years. We have created links with a dozen associations and national societies which allow us to extend our network.

This has enabled us to take part in several national events focusing on the protection of environment as for example the feast of Nature (June) the alternative week for the pesticides (March), the Week for the Reduction of Waste (November), the Heritage Day (September) ...



was asked to create allotments on the roof-terraces of a big housing estate in Nantes as well as of buildings in the

Eurodisney Park in Marne-la-Vallée near Paris.

In 2005 we were considered by some people as an association of polluters with whom one should not mix. Today, however, our yesterday's denigrators



Watteau



square vegetable gardens



Watteau fellowship

respect us and look for our company.

An opening towards the town

Yesterday generally all our allotment sites were surrounded by high fences and were firmly locked. When the grounds belong to the communes this situation is no longer accepted by the citizens, who do not understand why a common good is “privatized” by a group of “privileged” people.

Since a long time I have understood that the best way to defend and protect our sites was the opening towards the town, children, disabled people and seniors. This is as well the best way to answer to

these criticisms, to face the voracious greed of promoters and the plans of local authorities to shut down our allotment sites. Transforming our gardens into public parks open to all is the solution.

Another means is to take part in all the communal activities as do most of the other associations instead of hiding behind ones fences.

12th June 2014: A roundtable with elected people, and people in charge of social housing

This event is organised for the first time. It aims at informing people in charge of financing and creating allotment sites in town on our know-how. We have chosen an original subject: The taking into consideration of urban wasteland for transforming it into allotments in order to answer the increasing demand and which needs the mobilisation of all the actors in town.

In order to remain attractive as the competition of community gardens becomes more and more noticeable, we have to organise a reflexion around our values.

**Changing demands time and patience. The time for us is counted but we are patient, a value which is essential for every good gardener.**

# Belgium: The members of the allotment gardens and their efforts to help people get back on the job market.

Marieke De Boe, Staff member of the Flemish allotment garden federation

In Zonhoven, in the Province of Limburg the Flemish federation of allotment gardens launched a project under the name of "De Hoeve." It is a social farm with ecological and sustainable allotment gardens. There are also allotment garden plots for disabled tenants who would like to integrate. The project foresees that tenants can benefit from assistance in order to get back on the job market, which is an important factor in the fight against poverty.

The reasons of the project are:

- The important increase of the price of food.
- The lack of knowledge to cultivate and prepare vegetables and fruit.

On 5th October 2012 the allotment garden site "De Hoeve" was officially inaugurated. Within only a few months an abandoned plot of land had been transformed in a complex with 25 garden plots where disabled people and other gardeners can grow organic vegetables together. The CPAS of Zonhoven, the intercommunal association "Limburg.net" and the non-profit organization "Werkende Handen" have implemented this project together with the commune and the non-profit "Velt Zonhoven" (Vereniging voor Ecologisch Leven en Tuinieren) with the support of the Province of Limburg.

The project not only provides the opportunity to do gardening work together but also includes a project to put

people back on the job market.

Additionally the families can buy packages of fresh fruit and vegetables.

### **The park of ecological allotment gardens and organic waste**

"More than half of the waste is organic waste. This part can be avoided by an intelligent gardening and the composting of household waste. The project of the allotment gardens and the training of contact persons in the park as composting experts, draws the attention of the users to gardening as well as to the use of compost" explains Hubert Brouns, president of the intercommunal association "Limburg.net". "This is why the intercommunal association for waste supported since 2008 the creation of allotment gardens.

"Limburg.net" already acknowledged

the social importance of an ecological gardening quite some time before the tendency became popular. Ecological allotment gardens can be found in the communes of Bree, Genk (Slederlo and Black Mountain), Houthalen-Helchteren, Kortesseem, Neerpelt, Opglabbeek, Peer and Sint-Truiden (2) (Zepperen)."

The communal administration of Zonhoven used all its power to support the project with the creation of a demonstration site for composting household waste focussing on practical issues of composting and by participating in the costs of the construction of a shed for the gardeners. "Above all the allotment gardens are a practical example allowing the composting experts to actively inform residents on how to





compost their household waste and use it in the gardens » said Kristien Smets, deputy major for the commune of Zonhoven.

### **Teamwork**

The workers of the non-profit organization “Werkende Handen “ have transformed in a short period of time an abandoned plot of land in the Hoeve weg in a beautiful allotment garden site full of healthy and tasty vegetables. Georges Bos, president of “Werkende Handen” explained: “the allotment garden site of de Hoeve also provides a work circuit in form

of a social re-integration in the business world and other initiatives within the frame of the fight against poverty.. Volunteers come along with their families to pick-up the fruit and vegetables themselves. So their self-confidence increases in parallel to their social and communicative capacities This will eventually make the transition to the regular job market easier. “Not only is the addition of a training project to the allotment garden site unique but also the specific attention given to two other groups of society, i.e. elderly and disabled persons.”



Mieke Ramaekers, in charge of well-being in the province of Limburg said: “The administration of the province has invested 12,300 € in the allotment garden site. These funds have allowed acquiring adapted raised beds allowing disabled people to work in the garden in an ergonomically correct position. Access ways have been specially designed for people in a wheelchair. The most striking point of this project is that disabled and normal people work together in the gardens and produce healthy and delicious vegetables”.

### **Social shop.**

In addition to the individual garden plots, the site also includes a plot of land on which organic vegetables are grown by all member gardeners for the social shop. “Vegetables that are grown on this plot are eventually offered to the public through the CPAS. Everybody is welcome in this social shop and people who are in financial difficulties to cover their basic needs can come to the shop and buy vegetables at special prices.

The last group is referred by the CPAS of Zonhoven and by other cooperation associations.

There exists also a cooperation with the non-profit organization “Warm Hart “says Ria Hendrickx, president of the CPAS of Zonhoven.

Kristien Smets concludes: “The commune of Zonhoven is very happy about this new initiative on its territory. Creating a link between the association of allotment gardens and the social shop is not only a catalyst for a sustainable society but also the beginning of the fight against poverty. The association “De Hoeve” is a very good example of a meeting point where we listen to everybody in our society. This gives the project not only an ecological dimension but also an important social role.”

We hope to continue and develop this project.

# Allotment Association “De Hoge Weide” in Utrecht: A Food Bank Garden

Peter van Burik

The Food Bank Garden was set up specifically to supply fresh produce for the Food Bank. All vegetables grown in this garden are donated to the Food Bank, and before each pre-arranged pickup, society members can donate any excess produce as well. Last year

for example we have already donated 50 crates of different vegetables.

The following vegetables are grown; leeks, potatoes, lettuces, courgettes, onions, beetroot, carrots, cabbages, garlic, strawberries and rhubarb.



In Utrecht in fact a lot of families do not have enough resources to provide enough daily fresh food. The Food Bank is helping these people by supplying food on a weekly basis.

The 250 m<sup>2</sup> Food Bank Garden is part of the gardening complex Groenewoud in Utrecht. The setup and layout of the gardening complex is unique. Combining office buildings and a public park is not often seen, and our park serves as an example of how to integrate and increase green in urban areas. The park was designed and built by local government and we rent it from them.

The park has a number of special theme gardens, namely the

- Bird garden
- Butterfly garden
- Sheep garden
- Compost garden
- Food bank garden

The idea for the Food Bank Garden was presented and introduced at the end of 2009 to the committee of the garden association ATV De Hoge Weide. They approved setting up this garden and provided us with some starting funds. The actual sowing and planting of vegetables started in April 2010. During the gardening season every fortnight a group of garden members is now working in the Food Bank Garden.

Production of vegetables is important. In order to supply enough produce we need to sow and harvest on a regular basis. Our garden members provide



assistance every fortnight and they also help harvesting every Monday evening. Goods are collected for distribution every Tuesday during the gardening season.

Local garden members are involved

with helping in the Food Bank Garden. One of them is the coordinator and contact person to the Food Bank Utrecht. The complete harvest is collected by the Food Bank Utrecht which is part of the organisation „Pluspunten De Tussenvoorziening“. They

will distribute the vegetables to their customers.

The Food Bank will use a truck to collect the produce.

The project is helping the Food Bank to distribute vegetables to the residents of the city of Utrecht who are unable to buy their daily fresh food. Garden members who are helping in the Food Bank Garden are also residents from Utrecht.

Members of the Food Bank Garden are committed to the project and are very proud of helping the less fortunate in Utrecht.

As another resource we make use of a clay garden of 250 m<sup>2</sup> surrounded by a hedge. Every year in March we will use mushroom compost in order to improve the soil. We also compost other garden waste ourselves. We make no use of chemicals which means that all the food is grown organic.

The main risk is the weather. Either it is too warm, cold or too wet. Not planting or sowing the vegetables under the right conditions can influence the continuity of the production. Another risk are animals like pigeons, pheasants and mice. They may eat the crop before it can be harvested.

In order to tackle the weather conditions a glass house would be a good solution. Furthermore a fruitcage can be used for excluding the animals.

# News from the federations

## A National Meetings

### a) Finland:

14th - 15th June 2014: Nordic Allotment Congress in Hämeenlinna

### b) France:

12th June 2014: Round table discussion in Gradignan on the subject: „Des jardins pour mieux répondre aux problèmes des friches rurales, industrielles ou urbaines“. (gardens in order to better cope with the problems on rural, industrial and urban wasteland). This conference focusses on politicians, urban technicians and people in charge of lodgings

13th - 14th June: Congress of the French federation:

General assembly: discussion on governance, visit of sites

### c) Germany:

22nd - 23rd May 2014: 3rd federal congress on allotments 2014 in Kassel

22nd November 2014: Final session of the 23rd federation competition: Gardens in the urban development 2014 in Berlin

Seminars: specific gardening matters, publicity work and legal matters see under [www.kleingarten-bund/de/veranstaltungen/bdg\\_seminare](http://www.kleingarten-bund/de/veranstaltungen/bdg_seminare)

### d) Luxembourg:

National congress (every year on the Sunday preceeding Eastern) as well as one regional assembly of delegates and regional assemblies in the 4 regions

### e) Netherlands:

International congress of the International Office

Workshop: Trim your own fruittree

Workshop: Natural Gardening

Lecture: Allotments in the landscape

### f) Switzerland

21st February 2014: Nature Congress in Basel, Biodiversity 2020

## B Documents

### a) Belgium:

A new style for allotment sheds

Tool kit stimulating development

### b) France:

Two films promoting allotments were created. The first one is destined to people in general and will be shown in Utrecht. The second should sensitize the authorities and motivate them to create allotment sites. The films can be seen on our homepage and can be downloaded.

### c) Germany:

Weekly garden advice by dpa

Monthly garden advice on Internet

Monthly newsletter

The review: „Der Fachberater“ 1.4/2013

Grüne Schriftenreihen no. 226 bis 231 in form of a CD

Calendar 2014

### d) Luxembourg

Review: Garden & Home 9 issues per year for all the members

Pocket booklet concerning the mobility in Luxembourg issued in cooperation with the Ministry for sustainable development and infrastructure

### e) Switzerland:

Information paper on bees

## C Changes of law

### a) Germany:

Law to stimulate benevolent work

### b) France:

The association „Pacte pour le Jardin“ (Agreement for the Garden) of which the French federation is a member, succeeded in having the principle of a biotope coefficient in accordance with the surface of the ground inserted in the law ALUR (law on lodgings). This requires all planers to observe a coefficient on planted space on the ground, Fassades and roof-terrasses while planning new constructions and urban renovation. This is a means to develop gardens in town.

## D Useful informations

### a) France:

Complete renovation of the federation's homepage and of the concept of ist review: Jardin Familial de France (The French allotment garden) in order to make them more modern and more attractive

### b) Switzerland:

Workshop together with Bioterra on pesticides and fertilizers, positif and negatif products (red list)

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# Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux association sans but lucratif



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