

Les Jardins du Parc de Vert de Maisons



20 plots from 80 to 150 sq. meters integrated into a public park created in 2005.

Project summary

1. Convert a polluted industrial wasteland
2. Create conviviality in a populous area
3. Animate the public space of a town square

The context

A real “green lung” in the city 10 minutes from Paris, this park was built on the site of one of the biggest printing companies in France which had become peculiar in such a dense urban district. The challenge for the city was not only to turn an industrial chlorine and plumb polluted area into a public park, but also to counter the will of an American pension fund to built an office complex there.

After years of legal and financial battles, the Parc de Vert de Maisons was open in 2005, offering the residents of this populous area 25 000 sq. meters of vegetation in the heart of this area called Liberté-Vert de Maisons : 1 400 different species of trees, 5 000 shrubs, 8 000 plants, an orchard, an educational greenhouse, 2 000 sq. meters of allotment gardens, 3 fountains and 1 300 sq. meters of playgrounds and sports areas for kids of all ages are the main features of this park.

The project

As a result of its partnership with the National Allotment Gardens Association (e.g. FNJFC), the city of Maisons-Alfort created a 2 000 sq. meters site of allotment gardens divided in 20 plots from 80 to 150 sq. meters inside a public park. The purpose of the city was to go beyond simply creating one green space or a traditional public park. Animating the public space and reconstructing social links were the city’s main motivations. The area, with about 3 500 social housing, was lacking green spaces and this solution seemed most appropriate to make local people feel like owning the place.

Through the FNJFC, plots are assigned to neighborhood families who grow their way of flowers and vegetables. The conditions for plot assignation are simple : live in the neighborhood and in a collective accommodation. Technicians from the association and municipal gardeners provide assistance and advice to residents.

Near the gardens and the large greenhouse, the city has installed, for each class in primary schools, little squares of land that children can grow and maintain with the help of a facilitator. They often return on weekends with their parents.

This concept of public space-integrated allotment gardens should be considered to meet gardeners' practical needs, but also to promote coexistence between gardeners and people walking by. In this project, the plots are separated by little wood hedges. The content of the garden is then involved in the staging of the walk. Contrary to certain preconceived opinions, the way gardens fit into their surrounding is the best defense against theft or damages... better than fences ! Exchange and mutual respect are the best guarantees for their preservation. The paths, the position of fences, their height and their transparency allow people passing by to enjoy the garden view without compromising the gardeners' privacy or peace.



In this context, the city's commitment in maintenance and service is so very appreciated by all users, hikers or gardeners. City services maintain the common spaces open to the public : parks, street furniture, public toilets... Gardeners are involved into the cultivated area.

The results

One year after creating this site, the city and the FNJFC were awarded in 2006 with the National Allotment Garden Prize, within the national competition for cities and villages in bloom. Indeed the national jury found that these gardens perfectly fulfilled the criteria of social cohesion, education, aesthetic quality but also environmentally friendly, necessary conditions to win the prize.

The only negative point is that it is so successful that the waiting list grows and grows, so now it takes about 5 years to get an allotment !



The actors

- The city of Maisons-Alfort, project leader and financial support
- The National Association for Allotment Gardens, technical expert, consulting the residents and managing the gardens.