



Hyphen 56

News from the Office

Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux
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Different but working towards the same goals, a European speciality

Dr Martine MERGEN

President of the Luxembourgish allotment gardeners



As we come from our recent meeting in August in Luxembourg, we move towards the most glorious season in our gardens: harvest time. Luxembourg and its gardens have been suffering from the drought this year, but many gardeners in Europe will have gone through the same experience.

Seasons vary largely from East to West, from North to South, and there is an enormous local variety of crops. The backgrounds and the traditions of our associations may also be very different, as the role that the national federations assume is not the same everywhere.

You would think that our gardeners

and the 21,000 members of the associations, (who make the Ligue CTF one of the largest federations of gardening associations on national level) is a homogenous crowd, as we come from this tiny country.

Well, let me tell you that this would be a very wrong assumption. In fact, our country presents itself proudly as a champion in the integration of foreigners, as we have about 69% of non-Luxembourgers living in the city, and about 46% in the country. All these nationalities happily cooperate in our associations and allotment gardens.

In the same time, our associations' activities vary largely: In the countryside most members have their own gardens and they meet for the exchange of gardening know-how and organise social events. Meanwhile, in cities, associations often have allotment gardens to manage, as more and more people do not have a plot of green bliss attached to their houses and apartments. Waiting lists for allotment gardens are very long in Luxembourg-City, and the number of nationalities working on their piece of garden side by side is at least as impressive as the variety of their favourite vegetables.

As I consider these facts, and looking back to our meeting last August, I come to the conclusion that it is overly important that the European gardening federations have oppor-

tunities to exchange experiences between themselves and cooperate more closely, as we all have common goals, common problems, and, moreover, we have and will have to follow more and more common regulations from the European institutions.

Some countries' gardening federations work perfectly, some less. It will be essential in the future that we can speak with one voice in the interest of our gardeners, of our members, and unity will keep that voice strong.

We hope that the participants in the meeting in Luxembourg will keep the memory of our country in their minds and in their hearts and we shall be happy to meet you all at some other occasion, be it a gardening event or just for pleasure.

Lastly, I would like to extend my special thanks to Malou WEIRICH, Carine PEIFFER and Jean KIEFFER of the International Office for their assistance in organizing the meeting. We enjoyed every moment of it.



After the passing away of John FARMER in 2014, Henri MAHU now passed away on 25th May 2015 at the age of 93.

We thus lose so two personalities, who, each one in his way, have marked our international movement.

Henri MAHU represented the Belgian federation in the International Office for many years until 1999. He was Office president from 1996 until 1998. He first organised the remarkable study session in Liège in 1988 and the very interesting congress in Brussels in 1998.

Henri MAHU exceptionally well adapted himself to his colleagues in the Office and invested many efforts into our international movement. He improved his German in order to be able to speak to all and contributed with his jokes to a good atmosphere and to many moments of hilarity.

His engagement for the Walloon, Belgian and international federation was exemplary.

Under his direction a scheme for soil analyses was elaborated together with the German and Dutch federation. He also worked out the first Office memorandum for lobbying purposes by insisting on the important contribution of allotments to society and nature.

His knowledge as an engineer of agronomics and his vast general knowledge helped the Office to well argue the texts to be adopted.

On his initiative a study was made for the first time before the International Congress in Brussels on the money saved when cultivating an allotment. This is a benefit given to every allotment gardener in addition to the recreation and pleasure enjoyed in the garden.

To honour his memory we have to work hard to push our movement forward in the interest of all allotment gardeners by adapting to the new needs and by taking into consideration the changes in our society.

We will never forget our friend Henri MAHU.

We will also not forget Len PARNELL, former president of the English federation, who passed away on 15th April 2015 and represented his federation in the International Office from August 2005 until March 2008.

We will also remember Dr Lorenz MAINCYK, who passed away on 17th June 2016 aged 83. He was one of the fathers of the German allotment law. For long years he was commentator of this law and didn't neglect any effort to upkeep the protection the German allotment gardeners get from it.

Allotment gardeners were honoured

June 5th 2015: The “ Golden Pitchfork” was remitted. Finland

The Global Dry Toilet Association of Finland is yearly giving a recognized award for promoting and improving the use of dry toilets. The 14th award was given Mr. Taavi Seppälä – the estate manager of Nekala Allotment

Garden in Tampere. The award, ‘the Golden Pitchfork’, was given to Mr. Seppälä on June 5th, the World Environment Day.

Mr Seppälä has for many years acted as a facilitator for dry toilets at Nekala Allotment garden. His dedication to

the dry toilets, as well as to the promotion of the use of the nutrients the toilets produce has been pioneering. Several other allotment garden associations have visited Nekala in order to learn how to process the toilet waste and how to end use the produced fertilizers. The toilet facilities in Nekala Allotment garden are fully taken care of by dry toilets.

Today, there are nine dry toilets in the allotment garden serving the gardeners and visitors. Between 2005 and 2010, the allotment gardens’ compost toilets and toilet waste treatment was completely redesigned. The planning and implementation of the reform was mainly carried out by Mr. Seppälä. Also the post processing has been revised. The yield is used after a thorough ex-composting both at common areas and in the gardens in Nekala.

The Dry Toilet Association and Nekala Allotment Garden have – together with Mr. Seppälä - been working together in order to promote, in particular, the





nutrient cycle. Mr. Taavi Seppälä is described to be a “daring reformer”. The dry toilets have attracted interest beyond the borders of Finland and the allotment garden has been visited by guests from dozens of countries. „Taavi has always welcomed us with pleasure and introduced the exemplarily managed dry toilet solutions” says the Project Manager Susanna Pakula from the Global Dry Toilet Association of Finland.

21st June 2015 Award for “Outstanding contribution to Horticulture”, England

Phil Gomersall, Chairman of the Yorkshire Allotment Gardeners Federation and the National Allotment Society, Volunteer Allotment Mentor for the Yorkshire and Humberside Region has been awarded a certificate of commendation from the Chartered Institute of Horticulture for his ‘outstanding contribution to Horticulture’. This was awarded at an event at the National Trust Middlethorpe Hall, York.

In Yorkshire you may have seen him at an allotment promotion stand or giving illustrated talks on his favourite topic, allotments, at many locations around the region of Yorkshire and Humberside over the last 12 years, promoting what he describes as the only recreation activity which can offer such a wide range of healthy benefits to so many people of all ages and abilities. In this role as with all NAS Allotment Mentors he offers advice on



all aspects of allotments including the starting up of new allotment sites and the benefit of self-management of allotment sites.

In addition to the above function he is Publicity Officer for the Leeds & District Allotment Gardeners Federation and has taken a leading role in creating many demonstration allotment gardens at both of the Harrogate Flower Shows and the Great Yorkshire Show culminating in the creation of the ‘VE Day Allotment’ at this year’s Spring Flower Show.

July 6th, 2015: Support recognised. England

Yorkshire Allotment Gardeners Federation (YAGF) awarded Allan Rees a trophy in recognition of his long standing and unwavering support to the



Yorkshire Federation during his long term of office as the National Allotment Society (NAS) chairman. Allan also had attended most of the YAGF AGM’s and was always prepared to actively participate in proceedings when invited.

The presentation was made in Chesterfield by the Federations Chairman, Phil Gomersall and Secretary, Tony Heeson.

Allan had been kept in the dark as to what the meeting was about and was quite touched on receiving the trophy and wished to thank all members of the YAGF for their kind thoughts.

Phil also presented Allan with a small personal gift of a pair of Welsh dragon cufflinks.

It was a brief presentation but it was good to meet up again and a good chat was had by all, putting the world to rights, as we allotment folk do.



Decision protocol of the general assembly

held in Luxembourg on 27th August, 2015



Were present: the federations of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great-Britain, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Switzerland

Were excused: the federations of Finland, Norway and Sweden

- 1) W. WOHATSCHEK welcomes all the delegates.
- 2) The agenda is adopted with unanimity.
- 3) The decision protocol and the report of the general statutory assembly held in Luxembourg on 27th and 28th February 2015 are adopted with unanimity.
- 4) The delegates remember in silence John FARMER, Henri MAHU, Len PARNELL, Lorenz MAINCYCK and Leo VAN BELLEGHEM.
- 5) W. WOHATSCHEK explains the reasons indicated by the Polish federation for their immediate disaffiliation from the Office and

gives the necessary explanations. The immediate demission from the Office is not in accordance with the statutes. It should have been given by the end of this year, which thus would have given the possibility to clarify possible problems and to find solutions.

The Polish federation wishes an external cooperation, but has reacted in a negative manner to a proposed meeting.

The Slovakian federation has also notified the Office of its demission with immediate effect without, however, giving any reason. It cannot be a financial reason, because for many years half of its affiliation fee was paid by a sponsor. Until 2014 the federation had nearly not at all taken part in meetings and activities. By end of 2014 a cooperation slowly started and, therefore, the demission is the more surprising at this precise moment.

The Slovakian federation has not at all reacted to the proposed meeting.

The Czech federation which was also invited has excused itself with a polite letter.

The Polish letter will be added to the report of the meeting, which will also include the detailed answers concerning the indicated reasons.

- 6) W. WOHATSCHEK explains the aim of the discussions concerning a future vision for the Office and the result of the sent answers to the questionnaire. It is decided to continue these discussions.

An online questionnaire will deal with additional questions (Hyphen, homepage, meetings...). In order that the federations can take more "ownership" of the Office, projects should be done in smaller groups. One should also take care that - according to the statutes - all the linguistic regions

will be represented on the executive board.

One should also do everything possible in order to inform the national members on the allotment movement in the other countries (exchange, visit, partnerships...)

- 7) W. WOHATSCHEK and H. BONNAVAUD inform that the executive board proposes to discuss again a particular problem in detail during the March general assembly. The current problem "allotment gardens and community gardens" should be discussed under the direction of an external scientist (Christine AUBRY).

The proposal is accepted.

- 8) J. KIEFFER shows the difficult financial situation of the Office with diagrams.
- 9) The affiliation fees for 2016 were sent to the federations. They do not include an index adaptation.

The executive board will discuss the problem if the contributions can be calculated on basis of another, better key. It seems, however, impossible to pay the affiliation fee exclusively per member.

- 10) On proposal of the executive board the general assembly decides to grant the diploma for ecological gardening to the allotment association Sint-Amandsberg (B).
- 11) P. PASCHKE explains the decision of the executive board to contact Martin SCHULZ, president of the European Parliament in order to increase the importance of the allotment movement on European level.

M. WEIRICH explains that up to now the NGOs had no official place in the European Union.

She explains the new situation and the consequent proposal to also contact the president of the European Commission.

The general assembly decides to take up new contacts with the European Institutions in order for the allotment gardens to be taken into consideration in the European policy and legislation.

A letter will be sent to the president of the European Commission Jean-Claude JUNCKER and then to Martin SCHULZ, president of the European Parliament.

The national federations get the list of their national members of the European Parliament in order to contact them so that they can support the demand of the Office.

- 12) H. BONNAVAUD explains that the Office has to continue to open up to new federations. He proposes to offer full membership to the Japanese allotment gardeners.

The delegates decide to contact the Japanese allotment gardeners to this effect.

- 13) K. KENNY informs on the visit of the allotment gardeners from South Korea. Following her demand it is agreed that contacts and a cooperation between the South Korean allotment gardeners and the Office are possible.

- 14) The report on the cooperation with the international organizations was sent in writing to the federations. As a complement M. WEIRICH shows the homepage of the European Council explaining the different bodies of this organisation. She shows that projects from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Finland, France, Great-Britain, the Netherlands and Switzerland are online on

the Council of Europe's homepage on the specific site of the European local democracy week having as subject: "Multicultural dialogue, respect, dialogue, interaction".

The federations should draw the attention of their association to the fact that their project is online and urge them to indicate this fact on their information board.

- 15) The next statutory general assembly will take place in Luxembourg on 4th and 5th March 2016.

- 16) W. WOHATSCHEK hands out the programme of the next congress in Vienna to the delegates. The inscription fees will be similar to those in Utrecht.

- 17) W. SCHAFFNER informs on the efforts made by his federation to give a better legal protection to the Swiss allotment gardens within the reform of the Swiss law on urban planning.

The allotment site Alfred Thinnes in Merl (L) received the diploma for an ecological gardening

A historical garden

Following the integration of Merl into the commune of Luxembourg in 1920, the allotment garden association Merl-Belair was founded in this rural quarter, which is situated at a height of 275 meters and is crossed by the river Merl.

Until the development of Luxembourg City at the end of the 70s the allotment site maintained its rural aspect.

A development similar to the European character of the city of Luxembourg

During the last years, under the special leadership of Jacques Jourdan, the support of the Luxembourgish allotment federation and the city of Luxembourg the gardens have become an integral part of the green spaces of the city.

58 gardeners now cultivate their plots with a size between 100 and 250 sqm

cultural diversity. They interact in the languages which are used in Luxembourg and which are Luxembourgish, German and French.

The gardens of the allotment site Merl-Belair are becoming greener and greener!

In 2014, after many years of practice, the allotment site was declared as “site without pesticides” and participates in this way in the general green space



covering a total surface of 8,500 sqm. The site is surrounded by an orchard, an area with late mowing and is crossed by a bike and pedestrian path leading towards the forest of Leudelage and the neighbouring town of Bertrange via this green oasis.

The allotment site is also a living space for cultural integration with members from more than 12 nationalities showing a very large social and

policy of the town of Luxembourg in order to promote the local biodiversity.

To this effect have been created:

- A space with fruit trees with a space of late mowing
- An individualized water management and an encouragement to collect the raining water from the individual sheds
- Installation of beehives managed by a beekeeper under the acacias



In order to manage the waste the commune puts at the disposal:

- A trolley for the green waste which is regularly emptied. In return the gardeners receive compost for their gardens and for the inhabitants of the neighbouring living area free of cost
- A trolley for stones

The plots are leased to the gardeners under the observation of the following conditions:

- To cultivate their garden mainly with vegetables, which does not prevent a floral pleasure: Are cultivated for example: corn, sunflowers, artichokes, rhubarb, beans, peppers and cabbage. You find many ways to protect tomatoes in our humid climate!
- To have at least one fruit tree in order to favour the development of pollination insects. So you find cherry, apricot, mirabel, quetsch, pear, apple and a walnut tree on site as well as wines.
- To limit the surface of the shelter according to the applicable rules of

the non construction areas issued by the city of Luxembourg. Everyone has his style in order to fully enjoy the green and profit of the fresh air in the city!

Among the cultures you can already find a few solar panels.

Regularly the association also takes part in sensitization sessions for nature organised for the pupils of the city of Luxembourg and participates yearly with specific animations in the day of the nature in Luxembourg.

With the support of all its members and the town of Luxembourg the allotment association Merl-Belair is happy to contribute to a sustainable development of this area put at the disposal of all and to create one of the nicest allotment sites in the heart of the city for the pleasure of the eyes and the senses of the visitors.

The allotment association Vlijpark in Dordrecht (NL) received the diploma for an ecological gardening



change seeds. It is annexed to a seeds' bank.

- Vlijpark offers space for learning-work projects for young people with physical, mental or social limitation.
- The central, ecologically sound, processing of garden waste into compost which is then used by the garden members on their allotment.
- The volunteer certificate „Vorst“ and an in-house publication about the volunteers of the association.
- Vlijpark is part of the urban agriculture network Dordrecht.
- They support a vegetable garden project in Dordrecht, South Africa.

The percentage of gardeners that apply the principles of ecological gardening is estimated at about 80%.

More than a decade ago the AVVN has developed a set of strict criteria on ecological gardening. To develop these criteria the AVVN worked together with several other nature conservation organizations.

Vlijpark has achieved the highest level in 2014 after more than a decade of learning and working on ecological gardening.

- The recent workshops include among other things the making of 'breakfastbollen' for the birds, bed (fat balls covered with sheep's wool) and a day course by Janneke Tops on how to grow your vegetables ecologically.
- The last few years the following

projects were developed: a rainwater buffer (wadi) leading to a toad pool with ecological bank; a wall of branches, both on the garden site as in the adjacent area; insects wall and bees hotel; a butterfly garden; wood piles for the soil life; worms breeding; a school garden with a joined experiment and learning garden; reptiles accommodation; bird and bat nesting.

- A learning path for children is under development.
- There is a trading place where people can ex-



The allotment association ATV Zonneweelde (NL) received the diploma for an ecological gardening



More than a decade ago the AVVN has developed a set of strict criteria on ecological gardening. To develop these criteria the AVVN worked together with several other nature conservation organizations.

Associations that want to obtain a certificate on ecological gardening from the AVVN have to comply with these strict criteria. The certificate knows four levels. ATV Zonneweelde has achieved the highest level in 2014 after more than a decade of learning and working on ecological gardening.

ATV Zonneweelde measures three hectares on which 88 gardens are situated.

The gardening at ATV Zonneweelde

is in accordance with the brochure "An ecological approach to allotment cultivation", published by the Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux".

What has ATV Zonneweelde been doing and is ATV Zonneweelde still doing in the field of ecological gardening?

- Workshops on making compost, dry stone walling and making fences and other objects of willow branches.
- Planting sunflowers and other plants to create food supplies for birds and other animals.
- Planting trees and bushes that are

typical for their ecological region and that provide sanctuary and food for birds and other animals.

- Planting plants which are typical for the environmental conditions.
- Creating shelters for animals with the help of tree trunks and reed.
- Building a four stories insect hotel.
- Building long walls of twigs, trunks and branches to provide good living conditions for all kinds of wildlife.
- Creating nesting facilities for birds.
- Selling only environmental safe products in their garden shop.
- Realization of a nature education trail.
- Phased mowing.





- In co-operation with a beekeeper, beehives have been placed.
- Placing information boards on most of the ecological highlights.
- Using recycled materials e.g. benches made from willow wood and stone walling from used pavement tiles.
- Trees and bushes are labelled.
- Small butterfly gardens.
- Educational activities for the members of the association.
- Making use of a website and a digital newsletter.
- Working with the members of the association on the improvement of the ecological situation on their park. (Once a month for two hours.)
- Herb garden.
- Seeking co-operation with organizations that occupy themselves with the improvement of the environment.
- Their site is part of a little polder and the gardens are lying along ditches. Partly, the ditches have marshy banks and hedgehog stairs.

Participation.

A 100% of the gardeners participate in the maintenance of the grounds.



ATV Zonneweelde is part of the ecological main structure of the city of The Hague. This main structure is dominated by old waterways that flow from the polders surrounding the city into the city. Their site lays along the waterway, that's called "de Schenk".

The allotment site is during daytime open to the public.

The allotment association “Volkstuin- Werk van de Akker- Sint Amandsberg” (B) received the diploma for an ecological gardening



When the non-profit association „Volkstuin-Werk van de Akker Sint Amandsberg“ was founded in 1932, its objectives were mainly socio-political and charitable whereas today the aims have completely changed. Today the aims concern much more

the environment and nature. So the association in Sint-Amandsberg has become an association which cares much more for the environment and pays much attention to the quality of the environment and nature.

Stimulation of the members for an ecological gardening.

The internal regulation stipulates the prohibition to use weed killing products. The gardeners can only use insecticides and fungicides for amateur gardeners (which can be recognized by the letter G in the accreditation number). In order to protect the cultivations by preventive measures one could observe for example the following guidelines: observation of a greater distance between the plants, watering in an intelligent way, a combination of different plant sorts, crop rotation, installing of insect hotels.



The use of fertilizers on the allotment sites.

Exclusive use of organic fertilizers (cow or horse manure etc.) dried cow manure, culterra seeds, compost. One can also add Bentonit, Edasil, and lava flour.

Prohibition to use NPK seeds, potassium nitrate, copper sulphate and many other products.

Activities and lectures that stimulate an ecological gardening.

All over the site there are panels informing the gardeners and the visitors on the advantages of an ecological gardening. There is also a demonstration garden concerning compost. Every year courses concerning an ecological gardening are organized. Every year the gardens are checked for their ecological quality (in 2014 64% of the gardens received the ecological label).



Further aims concerning the environments that are stipulated in the statutes.

The association plans to take position on environment and nature questions. It wishes to reach this aim by promoting the idea of an ecological cultivation of fruit and vegetables, the care for nature, the organization of numerous activities, the application of numerous functions (socio-recreational, aesthetic, educative, economic, cultural and historical scientific...) but always in the general perspective of an ecological sensitization.

Activities for the sensitization of the population and for the safeguarding and improvement of the environment developed by the association.

- nature is present everywhere. The aim of an ecological gardening is to place nature within the garden.
- An ecological gardening contributes to the quality of life, the environment, the landscape and nature.
- We choose plants that are adapted for their space of plantation.
- The gardeners rediscover the beauty of nature in their garden and on the allotment site.
- The allotment site management is based on the three ideas of sustainability, dynamism and diversity.
- A harmonious management of the allotment site grounds on eleven pillars:
 - 1) The management is based on a constant and structured reflexion;
 - 2) The management aims at the creation of a sustainable site responding to the social needs which evolve constantly;
 - 3) On the site „Slotenkouter“, one works mainly around the socio-recreational, aesthetic and ecological functions;
 - 4) The management of the site is based on areas having a main function: The site “Slotenkouter” unifies 94 gardens (which concern 40% of the ground). There are many paths and ways, solitary trees, hedges and areas with reed;
 - 5) The management of the site aims at safeguarding the biodiversity;
 - 6) The management of the park aims at the creation of a park with a large diversity of structures;
 - 7) The park aims at serving the users of the park; an important aspect is the diversity offered within the site;
 - 8) The measures taken for the environment consider the safeguarding and the increase of biodiversity
 - 9) In general: the environmental

character of the management of the site has to comply with the general care of the environment, which is stipulated in the plans of the environmental policy;

- 10) The management of the site is an economic activity ruled by the principles of efficiency, effectiveness, profitability of management and of the social context;
- 11) These principles are medium and long term aims.

Environment and nature are central aims of the association and one emphasizes a functioning that favours the environment and nature.

- The leisure function is supported for the gardeners by the creation of water pumps, sanitary blocs, electricity and for the visitors by the creation of paths, grounds to play petanque and lawn areas.
- The elements of the landscape are maintained: solitary trees, main ways, open spaces, water areas...
- The site is open all year round from sunrise until sun set.

Yearly activities for nature and environment

- Publications on an ecological gardening (site Internet) <http://www.detuingsids.be/pages/list.asp?Cat=2&Param=bestrijding> and via <http://www.volkstuinen-sint-amandsberg.be>
- Permanent instructions given on site
- Cleaning of the waste





- Ringing of birds
- Distribution of manure in accordance with the European and Belgian regulations
- Cleaning of the ditches
- Controlled mowing
- Control of trees and hedges
- Constant cleaning of dogs poo !

Investments that are being realized

Further publications concerning an ecological gardening, additional panels with information on an ecological gardening, nesting boxes for birds, containers for vegetables, fruit and gardening waste, different courses and demonstrations.

The allotment association: Gardens and Orchards of Marsannay-la-Côte received the diploma for an ecological gardening and innovative projects

Alternation of gardens and orchards



Gardens without pesticides

Introduction

Between towns and vineyards

The St Urbain garden and orchard site (2.7 hectares) is determined by very simple geographical and historical data: a clay strip cleared of clay-limestone gravel soil, good for vineyards. This is not a prestigious wine-growing region. Wine-growers prefer hillsides with better drainage. However, the soil is moist and is good for market gardening as long as you dedicate a lot of energy to it; the earth stays heavy, sticky in winter, hard in summer.

For a long time this land was the property of the church (St Urbain monastery), before being sold in a number of plots during the French Revolution: this created a very scrappy fragmentation where the small owners managed a number of dry stone wells from the 18th century.

A flood plain and micro-plots protected the site from urban sprawl, up until recently where urban pressure became stronger and public authorities were equipped with such financial and administration means that noth-

ing could withstand urban sprawl any longer.

Around the year 2,000, St Urbain was occupied by a juxtaposition of gardens, vineyards and wilderness... without a master plan or any organisation. In 2004 the PLU (urban planning document) turned the area into a zone for urban development despite the arguments put forward by local gardeners.

So, out of nothing, some people decided that, in the face of an urban aberration, they would not lose this asset, and it would be passed onto future generations.

1. 10 years of fighting

Therefore it was with a defensive stance that a party of the winemaking world (Wine Syndicate) and the local community (association for the defence of quality of life and the environment) was formed.

And so the “JVMC” association was born, with the original by-laws and hardly any support (much to the contrary – oh how many critics and pessimists!) out of the sheer will of a dozen people who were determined to show that gardening is not just an activity for isolated individuals.

They had to persuade the numerous owners to sign holding agreements with JVMC, making the gardening association a preferred partner. They had to convince the gardeners of the relevance of the association’s power and attract new followers with vegetable gardens, as nobody was certain of keeping their plot. Gradually JVMC grew from 15 members to more than 80. Today it has 70 active gardeners. The yearly membership fee remains low (€16).

The defence of the site was going to pass before the administrative courts as the procedures followed to convert it were weighed down by flaws and gross illegalities. Knowing this, the existence of the allotment garden association was a decisive factor in being able to appeal to the administrative courts. Four procedures were underway, three having led to the annulment of the management convention, up to the Council of State. Each time they had to argue and assemble defence files. The heaviest file was for the public enquiry in order to show the investigating commissioner the place JVMC has in the community and the wider Dijon.

Thanks to the support of the national federation of allotment and community gardens, JVMC was able to call on a hydrological valuation, carry out a wildlife inventory by the League for the Protection of Birds and issue a 75 page dissertation. Under these conclusive circumstances the investigating commissioner demanded that all of the gardens be relocated and reinstalled as nearby as possible, something that the project did not foresee. However, it was a Cadmean victory

that stretched the feasibility of the collaborative development even further. Meanwhile, JVMC had become a vital part of society at a local level by regularly opening up the gardens for annual festivals on various topics (scarecrow festival, wind festival, well festival, garden festival), by organising markets and green swaps, by taking part in conferences on biodiversity and water resources, and by welcoming a regional ecological forum.

Historical research and the quality of the landscape allowed the garden area to be entered into the Burgundian vineyard climate zone, which was classified in 2015 as a world heritage site by UNESCO. JVMC has contributed to this campaign through its regeneration project of the vineyard peach.

At each event a local press release was sought. Same for institutional press (General Council), regional press (magazine) and specialist press (websites).

Thus JVMC, previously seen in a negative light, was becoming an active association, rich in offerings and seen

positively. The allotment gardens that were holding back the town’s development were becoming a communal richness that should be protected. The opinion battle played out at the last municipal elections. The main theme of the electoral campaign became: for or against the St Urbain allotment gardens. In this perspective, the 10 years of defending and looking after the gardens had not been in vain. Constituents decided by voting for the option that supported stopping real estate projects. The convention tying the community to the developer was denounced. The project was laid to rest.

The exceptional character of this adventure and its outcome merit these words and must encourage those who defend garden sites under threat.

The site, whilst remaining open woodland, today constitutes a true green bubble, a maze of trees between the urban area and the tidy vineyards.

2. A dynamic association through necessity

JVMC was created by geographical and historical conditions, and it re-



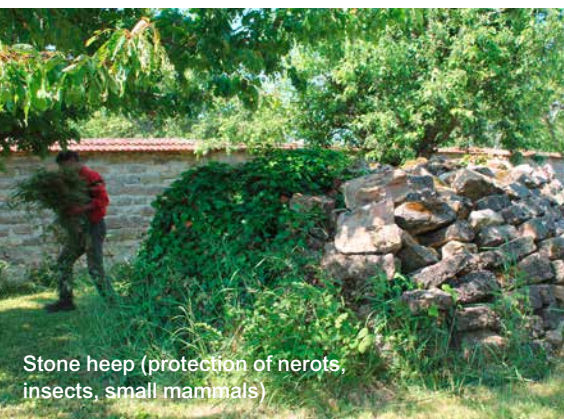
Celebrations in the gardens 2014



Pool in the gardens

mains characterised by constant research into innovation and openness towards the future.

Continuing to act to protect biodiversity from its work with the League for



Stone heap (protection of nerots, insects, small mammals)



Wildland with dead tree

the Protection of Birds; from now on we research to preserve the continuum of the food chain: around wells, the pools and the puddles risen up from groundwater (from plankton to snakes, from midwife toads to alpine newts), around orchards and plains (from calcareous grass to common linnet), wildlands welcoming herbivorous mammals (deer and rabbits) and also our beehives watched by a beekeeper gardener. Only butterflies have not been the object of a particular study promised by the entomologist from the natural history museum in Dijon.

That's to say that we don't envisage building an insect house or an artificial sea; here all of the conditions are kept in a natural state. It is very clear that this result is achieved by formally banning (internal rule) phytosanitary products in 2004, and through late mowing, brushwood, deadwood, rockfalls, covering the soil (mulching)... hedgehogs that had left the area returned in 2014. JVMC provides a group purchase facility of compost (4 tons in 2015) and bio-fertilizer (guano) and has put in place a collective composting area.

Diversifying growing cultures

A year ago, the gardeners started to research as many different types of vegetables as possible; which was the case with tomatoes in 2014 (they held a tomato festival and taste test) and squash in 2015 with more than 45 varieties, of which the seeds were given to the gardeners in order to maintain this diversity and increase the attraction of less widespread vegetables.

Using water responsibly

Supply is guaranteed thanks to 14 dry stone wells built in the 19th and 20th centuries. Variations in the water level are observed by a piezometric sensor installed for impact studies. Watering is only carried out with a manual watering can, excluding irrigation system or sprinklers. However, usage is still too high and bad habits are too engrained.

This group of wells must be classified as "small rural built heritage".

Making up for equipment shortages

The low membership fee, the near non-existence of municipal aid for 10 years and the primary necessities of defending the site (lots of debt!) mean that JVMC must make up for equipment shortages and offer members due comfort: a communal shed, mechanical tools, tool boxes, dry toilets...

Maintaining external activities

School activities:

planting trees and helping in the vineyard peach nursery complements the students' literary (studying the works of Giono) and scientific studies. Their individual work is read when planting or published on the JVMC website.

School gardens:

without question the important activity of the moment, as it allows children from local primary schools (150 children) to practice gardening and include it in school projects. They create autumn planters, placed in their first garden of 400m² on a plot of 1,000m². Each group of 6 children has their own garden of 36m², and spends



Cooperation with schools: Planting trees complements the literary and scientific studies



half a day a week on the site. The association takes care of the preparation, training and management of the activities, but the children genuinely take care of their own plot. Gardening becomes part of more complex school projects based on sharing the acquired knowledge. This creates a team of 16 gardeners and students' parents who in this way learn about vegetable gardening. An agreement is signed with the community.

The elderly:

reorganising the social and cultural centre allows JVMC to become a regular partner. Visits for the elderly to the gardens during the summer and a project on a garden for the elderly, and winter activities with a traditional basketry workshop are arranged by JVMC.



School garden

The website and audiovisual productions

34,000 visits on average per year, 274 articles, thousands of photos, a way of finding the garden atmosphere and St Urbain at home. Have a look at the site: www.marsannay-jardins-vergers-de-la-cote.com

Natural basketry workshop

From September to April, 12 apprentice basket makers use materials collected from around the gardens, the association's willow plantation (100 willows planted), or taken from the communal forest. Spiral baskets, hooped baskets, helical weaving, trellis or weirs in the gardens, land art, wadding.

The arboriculture party

As part of a project supported by the County Council, "Protecting ordinary natural environments", by Greater Dijon and the community, JVMC got involved in preserving the genetic assets of vineyard peaches in the winegrowing region 4 years ago: two nurseries of 300 trees must supply their redistribution to gardeners from regional associations and winegrowers. JVMC controls all of the stages of regeneration: collecting the peach stones, layering, transplantation and

putting in nurseries. A team of 8 gardeners has been formed.

JVMC has an orchard of around 30 trees in production, where you can start preparing them for fruit in winter, and a group of 8 gardeners with a resident arboriculturist.

It is planned to have a conservatory orchard with peach trees and small red fruit trees once the land is available.

Sharing needs and resources

The Dijon allotment garden association group

JVMC was the initiative of the Dijon allotment garden associations group, in order to propose a partnership to



Basketry

the regional community – today an urban community – and to be able to regroup our purchases (bio straw, for example), arrange training etc... it's a hard task and people aren't always mentally ready to reinforce sharing.

The calendar of tasks

JVMC cannot lead all of these activities without appealing to all of its members to participate. A calendar of tasks was put in place this year to address the shortcomings of some and the tepidness of others. Its compliance is included in the internal rules.

3. JVMC at the heart of a protected agricultural area

The current goal is therefore to definitively (?) keep urbanisation away from the site and to sustain the gardens. Even more so because they attract people from all around the South of the area and they must respond to these growing demands. Construction projects are underway to build 2,800 homes less than 4km from the site. One of the ways to meet local social housing obligations (the SRU law) whilst finding the least harmful solution for the environment, is to reclassify in the urban planning document part of the nearby oversized economic activity zone into zone for urban development. In this way, building and gardening are compatible.

In this context, the Marsannay la Côte allotment garden association must now extend its efforts towards creating a protected agricultural zone of 16 hectares, of which the association would be one of the hubs.

To do this, it is necessary to merge the communal gardens of around 30 plots of 200m² each, closing the protected agricultural zone to the east, and the allotment gardens. This is forecast for the start of 2016.

With the land gained by the developer having to mainly return to the community, the latter envisages allocating half of it to two pairs of bio vegetable

gardeners, paid by the sector, on the Saône plain. Their operation must be achieved on rented land of 2.6 hectares. The setup of the location and the interlinking of the plots entails creating a garden unit of more than 8 hectares, mixing professionals and amateurs and with equipment (e.g. storage) and quite exceptional synergy on the doorstep of a conurbation of 300,000 inhabitants.

To complete the facility: conservatory orchards, the school's nature trail, a garden for the elderly, the school garden, surrounded by vines, all regimented by a strict mission statement on growing methods. This protected agricultural zone must also fit the scope of the "Côte de Nuits" site being developed and expected in 2017.

That means it will be a hard task and require renewed effort. However, considering the advances already made, with new strength, this task is not impossible.

Who would have thought it, only 10 years ago? It was only down to some determined, never-say-die "dreamers".



Cooperation with schools:
Autumn planting



Cooperation with schools:
Plantation of bulbs



Protection of the wineyard peaches

Services offered to their members by the central allotment federation in Austria and the federation of the allotment gardeners in Vienna



The central allotment federation in Austria is the special interest group of the allotment gardeners and unifies five regional federations (Landesverbände): Vienna, Lower Austria, Upper Austria, Steiermark and Salzburg. 390 associations with approximately 38,000 members are member of the central federation.

The missions and services offered by the central federation to its members are manifold and cover a very large range.

Administration of grounds:

The central federation is by far the most important owner of allotment gardens in Austria. The central fed-

eration administers more than 8 million square metres either as general leaseholder or as owner. The administration requires, among others, the calculation of the rent to be paid by the different associations and of course the timely payment of the received rent to the respective owner.

Issuing of sub-lease or individual lease contracts and conventions:

The central federation is either the general leaseholder or the owner of the grounds on which allotment gardens are situated. Therefore, every member receives, according to his specific ownership relationship, either a sub-lease or an individual lease contract for his plot.

These agreements are issued by the central federation and consequently the latter has to pay the related tax to the financial authorities. Every year the central federation issues approximately 1,500 contracts.

Since in Vienna there is the possibility for bigger constructions and the creation of a main domicile on the allotment garden, specific conventions have to be signed by the members. The reason thereof is that higher leases have to be paid in this situation. All these agreements are issued by the central federation.





Financial support of the members and the associations:

Three existing funds are the expression of the central federation's social responsibility towards its associations and members.

The Solidarity Fund helps to reduce the financial burden of members if infrastructural changes have to be made by the association. This help is given free of interest and has to be refunded in six payments to be made every six months.

The Fund for Catastrophes helps straight away in an informal way in case of nature catastrophes.

The Social Fund which is supplied according to what is needed by the Wiener Städtischen Versicherung (In-

surance), the Bank Austria Unicredit Group (Bank) and the central federation helps the allotment gardeners by paying their rent if they are in a financially precarious situation without it being their fault.

Part of the yearly affiliation fees of the members supply the solidarity fund and the fund for catastrophes.

Training:

Over the last years the central federation made many efforts in order to increase the range of the services offered to its members. Therefore, the most diverse courses or formations have been created.

Taxation masters:

In order to avoid speculation with allotment gardens, the general assembly of the central federation set guidelines in 1996 that have to be observed in case of the transfer of a plot. These guidelines stipulate that if there is a transfer of sub-lease rights the price to be paid has to be fixed by an expertise established by a trained taxation master. How this price has to be determined and under which conditions a payment for an allotment house is due, is precisely regulated by the central allotment garden law.

Consequently, the central federation offers the formation of the taxation masters based on the guidelines applicable to the judicial sworn experts at the Court in charge of the allotment garden movement.

This course has been organized for the last time in 2009 and so the trained taxation masters are closely linked to the central federation.

Gardening advisers:

Since 2010 the central federation also organizes the training of gardening advisers and has reorganised this training. Over the last years approximately 80 new gardening advisers have been trained in Vienna and received their certificate by the central federation. The federation could find well-known people coming from the

most different areas as lecturers. According to the opinion of external experts the training of the gardening advisers by the central federation is equivalent to the one offered by special technical schools.

The federation of Vienna also has an own technical gardening group for horticulture and fruit culture. Its gardening advisers operate in the associations and help their members if different gardening problems occur.

A project initiated by the gardening group of the Vienna federation is the activity: "fruit tree instead of conifer". The aim is to have more fruit trees on the plots. This activity has been positively appreciated.

Beekeepers:

The dying of bees is currently a major concern and is meanwhile known by all. Thus, the central federation was ready to provide the financial means to train its own beekeepers. Since four years the beekeeper group has been working successfully.

Fruit trial garden:

The fruit trial garden of the central federation is closely linked to the garden advisers and the beekeepers. On one hand the planted fruit trees and bushes profit from the beehives that are situated at a short distance and on the other hand the fruit trial garden can be a practical training place at the disposal of the gardening advisers for tree cutting and pruning.

Insurance agencies:

Since many decades the federation of Vienna has been offering own insurances to its members via the Wiener Städtische Versicherung (insurance company). Over the last fifteen years the offers have been increased a lot. Not only several policies for allotment sheds are offered, but also legal insurance or accident policies for the members and a large range of insurances for the associations and their employees.

As, however, the procurement of insurance policies can nowadays only be made by insurance companies, the federation decided to find an appropriate solution. That is the reason why the central federation has founded its own insurance agency, which deals with the insurance policies for the federation of Vienna.

Advantage card for members:

Every member of the central federation has an advantage card providing the member with different price reductions. So, for example, this card enables the members to buy products from the online pharmacy at a better price. Also the member number on the card gives the possibility to access the homepage of the agency for health and food security (AGES) and to get information on current food pests including the means to fight them.

Additionally, the central federation has agreed to a cooperation with the societies REWE and Palmers. The allotment gardeners can get vouchers at a reduced price. These vouchers can be bought in the federation's office and this offer is very much appreciated by the members.

Legal advice:

The employees of both the central and Vienna federations invest an important part of their time in helping employees and members. Because the central federation and the Vienna federation are located in the same office building, these problems are submitted to the employees of both organisms.

The administration of the allotment associations is becoming always more difficult and complex. Therefore, the employees need much more help than in the past. Also the fact that today the members question and mistrust decisions much more than before, makes the mission of the board members not necessarily easier. It is therefore important that the employees

of the federation help the executive boards of the associations.

It is also normal that members need help if they have problems with the executive board of their association, if there are problems with the neighbours or simply because a person does not know what will happen to his plot, when he will die or when he is no more able to cultivate the garden.

All these important and small problems are submitted to the federation's representatives and employees who do their best to help.

It has, however, to be mentioned that, despite all these efforts, the number of cases that cannot be solved by the federation's representatives is constantly increasing. So the judicial cases have increased in the central federation from 252 into 2013 up to 414 in 2014.

Despite all these discouraging figures the federation's representatives are still very motivated to remain active for the wellbeing of the members and to even continue to extend the services offered by the federation in order to also remain in the future the representative of the interests of all the allotment gardeners and to be recognized as such.



The Flemish allotment garden federation Tuinhier: Action plan 2016-2020



tuinhier
wat je
zelf tuint
is top



The non-profit association “Tuinhier” (Flemish federation for allotment gardens), recognized as a socio-cultural organisation in 2010, terminates this year its first action period 2011-2015. This recognition enabled us to get important financial support during this period. In order to maintain this financial support it is necessary to introduce a new action plan for the period 2016 - 2020. Therefore, the administrative board decided in September 2014 to create a workshop in order to prepare the introduction of a second action plan to the Flemish authorities.

- Composition, mission and mandate of the workshop. The workshop is composed of representatives of the five provincial federations (Antwerp, Limburg, Flemish Brabant,

East- and Westflanders) and also by a certain number of representatives from the local sections.

- The mission remains identical to the one of the first plan i.e. the non-profit making association “Tuinhier” is an association of voluntary workers that is organized on local, provincial and regional level. It organizes and supports amateur gardening in Flanders. In order to reach this goal, the non-profit making association organizes lectures, demonstrations, practical courses, exhibitions etc. and the association supports and informs its members by a monthly review “Tuinhier” as well as an efficient Internet site. Especially an ecological and sustainable gardening are the essential points of attention.

- The gathering of data is the centre of the new activity plan. The SWOT analysis shows us the strong and the weak points, the strengths and opportunities of our organization. A survey among different people belonging to our association or external people tells us a lot about our organization (sociologic, technologic and political tendencies).
- The most important work consists in the formulation of the strategic and operational aims and above all in the development of a strategy in order to reach these aims. The determination of the aims also requires the determination of the means: competent people and financial resources.



- The working group met on 23th September, 13th October, 4th November, 9th December 2014, 7th and 13th February, 14th and 15th March 2015 and finally formulated the following political challenges for the next period 2016-2020.

1. Socio-cultural functioning.

The association wishes among others to optimise its socio-cultural functioning by a better development of its expertise centre, by the improvement of the registration of its activities and by the continuation of projects concerning allotment garden sites.

2. Target groups.

The association wishes to increase the diversity plan (more younger people, more women and more non-native members) at the level of the local and provincial associations.

3. Cooperation with external partners.

The association wishes to intensify and to diversify its cooperation with other organizations.

4. Internal and external communication.

The association wishes to improve its communication plan, the homepage, the recognition of its new name and the internal communication.

5. Internal functioning.

The association opts for a better formation of the executive board members (on all levels) as well as a better functioning and better computerization of the local and provincial sections. The association also wishes to research new forms of association.

6. Policy for staff members.

The association plans to invest in a real policy for voluntary workers, a better support for lecturers and a policy for the staff members.

7. Logistic policy.

The association plans to invest in an own computer network and an adapted hard- and software.

The challenges are converted and de-

veloped in 7 strategic aims.

These 7 strategic objectives are transformed into operational aims and developed in concrete activities.

One person is in charge of each activity. There is a fixed timing and an estimation of the necessary financial means. It is evident that we are going to make a yearly evaluation to find out to what degree the planned activities have been realized or not and so they can possibly be adapted.

The action plan 2016-2020 was already submitted to the executive board and the general assembly of the association „Tuinhier“ on 25th April 2015. Up to 30th June, 2015 the members could still amend the plan. It was finally submitted for approval to the executive board and the general assembly on Saturday 19th September, 2015.

Allotment gardens in the Park 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 build 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 Federation of Allotment and Collective Gardens (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 neighbourhood families who grow their way of flowers and vegetables. The conditions for plot assignation are simple: to live in the neighbourhood and in a collective accommodation. Technicians from the federation 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 cultivate 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 light wood fences. 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 in the maintenance of 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 gardening, 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 a plot!

The actors

- The city of Maisons-Alfort: project leader and financial support
- The National Federation for Allotment Gardens: technical expertise, consultation of the residents and management of the gardens.

Intercultural exchange in the Ris-Orangis Gardens

Gil Melin

The Orme Pomponne gardens are located in the town of Ris-Orangis, a suburban town 25km south of Paris. The urban development happened in the 1960s to welcome back Algerian people, and to welcome the Portuguese community. Part of this population was replaced in the 2000s by the Turkish community (Turks, Kurds). The town currently has 27,000 inhabitants, of which two thirds live in collective housing, of which three quarters are social housing.



Since their creation in 1998, it was decided to reserve the gardens ex-



clusively for those living in collective housing without any criteria on income, nationality or origin. The authorities never deviated from this principle. The existing 250 plots, occupied by families from more than 20 different countries, cover an area of three hectares, on an area of six hectares, gradually made available by the town authorities, helped by the Essonne county and the Ile de France region. The collective facilities include, in addition to the plots' infrastructure, two buildings for storing gardening and maintenance equipment and for organizing get together events. In a third building is since a short time an administration office, an equipped kitchen and a meeting room to complete the facilities.

All of these facilities allow already a rich and varied multifunctionality. But I would like to emphasise the role of a greenhouse tunnel made available to the families to allow them to grow their plants. The geographic diversity favours the diversity of plants grown, and the abundance of plants encourages exchange and gifts. These gestures really bring cultures together and do more for the understanding

of others than a theoretical speech or a poster on a wall. That is because, after growing the vegetable, people will explain how to cook it. People can even share a dish or a meal at the occasion of a get together event. Bonds will also be built, stimulated by the children who can play interpreter when the French language is less mastered by one or other of the parents.

We must, as creators or re-developers of the gardens, think about all of the spaces that must allow energies to express themselves in order to build ties, that we don't even think about.



France: Square vegetable gardens in a box

Hervé Bonnavaud



Different types of square vegetable gardens in boxes

1. Low beds:

created with planks 10-20cm high or other materials such as bricks, plastic, concrete edges, logs, pleached hedges...;

2. Raised beds:

at least 40cm high and up to 80/90cm long (height of a table), such as "Terraccessibles" and "Terraform" for people with reduced mobility;



Vegetable gardens in a box aren't new. They've existed for a long time, but they weren't always called this. It was simply a way of managing big gardens by dividing their surface into small rectangles or boxes surrounded by borders or low hedges of box tree, for example, to facilitate the upkeep. A garden, a plot, was made up of a varying number of boxes.

Why vegetable gardens in boxes

Nowadays, this type of management tends to develop in response to the reduction in land available. In town centres where space is limited, the box tends to replace the plot.

Simply speaking, at the end of the 19th century, in 1896 when the clergyman Lemire created the League of Allotments (Ligue du Coin de Terre et

du Foyer), 20% of our country's population lived in towns. Our town was fundamentally rural, and there was no lack of space to create allotments (worker gardens). In 2015, almost 80% of the population lives in towns or suburbs that have gradually encroached upon a large part of the agricultural areas on the periphery. Since the end of the 39-45 war, the number of farmers has melted like snow in the sun and has, in some way, been replaced by amateur gardeners whose numbers don't cease to grow, whilst at the same time land is becoming more and more rare and expensive.

To respond to this new demand, local authorities have no other option but to offer square garden plots to citizens asking for a vegetable garden.



3. Plant crates/trays/sacks:

they can be put on any surface and eventually moved if needs be;

4. Rooftop:

the three types mentioned above can be used, depending on the building's



structure and types of plants that you want to grow and the depth of soil required.

Size of square vegetable garden boxes

They can vary from 1 - 4m² in general. It depends on the space available and the gardener's wishes, as he has the choice of how to manage his square vegetable garden box(es).

It is uncommon to go beyond a width of 1.5m; this size is very practical for raised beds as the vegetables at the centre can easily be reached by stretching out an arm.

For low boxes, a width of 1.2m can be

better managed. The length can vary without problem up to 4m or more, according to the size of your garden.

Advantages of square vegetable garden boxes

1. Reduced size
2. Adapted to complete beginners: they don't require physical effort and need basic knowledge
3. Economy of means: small tools for balconies suffice
4. Easy to manage: no digging or weeding
5. No entertaining space lost
6. Very good quality soil, very fertile
7. Significant return: at least five times more than a traditional allotment
8. Very fast crop rotation: two to three harvests possible per year
9. Treatment unnecessary
10. Possible to use on polluted soil, concrete slabs, balcony, terrace, retirement home, schoolyard...

Different uses

1. Classic vegetable garden in boxes to make work easier and notably reduce the surface to dig, turn over, weed, water and treat
2. Educational plots
3. Plots for the disabled
4. Short term gardens
5. Isolated plots (hospice, balcony, terrace)

How to use them

1. Fill them with good earth
2. Divide the surface into small squares from 30-50cm across or in triangles, each dedicated to a type of vegetable or flower in order to combine and diversify the plants and allow them to be rotated
3. Take into account the size and orientation of the box for planting in order to make the most of the sun or protection
4. Fence off the gherkins, cucumbers, squash and melons in order to reduce their influence on the soil





Some examples of arrangements

If you only have one square vegetable garden box, from 1-2m², your choice will be somewhat limited. Nevertheless, it is possible to grow 4-5 types of vegetable, 1 or 2 types of flower in associated plants to protect your vegetables and perhaps 1 or 2 strawberry bushes. Your box being full of fertile soil, you can expect 2-3 harvests, which will allow you to diversify your production even more, and to taste a number of fresh and healthy vegetables.

On the other hand, if you have a garden plot of 20m² or more, it is still possible to manage several vegetable garden boxes and to give a theme to each one, such as:

- Salad box
- Aromatic herb box: parsley, rocket, thyme, coriander, chervil, lovage, chives...
- "Ratatouille" box: tomatoes, pepper, aubergine, chilli pepper, courgette
- Children's box: radish, salad, strawberries, cherry tomatoes...

- Raw vegetable box: salad, radish, carrots, tomatoes, beans
- Tomato box
- Flower box
- etc.

It is all a question of imagination, taste and aesthetics.

However, we must not forget that there are interactions, beneficial or harmful, between certain plants, which must certainly be taken into account. It is what's known as allelopathy. We know, for example, that peas like strawberries, but on the contrary beetroots hate tomatoes. So if, for misfortune, you were to plant some beetroots next to a tomato plant, your beetroots would have every chance of vegetating and not growing larger than a big radish.

France: And why not peanuts?

Badis Merad. Gardener from the Joseph Aiguier allotment gardens. Marseille.



The discovery of a new world has allowed us to enrich our daily diet.

Potato, tomato, corn... the list is long. Peanuts or earth cocoa, an Aztec term for groundnut, is part of it.

Description

The groundnut is not a plant like the others. A tropical plant, *Arachis hypogaea* is not a nut grown on trees! It is rather an annual legume (enriching the soil with nitrogen) like peas or beans, with a subterranean carpophore.

It is a shrub 20-90cm high, 30-80cm wide.

Its leaves close at night (like wood sorrel). Whilst its yellow flowers at the axil of the leaves are fertilized, a type of stalk grows while the future cloves form. Then the fruit penetrates the soil where it will ripen several months later.

Buying seeds

What you sow is the seed with its pink-brown film and not the shell (a tough shell).

2 suppliers

- Seed dealers (shops or by mail)
- Pet shops (bird food)

For latecomers and the fearful, you find more and more readymade plants in nurseries and markets.

The seeds reseed from one year to the next.

Growing method

Think potatoes!

- In mid-March/April, put 1-2 seeds with their film in a seedbed, 2-3cm deep (warm, sunny and without excess water). Flowering takes place one month after planting.
- End of March/June, put a plant every 30cm in a mound in soft soil, drained, not clayey, in a sunny location.

Moderate watering from the month of August onwards.

Harvesting and conservation

In theory after the first frost. Personally I don't agree, as the leaves (unlike potatoes) don't wither after the cloves mature, which then risk rotting. Give yourself more or less 130 days for them to grow.

I recommend, from September, to go and "spy" on the shells to see how

they look, if not, take out a fruit, open it and estimate the size of the seed. It's up to you to decide, from then, the time of harvest.

Pull out the plants, shake the earth off them, dry the cloves on the hanging plant in an aerated room for 2-3 weeks.

The leaves are an excellent green fertilizer.

Now it is up to you to choose how to prepare them for tasting (grilled with or without shells...)

Think about keeping several seeds for the following season.

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