

## **The first Ecologic Garden Label in Belgium**

After 2 years of hard work, we officially inaugurated the first Ecologic Garden Label on the allotment site “De Roshaag” in Peer on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

### **What is the Ecological Garden Label?**

It is a label awarded to an exemplary allotment garden site for ecological gardening and behaviour.

It is first a way to reward active boards for the work and effort they put in an allotment garden. A second goal is to innovate and modernize older sites.

The sites can earn 4 stars, each star representing a certain topic:

1. Park design
2. Management
3. Equipment/ facility
4. Awareness/ sensitization

### **“De Roshaag” allotment site received 4 stars**

1) Two years ago the site existed for little more than a year. However, a lot of work had still to be done as far as its design was concerned. After a first evaluation the jury listed a couple of advices.

So a demo-garden, extra storage room, layers in vegetation inside and around the park were realised. In this process the allotment gardeners gave extra attention to the participation of gardeners, neighbours and partners.

2) For park management, the site scored with the following elements:

The paths are permeable for water; the use of green manures that hold the moisture and nutrients in the ground is stimulated. The weeding happens manually and is kept to a minimum by using green manures and anti-rooting membranes. To control diseases and plagues the demo-garden is used to experiment with biological controls, new vegetables and old species to find stronger plants. To prevent over fertilisation a soil sample is taken in every garden every 3 years. Solar energy is used for the compost toilet and the lights inside the cabin. The garden cabin has a planted green-roof.

3) From the start of this project the local board and the local government chose to use durable equipment and materials. They introduced indigenous plants and removed invasive species. To attract and sustain natural enemies and other useful animals in the garden a hedgehog and bee hotel were built. Piles of branches and leaves were spread throughout the park.

4) The park is open for everyone. The local board actively engages other civilians to participate and cooperates with other partners. Schools visit the project to learn about gardening and composting. The gardeners learn from each other during informal happenings and the demo-garden.

### Many thanks

Vzw Tuinhier thanks all partners in this project for their support and guidance during these two years.

Special thanks go to our local board and the local government of Peer for their unconditional input and effort in this project.

### The future

In the future we are planning to review this project and probably add social and innovative components. The aim is to reward and encourage more projects to join our garden label.

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