

## Germany

### United we stand, divided we fall

Even though many towns are seeing increasing demand for allotment gardens, most rural organisations are facing the problem of finding takers for their plots. Proof that we can't bury our heads in the sand comes from the community of Wathlingen, with its 6,000 inhabitants, situated in the Celle district of Lower-Saxony.

The local allotment garden association registered for the "4-Generationen-PARK" project (park for 4 generations), through which the community plans to invest in its future. This ambitious project's long-term aim is to set up a site for people of all ages and all walks of life.

The "4-Generationen-PARK" project includes accommodation, education, leisure, sport, health and "life". The Wathlingen allotment gardeners are doing a great job. They offer people of all ages and nationalities, from all walks of life, a place to which they can devote their free time. They work in close conjunction with schools and nurseries to offer children an ideal space to get to know and "understand" nature.

For this reason the association is an essential part of the community. Its various relationships with the local council and authority, as well as other associations and organisations, ensure that the association can reach its goals through joining forces. The judging panel of the "Gärten im Städtebau 2010" (gardens and townplanning 2010) competition paid tribute to the innovation behind this project, which has involved all those concerned and is likely to be imitated by local communities. It awarded Wathlingen the silver medal and a special prize.

The change in demographics is difficult to stop, but by involving the community and its inhabitants, including local allotment gardeners, there is a way to get things going.

We as allotment gardeners reflect our society. Our association includes many members who are also active in other associations or have contacts in politics and the local authorities, associations and institutions. It is precisely these links which are important for our association, the community and all other institutions to take advantage of. And we will not hesitate to show that united we stand, divided we fall.

Joachim Roemer, Vice President of the Landesverband Niedersächsischer Gartenfreunde.

