

Diplomas - 36th international congress

1) The Golden Rose was given to the town of Gradignan (F)



2) The diploma for an ecological gardening was given to:

a) the association "Freiheit e.V. in Berlin (D)



b) the association "Falan in Falun (S)



c) the association "Zonnehoek" in Amsterdam (NL)



3) The diploma for social activities was given to:

the association "Heideland" in Braunschweig (D)



The town of Gradignan and the allotment gardens

(Extract from the dossier of candidature)

The allotment gardens of Gradignan, a project supported by the local authorities

The project to create an allotment garden site in Gradignan goes back to 1979, year of the foundation of the local association. Its mission was the creation and administration of allotment gardens. The local association is a member of the national allotment garden federation. The first plots were attributed in 1982.

The local association was initiated by Mr. René Canivenc, former Mayor of the town and the president of the French allotment garden federation. Today its board has following members :

President : Henri Rivière
Secretary : Albert Moulin
Treasurer : Évelyne Villa

The interest of the local authorities for allotment gardens did not change when Michel Labardin became the new mayor of the town. He never omits to underline the importance of gardening, when he visits an allotment garden site. He also considers gardening as a good school of communication and of conviviality.

It is with his support that the local association opened up towards the exterior and has integrated questions concerning the whole society in the largest sense of the world in its projects: For example questions on a sustainable development, the relations between generations or the development of a harmonious life in society.

The allotment gardens of Gradignan, thirty equipped plots

Thirty allotment garden plots of approximately 200 sq metres each have been created on a ground of 8,000 sq metres belonging to the local authorities in the area of Ornon.

This zone is classified N3 in the local urbanisation plan. Natural zone, it corresponds to an area with a low density at the outskirts of the urban area and its future urbanisation zone. It can only have a very low extension of its urbanisation.

Thirty plots equipped by the local authorities and put at the disposal of the local association of Gradignan are destined with priority to people living in the collective housing area. The families, that got a plot, can cultivate it just as they like and for an unlimited period. Today six plots are exclusively cultivated by women.

The local association has the obligation to administer the allotments: attribution of the plots, associative life, care of the common parts, respect of the charta "Gardening and environment" and of the internal regulation, buying of common equipments etc.

At the beginning the site was laid out according to following scheme: Every plot had a shed and a system to collect water, as well as a well per group of six gardens.

General lay-out of the allotment gardens

Since president Henri Rivière was elected in 2002, many changes have been realised on the site :

- one compost bin per plot,
- every well was equipped with an electric pump in order to limit the noise,

- shed with sanitary equipments,
- a shed to range all the common equipments (mower, grinder, etc),
- multifunctional room called: “La Tonnelle”,
- a space for children with raised beds and a shed to range their material (garden tools)

Sustainable development

Many activities in the area of a sustainable development are initiated by the allotment gardeners in Gradignan under the leadership of its president and with the support of the local authorities. All the mayors of Gradignan are willing to work for a sustainable development. So Mayor Michel Labardin has initiated the creation of a division in his municipality working exclusively for the Agenda 21 in order to increase the number of activities in this area and to involve the inhabitants thanks to work groups.

Examples of concrete activities initiated by the local association :

- Planting of trees on the car park,
- Construction of a shed with sanitary equipments,
- Construction of technical premises,
- Creation of a shed to stock fertilisers,
- Common buying of fertilisers by the local association and selling of these fertilisers at the existing costs to the gardeners in order to control the harmfulness of the products used,
- Equipment of every plot with a compost bin in order to limit the use of chemical fertilisers
- Buying of a grinder to recycle the green waste,
- Buying of a mower for the regular mowing of the common paths in order to limit the use of weed killing products
- Equipment of every well with an electric pump in order to allow a silent watering (reduction of noise)
- Transmission of information to allotment gardeners and regional responsible people

The allotment gardens of Gradignan, an integral element of municipal life.

Encouraged by the local authorities the allotment gardeners in Gradignan regularly initiate many activities for the whole population:

- Public visits are organised every year in spring. These visits are a great success.
- Participation of the allotment gardeners in the competition « History of flowers and gardens ».

This competition is organised every year by the local authorities and the nursery “Le Lann” in order to encourage the citizens to contribute to the embellishment of their living space, to improve the image of their community for the inhabitants and visitors and to reward those who made efforts to reach this aim. The competition is open to individual persons, merchants, societies as well as liberal professions established on the territory of the commune of Gradignan.

- The allotment gardens did as well participate in the week on a sustainable development together with the mediathek of the town. A presentation on allotment gardens was proposed by the mediathek and the employees of the mediathek proposed loud lectures in the allotment gardens.

- Every year the allotment gardeners have a stand during the forum of associations. Many people from Gradignan stop here in order to discuss gardening questions.
- The local association is as well very active in the area of relations between people of different generations. Together with the division of the local authorities for elderly people visits of the allotment garden sites, very often followed by a meal in common with the voluntary allotment gardeners, are regularly proposed to elderly people's homes as for example "the foyer-restaurant Séquoias". The elderly people's homes are very happy to get such opportunities to spend moments together with other people in secured areas. The allotment gardens and their multifunctional room are then put at their disposal and the gardeners spend their time to listen to the elderly people, to discuss with them and exchange souvenirs.

Further activities

The allotment gardeners are as well very active in order to sensitise young children for nature and gardening.

They are active both on local and regional level. They plan to enlarge their site and to create an educational pond.

Project : ecological gardening : A nature trail through the city

Micheal Jubelt

In August 2008 the allotment garden association „Freiheit“ in Berlin had the idea of creating a nature trail within an ornamental and educational garden. The women’s group of the association called the “Schnippelgirls” had just financed the equipment for the site’s playground.

Next they considered how the allotment garden site could even be made more attractive for young and adult visitors and how they could at the same time make a contribution to environment and nature education.

After an important investigation it quickly became clear that even the smallest nature trail would exceed the financial capacity of its initiators. How could such a project be financed and realised? Over several months the group tried to find interested people, sponsors and partners. They needed both financial and technical support. With the help of the partners and sponsors who could be found, especially the Foundation for Nature Protection in Berlin, a detailed concept for the nature trail could finally be spelled out. Mistakes could be avoided at the earliest planning stage.

Who needs a nature trail? It was clear that the nature trail should aim above all at making children aware of nature. Targets were the children of the allotment gardeners, the neighbours and the whole area. But adult visitors should be not forgotten either. Already before the new project started, the allotment garden site was a green oasis for many citizens in the middle of a dense residential area. It was used by elderly people for their walks and for having some relaxation near their homes.

The practical realisation could be done within a very short time.

In September 2010 after only four months of work the building phase was finished. The nature trail is a round walk through the whole site and is open free of charge for all visitors during the gardening season. Thirteen stops have been built and have been provided with exhibition boards. They give in various forms information about nature. You can find an insect hotel here, an ornamental and educational garden used as a green class room, a fruit bush for birds and insects, a street for tasting fruit, a heap of branches and a dry wall to allow hedgehogs to live here. There is also a board with models explaining different ways of how to help birds nesting, a herb garden, a dendrophon as well as a model beehive and a quiz station.



Nomination for the diploma concerning ecological gardening

Falan Allotment Society in Falun

It is a beautifully situated allotment area on a south bent hillside with view over a little lake. The society has 141 allotments, 128 are with small houses and 13 are only plots. It is a society with active members, arranging lots of activities, studies, feasts and so on. Since many years they have a group of members especially engaged in environmental matters. They got their first diploma from the Swedish Allotment Federation in 2008. Last year they got the bronze diploma, the second level of diploma.

The whole society practice organic gardening. The members have their own compost bins but they also have a common area for composting. The members care for the birds with nesting boxes. There are beehives for the pollination and also a meadow area for the biodiversity.

The society has a very informative member's paper coming once a month during the season. There the environment group regularly informs about topics of current interest.

Falan Allotment Society is well worth the international diploma.

The board of the Swedish Allotment Federation strongly recommends Falan Allotment Society for the diploma concerning ecological gardening

Lars OSCARSON

Solveig SIDBLAD

DUTCH NOMINATION
DIPLOMA FOR AN ECOLOGICAL GARDENING
IN THE ASSOCIATIONS

The Netherlands, 7 June 2011

The Dutch National Society, AVVN, would like to nominate its association “Zonnehoeck” from Amsterdam for the honorary diploma for an ecological gardening. The AVVN believes Zonnehoeck meets the criteria set in the “Regulation on the criteria of a diploma for an ecological gardening”.

The criteria:

4.1 About fifteen years ago the AVVN has developed together with several nature conservation organizations a national quality mark for associations, which meet strict criteria on ecological gardening. Associations that meet the criteria can get a quality mark with one, two, three or four stars (best). Zonnehoeck meets these strict criteria of the AVVN and has achieved the maximum of four stars. Zonnehoeck has signed a contract with the AVVN in which they declare they will comply with the strict rules of the AVVN.

The gardening at Zonnehoeck is also in accordance with the Office brochure “An ecological approach to allotment cultivation”.

Garden site of Zonnehoeck dates from 1953, includes 70 gardens and is situated in the 19th century district of Spaarndammerbuurt in Amsterdam. Already in the 1970s and 1980s Zonnehoeck committed itself for ecological gardening: no chemical pesticides were sold in the garden shop and the members were asked not to use them on the private allotment gardens. More and more gardeners are using the principles of ecological gardening on their private gardens.

In 1999 Zonnehoeck started with two stars. After that, it's gone up steadily in 2002 they received three stars and for the first time in 2005 four stars, the highest stage. In 2009, those four stars were prolonged – with the annotation that the natural gardening even improved in quality and quantity.

4.2 What is remarkable about Zonnehoeck that is an integral ecological management and maintenance for the whole of the garden site and not just for parts of it.

- Zonnehoeck manages the bosage ecologically: no woodchips on the surface, but a variety partly indigenous and partly botanical flower bulbs as undergrowth.
- Shrubs and hedges are being pruned extensively so that there is more opportunity for birds nest, with more berries and flowers for insects and butterflies etc.
- Mowing is done extensive and phased. The grass is not mowed on all places every fourteen days. Several grass fields are only mowed after the flowering of the spring flowers.
- A rosary, willows and indigenous littoral plants were planted.
- A special butterfly garden was laid out on one of the corners of the garden site, near recently planted old varieties of fruit trees.
- One of the gardeners has become so excited that she has found a new hobby, keeping bees. There are currently two hives, with bee colonies.
- There are breeding kingfishers
- Special use of natural materials, such as a gazebo of willow wood and a playground of natural materials.
- Recently in the district neighbourhood a partnership (Overbraeck) was started to protect several ecological gardens (sites) against development plans by local authorities.
- Zonnehoeck provides much written and personal information, such as courses lectures, exhibitions and workshops to children.

At the presentation of the national quality mark the alderman of the city of Amsterdam emphasized the added value of allotment gardens in the city, a beautiful green feature which is accessible to residents and others neighbourhood as well as to neighbourhood schools which have the opportunity for nature excursions.

These are only a few examples of the activities of Zonnehoek and their place in the neighbourhood.

4.3 The percentage of gardeners that effectively apply the criteria fixed under 4.1 is approximately 90%.

We hereby send you a few photos of Zonnehoek.

We hope Zonnehoek will be rewarded with the honorary diploma of the Office.

AVVN

C. Zijdeveld,
chairman







Intercultural project : A common point : The love for gardening

Manfred Weis, Martina Krüger

In 2007 the first intercultural allotment garden of Braunschweig was inaugurated in the allotment garden site “Heideland”.

Three times a week refugees and migrant persons coming from different backgrounds, neighbours and interested citizens, of all different ages, and having different ways of living meet together there.

What unites them all is the love of gardening. The use of the garden as a meeting point favours the mutual understanding and reinforces the awareness of the personal situation of the refugees. Many refugees suffer from the pressure of traumatic events. They migrated to a new country without their families and sometimes suffer physically from the consequences of wars and catastrophes. A garden aims at helping them to feel at home in this new environment. M. Armineh der Avanesia, a member of the association, helping the refugees called Refugium expressed it in the following way: “A garden is a medicine without side effects”. Gardening helps people to recover.

Beside the gardening activities the use of the intercultural garden as a meeting point offers a space for many other activities. The participants in the project meet here in order to cook together and exchange ideas. They can relax in the allotment garden. There exists also the possibility of a regular information exchange as for example among others information about the garden and herbs, seminars on health and social political issues. Courses to learn German are also planned.

This was preceded by five months of very hard work during which an abandoned area of 800 sq metres with a broken down shed was transformed with the help of these new allotment gardens into a colourful garden. This garden was then divided into many small plots. People from eleven different nations for example Haïti, Ruanda and Syria, can now grow their fruit and vegetables according to their own ideas and in their own gardening traditions.

Meanwhile the first new gardeners have participated in a basic course to become technical advisers and have learned many things about composting and gardening care.

In the future the intercultural garden should be autonomously administered by participants involved in this project.

