

Diplomas Utrecht: 30th August 2014

The International Office has granted the Golden Rose to the City of Utrecht.

The city of Utrecht has since the nineties a pro-allotment policy and is very allotment minded on political as well as civil servant level. In 1993 Utrecht approved its first "allotment policy plan" and in 2012 the successor of the first policy plan was approved by the city council. In these policy plans the garden sites are labelled as protected green.

Utrecht protects its garden site as much as possible. The past two decades Utrecht has initiated new concepts and has integrated garden sites more and more in housing development sites. Two of the best Dutch examples of in development areas integrated garden sites can be found in Utrecht.

The legal position of the garden sites are guaranteed by long term rental agreements and in legal binding zoning plans. To keep the garden sites in an excellent state Utrecht gives a subsidy every year for larger maintenance work on the garden sites. The garden associations, co-ordinated by the AVVN, yearly decide among themselves what should be done on which garden site.

Furthermore the city of Utrecht subsidizes each year innovative projects on garden sites that stimulate multifunctional use or projects that improve the safety on the sites. In order to improve the ecological quality of the garden sites Utrecht makes it financially possible for associations to participate in the National Quality Mark for Natural Gardening.

Since 1993 the City of Utrecht and the allotment associations meet twice yearly to discuss all matters concerning the garden sites and the allotment associations.

Last but not least, Utrecht was from the start of our contacts very eager to get the International Congress of the Office International. Where possible they give their support to the organization of this event.

EIGHT ALLOTMENT GARDEN ASSOCIATIONS WERE REWARDED AT THE OCCASION OF THE EUROPEAN DAY OF THE GARDEN.

The diploma for ecological gardening was awarded to:

- 1) the „Dijkzicht “ allotment garden association in Amsterdam (NL)



The allotment garden association Dijkzicht in Amsterdam has received the diploma for ecological gardening

Garden site Dijkzicht was founded in 1938 and is and is located at the present location since 1957. Dijkzicht has 204 gardens with an average size of 300 m² and a total surface of three hectares.

In 1996 Dijkzicht decided it wanted to meet the strict standards of the National Quality Mark for Natural Gardening. After a few years of hard work Dijkzicht was rewarded with three of the maximum 4 dots of the ladybird quality mark, with a total score of 56% of 100%. In 2002 the score was 70%, in 2005 it declined to 60% but in 2009 the score rose to 74%. At the re-inspection in 2013 the score exploded and was 104%. Dijkzicht was cum laude rewarded with the maximum of 4 dots.

This impressive improvement was a reward for the large number of projects related to natural gardening and management that was realized by Dijkzicht. This improvement was made possible because more and more gardeners actively participate in natural gardening.

Here a non exhaustive summary of the activities since 1996:

- since 1998 the use of chemical pesticides and herbicides is prohibited and if necessary only natural means are used;
- Inventory of all that is alive and growing;
- Use of sustainable energy and of environmental friendly products, LED-lights and CFLs in the buildings;
- Separate waste collection: paper, glass, domestic waste (and in the near future plastics);
- Communication through leaflets, the brochure 'Tuinieren op Dijkzicht', the newspaper Dijkzichtkrantje, information signs and the website "tuinparkdijkzicht.nl";
- Education through workshops for gardeners about subjects like pruning, chopping, wicker braiding, composting, butterflies, bees, birds, toad mushrooms and trees on Dijkzicht;
- Since a few years education for children of Dijkzicht and schools in the neighbourhood. In 2013 over 250 children took part in the nature lessons. Also an educative gnome path was constructed;

Natural gardening is supported and implemented by around 90% of the members of Dijkzicht.

2) the „Nieuwe Levenskracht“ allotment garden association in Amsterdam (NL)



The allotment garden site “Nieuwe Levenskracht” in Amsterdam has received the diploma for an ecological gardening.

“Nieuwe Levenskracht” is a member of the Amsterdam Allotment Federation. The garden complex was founded in 1933 and has recently celebrated its 80th anniversary.

The management-team of “Nieuwe Levenskracht” takes an active approach in promoting ecological gardening amongst the gardeners, and has done so for fifteen years. This resulted in 35 percent of the park members practicing ecological gardening. The park was awarded the three-dots National Quality Mark for Ecological Gardening thirteen years ago and this status was prolonged year after year.

Seven years ago the attempts to strengthen the ecological significance of the garden park for the urban area of Amsterdam were renewed, resulting in a four-level approach:

- 1) Identifying and developing the existing ecological values of the garden park.
- 2) Seeking cooperation with third parties.
- 3) Enhancing ecological consciousness and the experience of the natural world with both gardeners and visitors from surrounding urban areas.
- 4) Developing education on topics concerning nature and ecological gardening.

Implementing these policies effectively improved the ecological status of the garden park and they will continue to do so in the future. The garden park was granted a four-stars National Quality Mark, the highest achievable, in 2013 as a direct result of these improvements.

To assure continuity of the current policy and sustained commitment to the development of ecological values, the park management, the eco zone-volunteers and the park maintenance group have drawn up plans for the coming years formulating new projects and improvements aiming at the embedding in the “Main Ecological Structure” of Amsterdam.

3) the „Tuinenpark ons Buiten“ allotment garden association in Utrecht (NL)



The association “Tuinenpark ons Buiten” in Utrecht has received the diploma for an ecological gardening

The association “Tuinenpark Ons Buiten” in Utrecht was founded in 1928 and has its present leisure garden site (3.5 hectares, 100 gardens, 30 small vegetable gardens and an animal garden) since 1958.

Since the nineties the “Tuinenpark Ons Buiten” started with a more ecological management of their garden site.

In 2009 they were awarded with the maximum of 4 stars.

Special projects on ecological gardening are developed by “Tuinenpark Ons Buiten”. Here some examples:

- several workshops for garden members and interested people from the nearby neighbourhood about ecological gardening and related subjects,
- initiator of an ecological neighbourhood vegetable garden outside the site for residents and provision of compost and tools there
- information signs with explanation ecological projects, also aiming to welcome and communicate with visitors in the park
- dry stone walling, garden for butterflies, special pool for several animals, fences and heaps of branches and twigs, a large insect hotel, special hives for solitary bees
- nature education route, special route along trees with name signs

- sensory garden and a herb garden which are also accessible to disabled persons and wheelchair users
- educational activities with childcare, primary school and the neighbourhood

The percentage of gardeners that effectively apply the criteria of natural gardening is approximately 95%.

The diploma for innovative projects was awarded to:

1) the „De Koekelt“ allotment garden association in Ede (NL)



The allotment garden site “De Koekelt” from the allotment association VAT in Ede has received the diploma for innovative projects.

Some years ago the members of the garden site “De Koekelt”, decided on a proposal of their board, that the closed and by a high fence surrounded garden site should be changed into a multifunctional site that is open to the neighbourhood. In 2012 the multifunctional garden site had become a reality.

De Koekelt is the first garden site with vegetable gardens, transformed into a multifunctional garden site and opened up to the public. This is unique in The Netherlands.

Furthermore “De Koekelt” has:

- 153 gardeners of 12 different nationalities
- A bee hive
- An insect hotel
- Special gardens reserved as school gardens and after school care
- An education and information space
- A meeting place for gardeners and people of the neighbourhood

Because of the reconstruction and opening up of the garden site the people living in the neighbourhood now have a substantial increase of their recreational space.

The important spatial qualities of garden site “De Koekelt” are:

- Green in the city
- Breathing space for men and animals
- a hospitable house for everyone

2) the „Park Groenewoud” allotment garden association in Utrecht (NL)



The allotment garden site “Park Groenewoud” in Utrecht, member of the allotment association “De Hoge Weide” has received the diploma for innovative projects.

The association “De Hoge Weide” was founded in 1954 with the aim of providing its members with soil for the use as vegetable or ornamental gardens or a combination of both types. Originally the garden site was located on the outskirts of Utrecht. In 2003 the garden site had to be relocated because the main motorway between Amsterdam – Utrecht and the south of The Netherlands was moved and the original garden site disappeared under the asphalt.

This did not mean the end of “De Hoge Weide”. Instead of relocating the garden site to the new outskirts of the city, the council of Utrecht decided to create a new garden site closer to the city centre, i.e. on one of the most expensive building locations in The Netherlands.

The new garden site was planned by a landscape architect and the design had to combine work and leisure. It became a unique park on a unique location. The garden site is planned around eight small office buildings. The offices are mainly service industries like ICT, financial services, advocacy etc. “Park Groenewoud” is a beautiful park for gardeners as well as for the people that work in the surrounding buildings and the residents of the districts nearby. The park is open from sunrise to sunset.

The allotments association “De Hoge Weide” decided to bring several special elements into the garden site and did/does this all with volunteers:

- 1) Insect garden.
- 2) Compost garden.
- 3) Sheep garden.
- 4) Bird bush.
- 5) Food bank garden.
- 6) Bee garden.
- 7) Prairie garden.
- 8) Toad pool.
- 9) Insects wall.

3) the “Pontnewynydd” allotment garden association in Pontnewynydd (GB)

Pontnewynydd Allotment Association has received the diploma for innovative projects

Recently the association completed a Lottery funded project - to build an area with raised beds, a shed and a greenhouse that will provide growing space for people with disabilities.

“The Disabled Plot” was funded with a grant of **£4,999.00** from the Big Lottery fund. After a lot of work and effort by mainly volunteers, this project has been highly successful.

“The Disabled Plot” Open Day Saturday 27th July 2013



Members of the association (and someone trapped in a shed) with Neil Mason Mayor of Torfaen, Allan Rees Chairman and South Wales rep for NSALG

The “open day” was a success.

A letter was received from HRH Prince of Wales who gave his best wishes and asked that we keep him informed of the project.

Now the project is complete.

Anyone know of people (with disabilities) who would like to rent a bay on the disabled plot with the use of the shed and greenhouse, then please do not hesitate to let them know to contact the secretary.



“The Disabled Plot” before (October 2012)



“The Disabled Plot” after (Finalised 26th July 2013)

4) the Vallila allotment garden association in Helsinki (FI)



The Allotment site Vallila in Helsinki (Finland) has received the diploma for innovative projects

Allotment Museum in Vallila Allotment Gardens (Helsinki, Finland)

In the middle of the Vallila allotment gardens, at Omenapolku 93 (93, Apple Road), there is a tiny little cottage, appr. 10 m², dating back to the 1930`s. It is still in its original condition. The cottage was designed by two distinguished architects, Brunila and Tuukkanen, in 1932. The garden was recently restored to the condition originally designed by Mrs. Elisabeth Koch, a professional gardener and a pioneering allotment gardening promoter in Finland. Her original planting scheme is still implemented on three plots in the Vallila Allotment Gardens which were set up in 1931.

Elisabeth Koch stressed the importance of variety. Nowadays Vallila allotment gardeners work together on a voluntary basis growing both the usual decorative plants and vegetables grown at the times of Elisabeth Koch.

In 1977 the site´s last cottage still in its original condition became available and the Board of the Association decided to buy it. The cottage museum is owned and run by Vallila Allotment Association.

For 30 years the cottage museum was dormant. In the summers of 2009 and 2010 the cottage and its garden were refurbished by collective efforts of Vallila allotment gardeners. All the items donated by local allotment gardeners date back to the 1930`s and their originality was verified and approved by the Helsinki City Museum.