

**In 2021 the International Allotment Federation awarded again diplomas for ecological gardening and innovative projects.**

Due to the pandemic, the statutory duties were complied this year by an electronic vote. It was decided to respond positively to the request for two ecological and two innovative diplomas.

These diplomas should have been remitted during the international congress in Berlin, which had, however, to be cancelled due to the Covid crisis. The federations will now directly receive the diplomas, which will then be remitted on national level at an appropriate occasion.

You find below a first short description of the projects. A more detailed information will follow in the Hyphen.

***The colonists Berit Hogstad and Bjørn Johansson received together with their association "Solvang avdeling 5" in Oslo (N) the diploma of the International Federation for ecological gardening***

In only three years Berit Hogstad and Bjørn Johansson have built a solid competence in beekeeping. This year their honey was a gold medal winner in the Norwegian Championship. The couple is a brilliant ambassador for urban and ecological agriculture and shares their knowledge willingly with fellow colonists and Oslo's residents.

They meet regularly other beekeeper to share experiences and knowledge.



*Gold medal winner in the Norwegian Championship 2020*  
This season they tried really hard to make different types honey with a great variety in taste. Therefore they decided to harvest several times through the season. They harvested in the beginning of June, in late July and at the end of August. There was an outstanding difference in taste between these three types of honey. They knew that their honey was of great quality this year and entered the Norwegian Championship with two very different products: spring honey and autumn honey.

*Sharing competence and contribution to the local community*

Berit Hogstad and Bjørn Johansson want to raise awareness about the importance of bees in the global food production. On different occasions they have held lectures and tours, introducing audience to beekeeping. Here they tell them about the life in the cubes and give out tastings of different types of their local honey and their homebrewed “mjød”. Mjød is an alcoholic drink, brewed on honey, with ancestry from the Viking Age.

There are many factors that give a good harvest. Pollination is one very important factor for the harvest fruits and berries. Bees are well known for their pollinating skills and can increase the production of fruit and berries by 30%.

These allotment gardeners are an example in the association “Solvang avdeling 5” due both to their exchange with others, the sharing of their knowledge and to the positive influence on the plants on the site thanks to their activity. Consequently, the association also becomes an example to imitate.



***The garden park Nieuw Vredelust in Amsterdam-Duivendrecht received the diploma for ecological gardening***

Nieuw Vredelust (New Vredelust) is a garden park in Amsterdam-Duivendrecht with 103 gardens, founded in 1960.

In 2018, it started with the project Quality Mark Natural Gardening and in October 2020 awarded with a Quality Mark Shield which contained 4 dots – the highest possible.

In 2020, a year in which we all dealt with the restrictions regarding covid-19, the garden park turned out to be for countless people a pleasant and safe shelter in nature. Even though it is relatively small for Amsterdam standards, the common greenery is extremely diverse. The trees in the park are about sixty years old and provide shelters for owls, birds, bats and insects. Native, local and wild plants grow under the trees around the park.

The ditch sides are being mowed in phases with the scythe, so herbal vegetation is a result. The garden borders around the clubhouse are full of Bulgarian onions, various herbs and lots of host plants and nectar sources. Especially for amphibians and nesting ducks there are floating islands in the ditches, which also purify the water.

The public nature garden De Wijde Blick (The Wide View) includes shell paths, a pond, a herb and scent garden, spacious flower beds, various fruit trees, overgrown stone walls and a wild life hedge. De Wijde Blick has a lot of food sources for any animal that flies or crawls. Much more activities were made for the protection and advancement for the fauna and flora.

“Garden 94” is a freely accessible public garden of approximately 300 m2. Visitors can rest there and enjoy the greenery. There’s also a toilet facility. Signs at the entrances show what can be harvested.

Natural Gardening is widely supported. The coordinator of De Wijde Blick, together with a board member, plays a pioneering role, also in the communication with the gardeners. Gardeners receive a monthly newsletter and three times a year a richly illustrated magazine, in which tips and experiences are shared. Gardeners also actively use a social media group app to exchange plants.

New gardeners get a quick start and learn to maintain their garden in a nature-friendly way, how to compost and how to plant.









***The allotment garden site “Sogn” in Oslo received the diploma for innovative projects***

In 2018, Sogn Allotment Garden, centrally located in Norway’s capital Oslo, and NIVA (the Norwegian Institute for Water Research), together with life sciences and water management institutions, including the City of Oslo represented by the Agency for Water and Wastewater Services, initiated a collaboration project and initiative called [Sogn Hagelab](#) (Sogn Garden lab) to co-develop, demonstrate and test nature-based, blue-green storm water management solutions on-site in the Allotment Garden.

In the project, Sogn allotment garden contributes with volunteers, gardening and local knowledge, plant donations, testing and demonstration areas. NIVA carries out research and knowledge transfer (self-financing) and project coordination. The Norwegian University of Life Science (NMBU) contributes with guidance of master student projects and knowledge transfer (self-financing). The City of Oslo has provided funding and contributes with knowledge transfer and dissemination opportunities. Construction entrepreneurs have been involved in the building of the structures, and there has been interest from suppliers to contribute with hardware and materials (on varying commercial terms). Other finance partners, such as the Savings Bank Foundation DNB and Hageselskapet, through the Olaf Billes donorship foundation, have contributed to various communications, research and testing as well as other activities.

The project has gathered widespread interest nationally and internationally and created a strong community feeling amongst the participants. Even more importantly, the blue-green structures so far seem to have positively impacted the storm water distribution in the common areas, as well as provided an opportunity to learn about nature-based approaches to storm water management.

The International Federation's diploma for innovative projects was granted to the allotment association SOGN in Oslo for the exemplary engagement of their members in this future orientated project and so to help to meet our today's challenges and to make their contribution to a sustainable development.











***The allotment association "Steffens Minne" in Karlstad (SE) received the diploma for innovative projects***

The association "Steffens Mine" has worked actively for the past few years with a number of interesting, innovative and environmentally friendly projects, several of which have had biodiversity in focus.

*1 An insect friendly meadow:* They have created meadows with flowers and grass to attract insects and promote biodiversity.

*2 Using scythes:* As the main purpose of the meadows is to promote insects, the grass and the flowers are cut in autumn by using scythes. Members of the environmental group acquired a number of scythes and learned how to use them and now they teach other interested members.





The grass harvested is used for covering the soil in the vegetable patches, maintaining moisture in the soil and keeping weeds out. The grass also works as a fertilizer and enhances the soil.

*3 Producing their own biochar (charcoal:)* A group of people, including some from the environmental group, have been learning how to make their own biochar from wood and branches. The utilisation of biochar has a positive influence on the soil, the soil structure, the plants and the climate. The association has now invested in their own bio char machine and will continue to make biochar.

*4 Insect hotels and "living quarters" for wild bees:* The association members have build nests/living quarters for wild bees and a more traditional insect hotel.

*5 "Extra" - Active during 2020:* Despite the pandemic, the association continued their work with a number of different activities. To be able to do this, they did their best to make the activities corona safe. The activities were outdoors. All participants kept a corona safe distance to each other.

The association also had yoga a number of times on their big lawn, a very popular and much appreciated activity.

