



# Hyphen 61

News from the Office

Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux  
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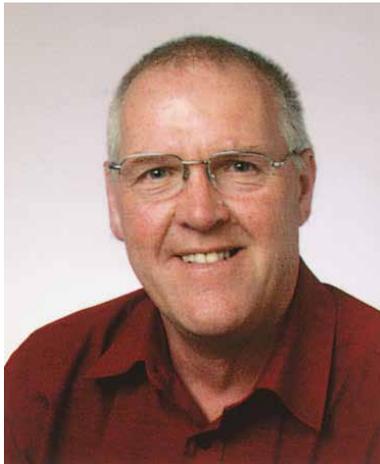
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# Editorial

## Walter Schaffner

former President of the Swiss Allotment Federation



Walter Schaffner

On May 20th at the delegates' assembly in my hometown St. Gallen, I resigned and transferred my mandate as President of the federation to my successor, Christophe Campiche, who had already been elected President in Riehen 2 years ago. This transfer took place after 12 years as president and 28 years of work on the executive board. During those 28 years, I assumed various assignments on the executive board, and now it was time to retire.

We were able to introduce some innovations during my presidential mandate: the regulations, a homepage with an application for our magazine „the garden friend“, the second edition of our brochure „Naturnah gepflegt“ as well as a lobbying of national and state councils to mention only the most important ones. This could not be done alone. It was only possible to do this comprehensive work with a strong team. Not everything always worked according to plan. Mistakes also were made during these years and I would like to apologize for them.

There is a saying „where there is work, there are mistakes“.

In 2005, I took over the presidency in Frauenfeld. It was always my wish to be able to pass over the presidency in the east of Switzerland. Thanks to the organization of the 2017 delegates' assembly by the Central Federation of the St. Gallen Allotment Association, my wish was fulfilled – thank you very much.

Over the past two years the Executive Board has also dealt with the problem concerning the future of our federation. On the basis of an analysis of the federation made by EMHO Management AG in Alpnach, we have been looking for more efficient structures in our organization. We would like to implement some good approaches, including the creation of an external audit department and the transfer of greater responsibility and increased competences to the regional representatives. We developed this project during six meetings of the management board, in four meetings of the executive board, and one in the working group dealing with the revision of the statutes.

An almost continuous subject is the problem concerning the termination of the leases concerning allotment sites. In Bern the „Viererfeld“, a green area which is situated in the agricultural zone and also houses family gardens is to be overbuilt with new houses. The affected allotment association „Brückfeld“ has joined forces with various parties and organizations, so that they can fight for a voting against this project. Our federation has contributed with a financial

support from the Solidarity Fund. In Zurich the allotment area „Vulkan“ of the FGV Altstetten-Albisrieden is also threatened by a loss of garden plots. The new ZSC stadium should be built here. We also financially supported the association using the solidarity fund for the voting campaign and furthermore took part in the media conference on the garden site. In Central Switzerland, the lease contracts for gardening and the building regulations were amended and have already been put into practice. In the city of St. Gallen three areas are also affected. They are to be built over within the next two to four years. A replacement ground is offered here, but the urban allotment concept of 2006 will be revised and unpleasant news are expected.

We are pleased to see that younger families are again finding access to gardening. At present times there are again waiting lists. The boards of the sections and associations are, however, also challenged by the tenants' cultivation of the plots and increasingly have to cancel leases. In addition, they have important staff problems. Who is still ready to assume a mandate today? For a long time we were looking for successors for some regional representatives; even calls in the „Gartenfreund“(our review) were necessary. This is a long-lasting issue with which the executive board must also deal very intensively in the future. Despite various resignations, whether for reasons of age or long-term management, our executive board is now complete again. For many allotment sites leaving the federation is not a voluntary step, but is due to the fact that an area is being overbuilt and no replacement ground is available.

Over the past two years, positive reports have been published in the media about allotment gardening. Furthermore some good programmes or interviews have been broadcasted on the radio DRS. This used sometimes to be different in the past. Now we are increasingly asked for reports.

Our project of building up lobbying at the occasion of the Federal Elections in the autumn of 2015 has started well, but it must not be neglected in the future. The aim is to find politicians at the cantonal and federal level, who support our movement above all in spatial planning questions or guideline changes. Talks with politicians are always important for us. This contact must also be intensively maintained by our regional representatives. We must further try to continue and intensify cooperation with other like-minded organisations and federations. We cannot avoid cooperation and follow our own path towards the future. With shared synergies, we can benefit from each other. The cooperation with the VdGV has somewhat

been reduced, but is still intact and we are cooperating again more strongly with Bioterra. FiBL conducted a study in the cities of Lucerne, Lausanne, Basel and St. Gallen. The reports can be found on our homepage. We are having increasingly discussions with Pro-Natura, ProSpecieRara and the bird protection. The issue of „biodiversity“ requires our fullest attention with regard to the implementation by 2020 of the Nagoya protocol that was ratified by Switzerland. In this area there will be a few challenges for the associations and our federation in the coming years.

We were able to provide some useful information to the International Office, thanks to our connections to technical high schools and the Swiss networks. The most important one was the „Cost“ project. Thanks to this information, the Office participated with some countries in the regular Cost meetings. The final event took place in Basel. Thanks to the participation of the Office and some leagues, one could control what was gathered and

published about the allotment movement. The summaries, which are already available in three languages, can be important for the future of our movement. That is why it is important that information from the individual affiliated leagues gets to the Office.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the management board and the federation's executive board for the good cooperation in the past years. I would also like to thank the executive board of the International Office for the very good cooperation during my term of office. I address a special thank-you to the Secretary General, Malou Weirich, for the cooperation and the long-standing personal contact also on a private level. I hope we can continue to cultivate it. I would also like to thank all the presidents of the leagues affiliated to the International Office for their cooperation. I wish all the best to the whole Office for the future. You will certainly not lack work and new challenges will await you.

# Activity report 2016

(1st part)



The executive board has the pleasure to submit the activity report for 2016 to you.

## Internal activities

Since the last statutory general assembly the executive board met on August 16th, November 26th and is still going to meet on March 5th, 2017.

### a) Work of the executive board and of the general assembly

#### *Work of the executive board*

The executive board is conscious of the importance of a better visibility of the Office and consequently discussed, among others, the following subjects in order to present the necessary details to the general assembly for an adequate decision making and in order to execute the decisions taken as well as possible:

- The executive board has acknowledged that the criteria for asking support from the solidarity fund do no more match the current situation. The text was therefore amended and a new draft submitted to the general assembly.
- The executive board also discussed the problem concerning the future of the Office and its financial situation. It was decid-

ed to ask the general assembly to discuss this problem during the general assembly of March 2017.

- It took the necessary measures for a third edition of the information brochure and for another edition of the brochure concerning children and nature as well as for the finalization of the brochure concerning innovative projects.
- On proposal of the BDG it was decided to propose to the general assembly to „internationalize“ the German brochure dealing with the problem concerning the soil.
- Furthermore, the executive board proposed to the general assembly to issue the Hyphen four times a year instead of two times a year in order to create and keep up tighter links with the national allotment gardeners.
- The executive board was of the opinion that one should continue to regularly update the homepage and that, therefore, the federations had to be asked to send in more contributions.
- It has acknowledged repeatedly that the internet forum does still

not work. This problem has to be discussed once more in the general assembly and it should be tried to open the internet forum for the gardening advisers.

- The executive board considered to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Office during the international congress in Vienna i. e. at the occasion of the opening session of the congress. It was additionally considered by the Austrian allotment federation to issue at this occasion a brochure concerning the history of the Office from 1926 until 2016. Professor KATSCH agreed to write the last part of the Office history i. e. from 1980 until today. So, a third part of the Office history can be issued (part 1 and part 2 were already issued by the German allotment garden museum). It has to be discussed with the German allotment museum if the two existing parts could be unified with the third part in one single edition.
- In parallel to this brochure, a survey of the history of the Office should be published in the Hyphen over several issues.

- After the meeting of H. BONNAVAUD and M. WEIRICH with the representatives of commissioner VELLA, the situation flowing from this, was discussed. It was proposed to the general assembly to take part in the citizen's consultations and the federations were asked to volunteer to deal with the different areas concerned: climate, environment, regional policy, youth and education.
- After a long research and discussions it was decided not to continue to seek for an affiliation of the Office to the European Environment Bureau.
- The executive board took the necessary measures so that the Office can again take part in the week against pesticides in 2017. A text proposal was elaborated and sent to the national federations for completion and correcting so that the final text can be adopted during the general assembly in March 2017.
- The executive board members were of the opinion that the Office does not have the necessary means to take part as a partner in a scientific study on climate and urban green (a scientist to accompany this work, the necessity of federations to host the students and the impossibility to pay a yearly contribution of 1,000 £ due to the financial difficulties of the Office). The Office had also been asked to take part in a network on urban planning and a joint venture. These demands were rejected too.
- On proposal of H. BONNAVAUD the executive board discussed the possibility not only to deal with the statutory obligations and the yearly activities during the general assembly, but to also discuss a specific subject. Thus in 2016 the problem concerning community gardening was discussed.

- The executive board discussed once more the problem concerning the Community Gardens because they start networking on regional and national level and get much support from the authorities. The executive board will propose to the general assembly that the federations make a survey of all forms of Urban Gardening in their country. Then a working group should analyse which position the allotment garden movement should adopt and make proposals.
- Following to the congress in Vienna the executive board discussed the procedure to work out new guidelines for gardening advice. It will propose to the coming general assembly to create a working group for this elaboration.
- Finally the executive board proposes to the general assembly to check if the "rule" one country = one federation remains necessary today.

#### *Work of the general assembly*

The general assembly was informed on the work of the executive board, the problems were then discussed and the necessary decisions taken:

- The revised regulation for the solidarity fund was adopted with unanimity on proposal of the executive board.
- The proposal to discuss during the general assembly in March 2017 the future orientations and the financial future of the Office was unanimously adopted by the delegates.

After a discussion in the general assembly in August, following the desire of the Danish federation it was decided to also discuss this problem during the study session in Denmark in 2017 and if necessary as well during the study ses-

sion in Belgium in 2018.

H. BONNAVAUD, followed by the new president and executive board of the French federation, have chosen as congress subject for 2019: „The soil, a common good, the soil in all its aspects“. This subject should be discussed during the study session 2017 and 2018 in order to prepare the congress so that during the congress the conclusions can be adopted.

The general assembly decided to discuss in the study sessions 2017 and 2018 both the problem of the future of the Office and the problem concerning the soil.

- The general assembly decided to issue a third edition of the information brochure, to finish the brochures on children and nature, respectively on innovative projects and to issue a brochure on the subject of the soil.
- It was decided to open the internet forum to the gardening advisers. The necessary password was sent to the federations. They also received once more the general passwords for the internet forum so that every federation has access to the forum.
- The general assembly decided not to issue the Hyphen four times a year but only three times and to check later if this practice should be continued. Accordingly, in cooperation with the company MAYERHOFER the Hyphen could be issued three times in very well conceived issues in 2016. The information brochure was edited for the third time at the occasion of the 38th international congress in Vienna. By end of the year the brochure concerning children and nature was issued in German, French and English. The brochure concerning the innovative projects will probably be issued at the be-

gining of 2017.

- The cooperation with the European Union was intensively discussed after the information was received by the executive board.
- It was acknowledged that the European Union cannot issue legislation in the areas of concern for the allotment gardeners. The European Union can only give guidelines or elaborate framework policies, which have to be put into practice on national level.
- Additionally, the EU decisions have to be adopted by a majority vote i. e. there are 28 member States, but we have allotment gardeners in only 10 member States.
- It was considered to check if the national members in the European Parliament could not support our efforts to integrate the allotments in the framework policy on green infrastructures.
- We have to continue sending documents showing our activities in order to maintain the „pressure“.
- During the general assembly in March 2016 the problem concerning community gardening was presented and discussed under the chair of Cost scientists. This problem should be maintained in our focus in the future in order to adopt the right position.
- During the August general assembly the Swedish federation presented itself with the services given to the allotment gardeners, their problems and challenges. It was decided to have such a presentation during each general assembly. In March 2017 the Luxembourgish federation is going to present itself.
- The general assembly got information by the German federation on the presentation of the German and international allotment movement during the IGA 2017 in Berlin. The highlight for the allotment gardeners will be the meetings organised from 18th until 20th May, 2017.

To be followed

# The allotment garden association „Blumenfreunde“ with its bees in Vienna (A) received the diploma for innovative projects

The allotment garden association „Blumenfreunde“ in Vienna’s 21st district has always had a beekeeper among them and since its very beginning a bee house was part of the association.



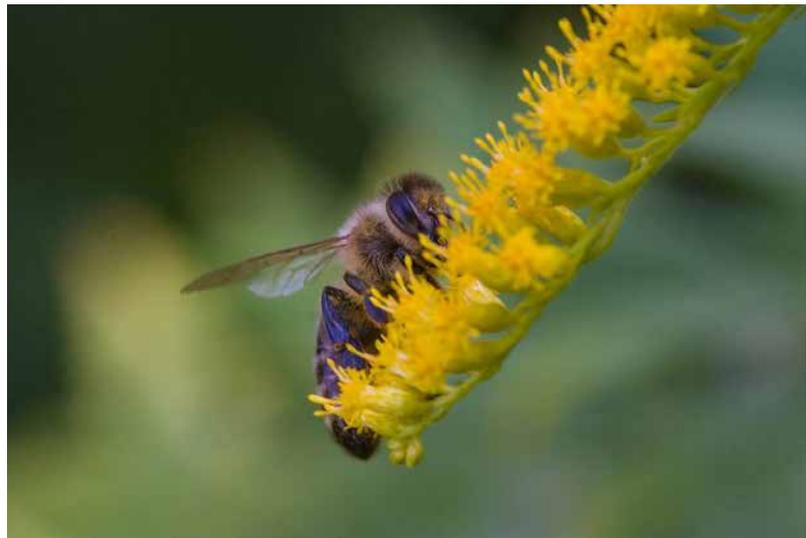
*The allotment gardeners, in particular the association’s management team, have always appreciated the work done by the respective beekeepers as the bees guaranteed rich harvests in times of scarcity.*



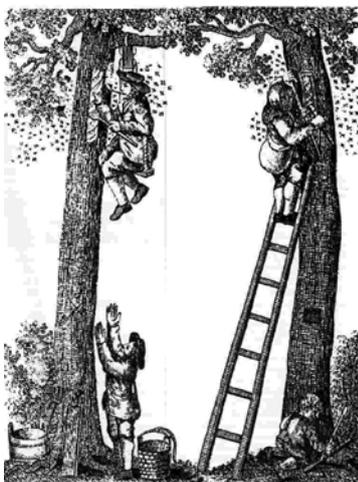
*And all of a sudden the bees became the talk of the town. All media was and is crammed with reports about the bees’ struggle for survival. And of course the new friends of the bees came together and founded – with big applause and huge media coverage – associations like the urban beekeepers, the rural beekeepers and whatever other names they could find.*



Only associations such as the allotment garden association „Blumenfreunde“ are hardly mentioned or not at all. Subsidies, which are far from insignificant, go to media-effective and marketable persons, companies and associations.



Bees are older than mankind. The first honeybees were found in over 50-million-year-old amber. When humans started to develop 5 million years ago, honeybee colonies already existed. During the Stone Age, honey was a popular energy provider. The eldest document, a 10'000-year old cave drawing found in Spain, shows „honey hunters“ at work. In our geographical area, beekeeping blossomed during the Middle Ages. The guild of the bee-masters who tended to the beehives in the bee trees enjoyed particular privileges.



Bee colonies used to be situated in tree trunks, baskets and hives with fixed honeycombs until the hive frame and the detachable honeycomb were developed in the 19th century. Many discoveries and developments took place during that time. The invention of the honey separator made it possible to reuse the honeycombs after the honey harvest.



*Back to our allotment garden association „Blumenfreunde“: The old bee house (a former allotment garden shed) was beyond repair; therefore the association decided to build a new bee villa.*



*Together they built the foundation and the supporting structure.*



*After the installation of the floor ...*



*...they assembled the framework ...*



*...and the roof panels were mounted.*



*The roof sealing with bitumen sheets and the front door were next, ...*



*... and the wall boards were fitted.*



*By the way, work makes you thirsty!*



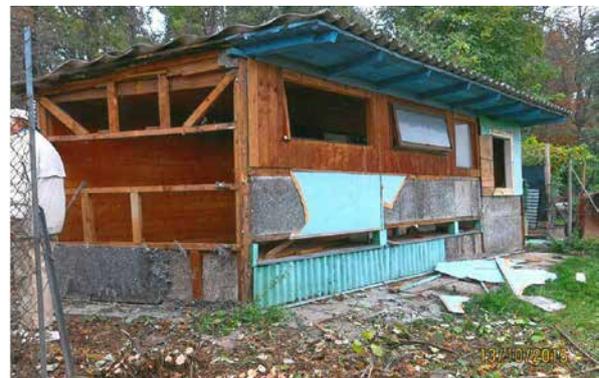
*The first window fits right in its place ...*



*... and this is what the bee villa looks like once it is finished and hosts the first beehives.*



*It is still a bit untidy inside but the bees, the beekeeper, the members and the board are happy ...*



*... because now the demolition of the old shed can take place.*



*And above all, the beekeeper can now take the first visitors for a tour, ...*



*... explain his work to them, ...*



*... and let them taste fresh honey directly from the honeycombs.*



*The last picture shows how sweet-tempered the bees of the allotment garden association „Blumenfreunde“ prove to be: not a single visitor got stung.*

# The allotment association „Zur grünen Insel“ in Bremen (D) received the diploma for ecological gardening and social activities



The allotment site „Zur grünen Insel“ is an association boasting exactly 100 gardens, which thanks to an almost perfect location make up the green lungs of the urban triangle of Horn, Oberneuland and Borgfeld. The association was established before 1969 by combining park and allotment land. The result – in addition to providing the benefits inherent in cultivating allotments – was to create grounds for inhabitants from the neighbouring residential quarter. The pathways leading through the association’s territory allow pupils and commuters alike to enjoy a much shorter route to their everyday environment. A route that is moreover green in every respect, given that it does away with vehicles.

The allotment garden area itself is characterised by an unusual stock of trees seldom found in Bremen’s public

green spaces. Pioneer species have hardly been established here. Oak and beech trees line the paths and gardens. Parts of the site are permanently shaded but despite this the area is used to its full extent for allotment gardening purposes – in accordance with federal allotment garden provisions. The allotment gardeners refrain from using any chemical pesticides and herbicides.

The allotment area borders a primary school and a kindergarten, providing resident children with great outdoor experiences, spacious natural areas and a good neighbourhood.

Not just the allotment area is firmly anchored in the urban neighbourhood of Bremen-Horn; the association, respectively association life, also has a positive impact on its surroundings.

The result is a supportive neighbourhood that sees association experts providing advice to domestic garden owners on sustainable and ecological gardening, gardening tools being lent out and allotment gardeners picking up the hedge trimmers when age or health reasons prevent others from doing so.

In the city-state of Bremen, soil is a highly sought-after commodity, owing to its severe limitation. Residential quarters frequently lack open spaces and children often have no room for playing and running around. The communal areas of the allotment association „Zur grünen Insel“ comprise several rambling meadows, which children from the neighbourhood are welcome to „kick around“ on. The spacious area also lends itself to walking man’s best friend and the bench-



es provide an opportunity for urban residents to engage in a chat. And so children, mothers, people both young and old, individuals from different backgrounds, even senior citizens come together not just as allotment gardeners; they also live together in urban neighbourhoods and cross paths in the allotment site „Zur grünen Insel“.

The care of the common green space is shared by the municipal council of Bremen and the allotment garden tenants. Here there are no maintenance or upkeep arrears. The sought-after location of the allotment area has seen local tenants reach innovative heights. An example: one allotment gardener planted a bed of May lilies in a communal green space that was previously inaccessible due to shrubs and a potential site for waste discharge. She cares for this approximately 500 m<sup>2</sup> area in addition to car-

rying out community work and cultivating her own leased garden. Her efforts are appreciated by countless admiring passers-by.

The association initiates joint activities, such as the Easter market and the Christmas bazaar. There is a Nordic walking group, a summer and children's festival as well as an organising team responsible for two events in the FlorAtrium: the Bremen „Day of the Garden“ and the autumn market, each featuring some 30 exhibitors. All these events foster contact with the residential neighbourhood, with personal invitations issued and specific projects created for children and senior citizens, so that nobody feels left out.

In a nutshell: the association combines an ecologically exemplary cultivation of its allocated land with the highest level of social commitment.

# The Allotment Park „De Driehoek” in Utrecht (NL) received the diploma for social activities



This association has invested much effort to bring refugees / asylum seekers in contact with a typical Dutch / north European phenomenon: associations and voluntary work. The initiative of the association also drew the attention of our Minister of Social Affairs. In spite of all the bureaucracy De Driehoek pulled through.

On Monday 1 February, Minister Asscher (of Social Affairs) paid a working visit to the Organic Allotment Park De Driehoek in Utrecht. The minister wants asylum seekers to be given faster access to volunteer work opportunities. Until now, the Employees' Insurance Agency (UWV) has required approximately five weeks before issuing a decision on permission. The Minister wants the time within which the matter is settled to be cut to between one and two weeks. In his opinion, it is vital that refugees quickly be allowed to carry out volunteer work, for example working in nature or organising games for the elderly. For that reason, he visited the Zuylenstede Residential Care Home in Overvecht and the Allotment Park De Driehoek.



Since 2014, a number of asylum seekers have been spending every Monday morning in the allotment park. After long negotiations with the UWV – supported by the AVVN – formal permission was granted following an initial rejection, and asylum seekers were allowed to assist with general maintenance (weeding), maintenance of the scrub embankments (pruning) and

helping elderly and infirm gardeners carry out heavier work (for example sieving and transporting compost to the gardens by wheelbarrow). This volunteer work for the allotment association is not a form of work that would otherwise be carried out by paid employees. Volunteers are not permitted to be deployed in place of paid positions.

The Utrecht Volunteer Agency acts as the go-between. They recruit interested individuals from the Asylum Seekers Centre (AZC) and travel with them by bicycle right across the city to De Driehoek, and subsequently back to the AZC. The bicycle guidance task is sometimes taken on by a representative from the allotment. The asylum seekers know that there is always someone to greet them at the gate, and cycle with them. Each month, if necessary, the Volunteer Agency tries to identify a new group of volunteers, thereby guaranteeing conti-

nunity of service. This means that the recruitment process is taken out of the hands of the allotment association. The allotment members are of course responsible for supervising the work at the allotment park.

Generally, when newcomers arrive in the morning, they are given a tour of the allotment park. Asylum seekers have little or no knowledge of the allotment system, nor are they generally conversant with the phenomenon of volunteer work for the public good (unpaid work). They are introduced to the gardeners on site and there is an opportunity to communicate in Dutch, English, or with hand gestures. After coffee / tea is served, they work together under the supervision of a small group of allotment gardeners, and receive instructions on weeding, raking and pruning. They also learn the names of fruit and vegetables in Dutch and are occasionally sent home with small samples of the produce, by

the gardeners.

It is a win-win situation. The asylum seekers are a welcome addition to the short supply of volunteers for maintaining the complex; they help enliven the gardens and offer the allotment gardeners an opportunity to get to know and understand the refugees, in a congenial environment. For the asylum seekers, it is a pleasant introduction to a typically Dutch phenomenon. They make contact with Dutch nationals, have the feeling that they are doing something useful while awaiting the conclusion of their asylum procedure, and can break out of the daily rut and boredom at the Asylum Seekers Centre with an enjoyable outdoor activity.

It would be excellent if more allotment associations could join forces with volunteer agencies to encourage asylum seekers to work as volunteers in their gardens.

# History of the Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux 1926 – 2016

## 4th part Malou Weirich

### The evolution from 1947 until today

After 1947 the allotment garden movement had to redefine itself in order to tackle the new challenges and to take into consideration the changes in our towns and in society. This evolution will now be analysed over several issues of the Hyphen. The topics discussed, the internal evolution of the Office and the cooperation with the international organisations with their successes and problems will be analysed.

### 1) The topics and areas of concern

The subjects that have been dealt with by the Office and the national federations are based on the societal and urban development in Europe: Reconstruction after the War, boom of the glorious sixties, awareness and sensitisation of people for nature and environment protection as well as health to name only these few.

The problems and aims of the federations were everywhere the same and on a national and international level the problems and challenges were discussed and dealt with.

First of all the subjects were discussed in congress cycles. Later on seminars and study sessions were introduced in order to intensively prepare the congress subject so as to be able to finalise the discussions during the coming congress.

### a) Allotments, a means for material support

At the time of the Office's foundation the allotments mainly aimed at enabling the workers to cultivate vegetables in order to lighten the family budget by getting a surplus of food.

This subject of the allotments as provider of food was up-to-date until the Second World War.

Afterwards the economic aspect of vegetable and fruit cultivation as a provider of food for the family was further discussed during the international congress in Brussels in 1998.

A comparison was made between the costs of self-cultivated vegetables and the price of these vegetables, bought in the supermarket. The result was that not only the self-cultivated vegetables were healthier, but that they were also cheaper. 368 € can be saved per year if you cultivate your vegetables and don't need to buy them.

The priorities of the allotment garden changed, however, slowly shifting from the material factor to becoming a useful leisure time occupation and then afterwards towards nature and environment protection as well as towards a sustainable development. The intensity of this shift was different from federation to federation. The social function of the allotment garden movement and the problems related to it were, however, not neglected.

Today the vegetable cultivation is again trendy, both because of the economic crisis and because of people's awareness for healthy food.

### b) The allotment, a means for the personal development and for the development of the families.

After the Second World War the allotment was above all a means for the personal development and the reconstruction of the families.

Five congresses, London 1949, Luxembourg 1951, Amsterdam 1953, Vienna 1955 and Brussels 1958 tried to define people's new needs and considered the social and personal function of the allotments as a main priority. The delegates were of the opinion that the contact with the earth enabled people to recover the physical, moral and spiritual balance, which had been heavily damaged during the war.

Two other congresses, Basel 1980 and Stockholm 1990, dealt again with the social function of the allotments and the social evolution in our society. Increasingly the allotment federations and associations considered their mission no more in a restricted manner i. e. limited to their members, but in a much larger way. The focus was on laying out the allotment sites and on creating activities so that children, disabled people, the elderly and immigrants could be integrated on the allotment sites.

A social diploma was created by the Office in 2010 in order to recognise all these efforts, to reward the allotment gardeners and to motivate others to realise similar projects. A brochure entitled: „the social responsibility of the allotment gardeners“ as well as two brochures dealing with the topic „Allotments and children“ were published.

### *c) The allotment, a means for a meaningful leisure time occupation*

When the working time was greatly reduced and the leisure time society began, the International Office was one of the first organisations on international level to deal with this problem and to analyse it as a whole.

Father Lemire already acknowledged during the congress in 1927 that the legislator had to intervene in order to liberate the worker of the very bad working conditions, the continuation and the hardship of which made them tyrannical for the workers. The eight hour working day and the forty hour week as well as the obligatory pensions were introduced. So, the leisure time was created and one had to find means in order to use it in a meaningful way. Sport, leisure time occupations, continuous education etc were mentioned.

These different possibilities to use the free time were adequate for some, but not for all. The allotment gardeners were convinced that the allotment garden was the only possibility for a meaningful leisure time occupation, which was adequate for all. In the allotment the person can in fact recover his free personality.

This subject was discussed for the first time during the congress in Dortmund in 1959. At the end of this congress an urgent appeal was addressed to the national authorities. The delegates underlined that the reduction of the working time could only be a step towards social progress if

the free time resulting from this, was well used. In the congress resolution it was stipulated that the possibility to cultivate a garden was an ideal means in order to use the free time meaningfully and so to improve the moral and physical health of the population.

This topic was afterwards discussed again during the congresses in Geneva in 1961, in Paris in 1963, in Copenhagen in 1965, in Birmingham in 1976 and in Brussels in 1982.

Also today the problem of a meaningful leisure time is not completely solved. People have more and more – deliberately or not deliberately – free time. The offers, on how to occupy oneself during this free time are constantly increasing. However, are they all in the interest of people? Does not the essence of a person consist in the possibility to take up initiatives oneself, to freely create something oneself? Is the allotment garden not still today a means to enable a person to fully develop his personality during his free time and this according to what he thinks best fits?

Is not the development of new forms of gardens (Community Gardens, Intercultural Gardens) the proof that the social potential of the allotments is not yet fully recognised and not fully used?

### *d) The allotments, an urban green zone and a necessary element of the town green infrastructures*

Father Lemire already wrote down ideas concerning the subject of „Worker gardens and Urbanism“ in 1920.

In the 60s the quick development of big cities started with their skyscrapers and the risk of people to feel suffocated by concrete and asphalt. All open spaces disappeared due to construction and the cost of land increased. But despite all this, green zones had to be safeguarded in the towns. Very quickly one recognised

that the allotments had to play a role in this urban development.

Therefore, the allotment sites throughout Europe were opened all day long in order to share our green oasis with other citizens. The allotments could no more exclusively serve the allotment gardeners. They had to make a contribution to the neighbourhood and society.

The congresses in Luxembourg in 1967, in Stockholm in 1970 and in Vienna in 1972 required the taking into consideration of allotments as urban green areas and required the recognition of this new function of the allotments. The consequence of this was that the allotment gardeners became aware that they had to protect nature and the environment in the urban area. A link between the contribution of the allotments for a humane and natural environment in towns was created and was developed over the following years.

Despite the fact that in several countries the allotment gardens are part of the town planning schemes, they are, however, not everywhere an integrated element of the urban green infrastructures. All the federations are convinced of the importance of this problem and this subject has to be discussed together, for example during the preparation for the international congress to be organised in Germany in 2021.

### *e) The allotment, a means for nature and environment protection*

Already during the congress in Amsterdam in 1974 it was acknowledged that the allotment garden is stimulating an active contact with nature and is an irreplaceable space to sensitise children for nature. However, also adults have to be acquainted with the facts, the new requirements and knowledge concerning nature and environment protection. If already government counsellor Bielefeld reported

that in 1910 professional gardening advisers came to the allotment sites during the evenings in order to inform the allotment gardeners on an adequate fertilisation and to give them advice on gardening cultivation, it is today even more important that the modern gardening advisers are best trained and acquainted with the new necessary subjects of gardening advice in order to be able to inform the allotment gardeners in an optimal way on the new requirements.

The congresses in Paris in 1986, The Hague 1992, Dresden 1996 and Lausanne 2000 dealt above all with the subjects of nature and environment protection and a sustainable development.

The allotment gardeners were, on one hand, conscious that a gardening respectful of nature would give them healthy food and was a remedy to the food scandals that regularly appeared. They, however, on the other hand, were also conscious of their responsibility to contribute to a sustainable development through a gardening respectful of nature and environment. It was without any doubt that a gardening respectful of nature constituted a possibility to safeguard biodiversity in the urban areas. It has to be underlined that a German study, worked out in 2008, proved that one can find 59 varieties of fruit in allotment gardens whereas there exist only 30 in the professional cultivation and 114 varieties of vegetables whereas there are only 35 varieties in the professional cultivation. The comparison of ornamental plants is as well much more positive in the allotment garden. In fact, per 100 sqm you find an average of 22,4 plants in the allotment garden but only 0,5 in public parks.

Currently a similar study is being carried out in Vienna.

Already in 1994 the Office issued a brochure on a gardening that is re-

spectful of nature. It was financially supported by the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Luxembourgish government in order to stimulate the efforts of the allotment gardeners to garden in an ecological way and to give them suggestions.

The Office additionally published a Vademecum on bees on allotment garden sites in 2013.

A diploma for an ecological gardening was also created in 1996 in order to support the efforts of the allotment gardeners and to stimulate them. Up to now 56 diplomas have been awarded.

Additionally, new challenges have to be faced. The subject concerning gardening advice was discussed during the international congress in Vienna in 2016. It has to be organised in such a way as to embrace all the new aspects and to support the allotment gardeners so that all the requirements of an optimal nature and environment protection can be observed.

Subjects as for example sewage, protection of ground water, economical use of water, waste separation and waste prevention as well as safeguarding of green spaces in the urban areas to improve the quality of air have to be included.

Gardening advice has additionally to include the general topics as for example integration, sensitization of children for nature etc.

The resolution adopted in Vienna stipulated that additionally to the existing guidelines, the Office should work out a new module of expert gardening advice. It should deal with advanced training measures considering sustainability. It should be formulated in such a way that it can be adopted according to the different national necessities.

Furthermore, a network of the feder-

ations' gardening advisers should be created.

### *f) Allotment gardens, an element of urban gardening*

Garden plots are appearing everywhere. Urban Gardening is considered a panacea, a proof, if still necessary, that people need the contact with the earth, the garden. Allotment gardens are, however, often considered first to be closed down if construction grounds are needed.

Since the end of the 19th century allotments have been laid out in towns among other reasons in order to restore people's contact with earth that had been lost. They enable still today contacts between people, provide healthy food to the allotment gardeners ...

For a long time allotment gardens have been increasingly cultivated all over Europe in a nature friendly way, pesticides are banished and the rules on a sustainable development are applied.

And despite all this, they are easily forgotten, overseen.

Are allotments than no element of Urban Gardening?

On the contrary allotments should be considered as the most sustainable form of Urban Gardening.

The problem concerning Urban Gardening was already discussed during the Office general assemblies. We have to adopt the correct position in this area for the future, work out a common strategy and make our voice heard.

### *g) Legal protection of allotments*

In order for the allotment gardeners to be able to realize all the above mentioned functions, be it the material, social, town planning or nature and environment protection functions,

the allotments have to be legally protected (congresses 1961, 1963, 1965, 1976, 1982 and 1986) and be included in the urban planning schemes.

This subject was and still is today a current problem. It has been of concern for the allotment federations and the Office since their foundation until today. Especially the congresses in Copenhagen in 1984 and in Vienna in 1994 dealt with this subject. The Office could put the translations of the existing legislations at the disposal of all the federations. Whereas the efforts to get a general allotment garden law were successful in Denmark, this was not so in Luxembourg. In Poland after the political changes the existing legislation was modified several times and the situation seems not yet to be definitively settled. In Slovakia a law was adopted which is, however, not favourable for the federation. Currently there are again discussions in the Czech Republic in order to adopt a new general allotment garden law.

The Office discussed the problem concerning town planning in Vienna in 1972 and in Amsterdam in 1974. These congresses requested among others that the allotment gardens should be integrated in the town planning schemes in order to guarantee their protection. They requested that the local authorities should be obliged to give an adequate place to allotment gardens in the planned green areas as

well as in the town planning schemes. Later this problem was once more discussed during the congresses in York in 2002 and Lyon in 2005.

Today the legal protection of allotments and their integration into town planning schemes is not yet given everywhere.

While fighting for every piece of ground, we have to look for additional methods to protect the allotments, for example the recognition of the allotments as ecological compensation grounds, the integration into cultural itineraries etc.

### *h) Focus on allotments*

The congresses in Cracow in 2008, Copenhagen in 2011 and Utrecht in 2014 dealt with the future of the allotments and the question: How can we lay out attractive allotment gardens and position them in a future orientated way in a society where every piece of land is coveted by so many people? It is clear – as it had already been acknowledged during the previous congresses – that the allotment garden sites can no more exclusively serve the allotment gardeners, but have to be part of the public green, have to be opened for the neighbours and other people of our society. The allotment gardeners have to contribute with their projects to the general well-being (sensitization of children for nature, food banks, school gar-

dens ...). The allotment garden sites have to be in the focus of the authorities. The authorities and the population have to realize the value of the allotments for all.

The allotment garden has to continue to evolve and innovations have to take place. The allotments must attract the attention of the authorities, the population and the media on them with their new layout and with the projects that are carried out. Innovative projects have already been surveyed and put at the disposal of the federations. They have now to be spread and further developed.

The allotment gardeners have on all levels to take increasingly part in scientific studies (as for example COST). Scientists analyse the allotment movement in a critical way. We have to take part, to give them the correct information and help to banish clichés. But we also have to react to justified criticism and to improve our allotments.

Our aim must be, to be recognized over the next years as the most sustainable and possibly the cheapest form of Urban Gardening. We have to consider the new trends in order that the coming generations can also in the future have the opportunity to get an allotment.

To be followed

# The situation in Switzerland and the related services offered by the Swiss allotment federation to its members

Walter Schaffner

former president of the Swiss Allotment Federation



In Switzerland, the urbanization was rather hesitant until the middle of the 20th century, but it was all the more rapid afterwards. Today three quarters of the Swiss population lives in urban areas. Since 1970 the built-up area has almost doubled, and still about one square meter of ground is covered per second. As a result, agricultural land is lost, natural habitats are destroyed or cut into small fragments and many species are endangered.

The settlement area is, however, also habitat for animals and plants: settlements with nature friendly green areas and many structural elements can accommodate a surprisingly high

biodiversity. Sometimes certain species find here a substitute for habitats that have otherwise disappeared from the landscape. In the city of Zurich, for example, there are 1,200 species of wild-growing ferns and flowering plants i. e. 40% of all species to be found in Switzerland.

More than elsewhere, biodiversity in the settlement area is subject to human influence. Technical innovations, new building materials and construction methods as well as changes in use of individual zones can very quickly lead to the disappearance of individual species. Current urbanization favours adaptive and mobile species

that do not place specific demands on their habitat. Non-locals and partially invasive species, so-called neophytes or neo-ozes, often find particularly favourable living conditions in the settlement area.

The settlement area is both a danger and an opportunity for biodiversity. With differentiated and well-planned measures in agglomerations, cities and villages, a considerable part of our flora and fauna can be preserved, promoted and in some cases protected from extinction. Research shows that many of the objectives of biodiversity promotion are compatible with the demands of the population. In ad-



dition, attractive species used as signboards can increase acceptance for a biodiversity – friendly design of urban green spaces.

Biodiversity Strategy Switzerland and the Action Plan:

- 1) Sustainable use of biodiversity
- 2) Creation of an ecological infrastructure
- 3) Improving the status of national priority species
- 4) Preserving and promoting genetic diversity
- 5) Review of financial incentives
- 6) Collection of ecosystem services
- 7) Generation and distribution of knowledge
- 8) Promoting biodiversity in settlement areas
- 9) Reinforcement of international engagement
- 10) Monitoring changes in biodiversity

The following **main objective** has to be achieved with the ten mentioned objectives:

„Biodiversity is rich and responsive to change. Biodiversity and ecosystem services are sustained in the long term“.

With the revision of the town planning, especially in the settlement area of

the cities, the allotment areas are under pressure. Many allotment sites are leased as an in between use in order to be later used as building grounds as they are located in the building zone. However, compacted construction should still preserve green zones in the residential areas and here is the balancing act between planners and politicians. The residential quarters are above all affected by this upheaval, as new gardens are then built on the outskirts of the cities. Is this meaningful?

We are clearly aware that the new housing policy, which is necessary, requires a compacter building, especially vertically, in order to keep green spaces to preserve biodiversity and the diversity of species.

The Swiss Family Garden Federation tries to maintain a close contact with the politicians and tries to get involved in the revision procedures of the spatial planning regulations. It is only in this way that we can propose our ideas and not only when everything has already been decided and determined. In two cities, votes were also held concerning the building on allotment sites. Unfortunately, despite all our efforts to influence this campaign, both votes were lost. In other words, this means the construction projects can be realized and more than 300 plots will disappear. In the city of Zurich, around 500 plots will disappear for school buildings and housing constructions over the next five years. We hope that a double aim can be reached, i. e. the preservation of biodiversity and the allotment sites together with the creation of the settlement projects.

# Allotment gardeners' contribution towards saving a good working soil

Peter Paschke

president of the BDG



Describing soil in a simple way is not an easy task, because if you hold soil in your hands, you won't notice its various qualities at a first glance. Many things remain hidden in its dark mass. We aren't aware of many of its elements. Only an in-depth analysis can allow us to discover its numerous qualities. And in spite of everything, soil is the substance of human existence – our life.

Soils are a very complex group, made up of mineral elements and organic substances. They store water and carbon. Soil shelters very precious biotopes and can also be used for agricultural, forestry and additionally horticultural purposes. At the same time it shelters a large number of living organisms: micro-organisms, plants and animals. Currently we have only identified around 1 % of species living within the soil, but scientists estimate that soil harbours more than a

quarter of all living species on earth. Soil and its inhabitants are a component of essential circuits for nature's balance, such as metabolism and the balance of energy and water in all ecosystems. Thanks to its qualities as a filter and buffer zone, soil is extremely important, especially for the protection of the ground water.

The United Nations proclaimed 2015 to be the international year of soils. The 5th of December is world soil day. Germany is one of the richest countries in the world, whilst also having a good attitude towards farming. Due to the western way of living, we use more agricultural land per person than the average worldwide availability per person. This is why we have a huge responsibility to protect the land.

Protecting allotment gardens means protecting the soil. Why? Allotment gardens are above all situated in ur-

ban areas – i. e. inhabited areas. These areas are characterised by dense soil, a considerable degree of cementing and high pollution. Therefore allotment gardens have a special purpose in densely populated areas, because the soil used for horticultural purposes fulfils its primary functions as water storage and a source of nourishment. It also forms a habitat for animals and plants.

And it is only in these precise places that soil can fulfil its purpose. It is obvious that the new trend towards urban gardening must be appreciated. More and more people recognise the value of greenery in cities and the joy of growing one's own produce. But what is the point of tomatoes grown in barrels or trays, marigolds in barrows or potatoes in blue bin bags? These probably do very little to help the soil. In trays and containers, plants grow off substrates, industrial produce,



wrapped up in plastic that can be easily bought in discount supermarkets or gardening centres. Soil in containers doesn't provide any surface water; it offers even less habitat for species living within it. The soil in question represents a closed system, fragile, which will quickly topple without human care. At the end of the season, the trays and containers are emptied and next year new products will be bought. This certainly does very little to contribute to a sustainable outlook.

### The situation is very different in an allotment garden:

Obviously, on allotments the soil is worked in order to be able to grow plants, to achieve harvests and to relax. It is unquestionable that the soil loses a lot of its natural character through intensive and continuous growing and usage. However, despite that, the soil has many positive qualities that a transformed soil, especially in urban areas, cannot offer, and that you can sum up with the phrase „soil fertility“. Allotment gardeners not only guarantee the soil's fertility but also its efficiency as a habitat and reservoir of water and carbon.

This is why allotment gardeners, member of the German allotment garden federation have been tending their gardens in an environmentally friendly way – or at least following good gardening practice – for a long time. Accordingly, this personal commitment is logically laid out in a memorandum of the German allotment garden fed-

eration regarding the environmental value of allotments.

The issue of soil is fundamentally important for allotments and the success of their cultivation. Following the international year of soils in 2015, it is clear that we must approach this problem more deeply. The German allotment garden federation has therefore created a brochure on this topic. It can be used as part of all international allotment garden movement activities and should be incorporated in the work of all our allotment garden federations.

The soil's purpose is of primary importance in inhabited zones and their surroundings as a place for cultivation and balance and for the water cycle. Protecting working soil is an important element in climate change and for the sustainable development of towns and cities.

On allotments we leave room for growth and we are conscious of the value of the soil; we use and protect the soil's climate function. With allotment gardens we limit the sealing of surfaces and we contribute to water management. The soil on allotments is protected against pollution.

We, the allotment gardeners, are you and I.

By protecting allotments, we all contribute to the successful protection of the soil in urban areas.

# Langley Park Community Garden



Langley Park Allotments have been in existence for over forty years and the tenants who have plots there have a wealth of invaluable experience and knowledge. Both of these two skills were put to great use when the decision was made to reclaim a neglected allotment pitch and convert it into a Community Garden, hence giving something back to the residents of the Parish.

Over a period of sixteen months a group of willing volunteers worked alongside Princes Trust volunteers, school children and local businesses to transform an overgrown, ill maintained plot into a tranquil, bright inviting area.

The initial work clearing the site was carried out by volunteers, before Diggerland came in with some heavy plant machinery and stripped the area into a more manageable condition. Without their help, the project may not have been completed.

Then a design was completed with the assistance of children from Langley Park Primary School. This design was then approved by Esh Parish who gave the green light to go ahead. Funding the project was quite a task, but

monies were secured from both the Awards for All Scheme and our local Neighbourhood Budget. Everyone was extremely grateful to these parties for supporting the project.

Work began in late 2014, the main task was to secure the area and this was done with the assistance of Mark Lambert and the Princes Trust from Houghall College. A six foot perimeter fence was installed, and then from that point an eco toilet, greenhouse and shed were put in situ.

The garden had to be accessible to people in wheelchairs and also children in pushchairs, so we ensured that quite a large area of pathways were established. These were again laid and materials sought by willing volunteers. In addition to having low level raised beds for children, we also wanted there to be disabled access to certain beds. So, several planters were done at a specific height which gives people in wheelchairs access to plant up shrubs, etc.

The garden consists of a wildflower section, mini fruit trees, vegetable patches, raised beds in a multitude of vibrant colours, fruit sections and sensory areas. These areas have all been

explored and worked on by the local children who gain great enjoyment and experience from being involved in the Community Garden.

The project has had an excess of 350 hours donated to it by a team of willing volunteers. All of whom we are forever grateful to, as without you we would not have the beautiful area which you have all helped to create. The garden will constantly need caring for, but we have dedicated people who will ensure that the area is maintained and improved upon year after year.

# Environmental certification of Swedish allotment associations

Text: Ulrica Flodin Furås

Translation: Ulf Nilsson



*Ewa Skaug, president of Älvtomtå koloniförening in Örebro shows the solar panel that are used by members to charge cellphones and electric tools in an environmental friendly way. Älvtomtå allotment association reached the bronze level this year.*



*The allotment association Zinkens odlarförening, situated in the very central of Stockholm was environmental certified in 2016*

Fotos: Ulf Nilsson

In Sweden, more than 30 allotment associations have become environmentally certified since work began in the early 2000s. But what does it mean and how does it work? Below is a brief description of the Swedish environmental certification work.

Allotment Associations have every opportunity to be pioneers and role models in environmental work. They have committed and knowledgeable members, and a leisure activity that in itself is positive for the environment. Besides the environmental benefits,

some Swedish municipalities have also chosen to reward allotment associations that have become environmentally certified by lowering their lease costs, based on which diploma level they have achieved.

Through environmental certification, the allotment associations have a tool, an educational guide for the environmental work. This provides goodwill for the association and is also important to show that the allotment areas are justified in cities and towns.

As a consequence of acute shortage of housing in major Swedish cities, several allotment areas are today threatened to make way for new housing.

The environmental certification is structured so that the allotment associations can gradually improve their environment work. They must first achieve a mandatory level that provides the first diploma. This level includes common rules for cultivation according to organic principles (without chemical pesticides and fer-

tilizers) and that each gardener takes responsibility and compost their garden waste. Then you go on to higher levels by collecting points for action in various areas such as farming, biodiversity, water and sanitation, energy and materials, and transport and machinery.

For instance, within the area of cultivation the allotment association can get points for when a majority of their members apply crop rotation or use green manure. In biodiversity, points can be achieved by building dams, putting up bird houses and placing bee hives within the allotment area. The highest level that can be

achieved is gold. To date, two associations have reached all the way but considering the great commitment that exists within the Swedish allotment movement it will soon be many more. Our aim now is to double the number of associations that are certified to 2021.

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