



Hyphen 65

News from the Office

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An introduction to Ruud Grondel

Ruud Grondel

Chairman AVVN



Ruud Grondel

I was told by the International Secretariat that it is standard practice for the new chairman of a national allotment association to introduce him or herself in the Hyphen. It also gives me the perfect opportunity to talk about the latest developments in the Netherlands.

My name is Ruud Grondel, and I have been living together with my lady, since 1976. We have no children. On 10 July last I will turn 66, at present the retirement age in the Netherlands. This date coincides perfectly with the completion of my 12-year period in office as an alderman in Diemen, a suburb of Amsterdam.

Previously I was an alderman in Haarlem, in the city of Amsterdam itself and in the Westerpark district of Amsterdam. After studying Political Sciences, I started as a policy assis-

tant at the University of Amsterdam and as a Student Counsellor, but when the political party GroenLinks was founded in 1990, I was elected as a councillor in the city district and as the English say, "the rest is history". As the Mayor commented when I finally left Diemen, it is remarkable to observe that in all the three municipalities where I have worked, GroenLinks came out as the leading party during the last elections. Not that it has anything to do with me, but it is worth mentioning all the same.

I was elected chairman of the AVVN (the Dutch Allotment Gardeners' Association) at last year's conference, at the proposal of Chris Zijdeveld, who many of you will know from his decades as chairman, or from his role as organiser and chairman of the International Congress of the International Office in Utrecht.

He told me that he chose me as Candidate Chairman, despite the fact that I myself have no allotment garden, because the AVVN had come across me as a discussion partner in all my municipalities, and I had not been a disappointment. In particular in Haarlem, we succeeded in finding a solution to a difficult problem. As always, the municipality was impoverished and had no money for overdue maintenance of the pathways in the allotment gardens. I was able to convince my fellow aldermen and the municipal council to find the necessary funding, because I had challenged the governors of the allotment garden to complete the work for half the budget. I had assumed (correctly as it turned out) that they would be able to do the job far more cheaply than the munic-

ipal authorities. The deal is still working, to the satisfaction of all parties.

I said yes both to Chris and to the AVVN because allotment gardens and allotment gardening are close to my heart.

In particular in urban areas, the green ecological zones that allotment gardens represent are becoming increasingly important. As one wise alderman in Utrecht recently said, for the municipal authorities, allotment gardens are ten times cheaper than the green areas we maintain ourselves, while delivering 10 times the natural value.

It is also becoming increasingly important for families to spend their free time in a green environment and, as was the case in the past, that they grow their own produce.

I am also hugely attracted by the fact that allotment gardens are self-governing communities, in which people from very different backgrounds are required to satisfy a whole variety of practical issues, in consultation. I am convinced, in fact, that even sports clubs in the Netherlands are less diverse in terms of level of education, income and ethnicity, than allotment associations. The role of the AVVN is to support the governing boards of the allotment gardens in their work. I personally recognise the value of making a contribution, myself.

Recent developments in the Netherlands

The above description is a rough outline of the structure of allotment gardens in the Netherlands. One very current issue is the huge pressure on

space, in our cities. There is massive demand for housing construction and the greedy eyes of project developers are attracted by any green space, including allotment gardens. At the same time, we are seeing a growing interest in urban agriculture, small, unorganised vegetable gardens, and healthy food.

We in the governing board of the AVVN have observed a certain degree of stagnation in traditional allotment gardens, which deliver a somewhat dusty and outdated image, for the general public and the political powers. At the same time, member numbers have also stagnated. Partly due to a lack of understanding among gardeners about the role of the AVVN on their behalf, we have not been successful in attracting new members. We are also seeing members leave

the organisation, partly in connection with the rising costs.

All in all, the time is right for a re-evaluation. We have initiated discussions with related natural conservation organisations about improved cooperation. We are now refocusing on a role in which we provide support for unorganised vegetable gardeners.

This year, we also organised a major discussion with our members about our ambitions and how to introduce greater differentiation in the range of services we offer. That differentiation could result in a different charging structure, which could make membership more attractive for existing members and potential new members. The governing board will be calling for a decision on the new course, at the June congress.

The regional discussion sessions, which were recently completed, reveal that the most important issue for many members is for us to join forces in focusing attention on the importance of allotment gardening for the general public and for the political powers.

This is an interest which we share across Europe (and Japan). For me as a new participant in our international meetings, it was hugely important to discuss the similar developments in our member countries. For us at the AVVN, this seems to offer a perfect opportunity to use the strength of our European network in jointly broadcasting the importance of allotment gardening.

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

7th part

Malou Weirich

secretary general of the International Office

European Union

The cooperation with the European Union revealed to be more difficult. This is due to several reasons:

- The economical interests, that have to be safeguarded by the European Union, are predominant. However, the allotment gardeners do not pursue economic aims.
- The Office could not be recognised as a nature protection organisation, because the authorities considered that the nature protection function of the allotment movement was not one of its predominant functions.
- Furthermore, the Office only unifies ten federations among the twenty-eight member States of the European Union. Consequently our importance is relatively low.
- Finally lobbying on European level needs enormous material and financial means which the Office does not have. Therefore, we have not had many occasions to gain influence on texts.
- Additionally, since the treaty of Maastricht (1992) and the introduction of the subsidiarity principle, the European Union is no more competent for the allotment movement. The matters concerning the urban environment were in fact returned to the national competences. The European Union

can only elaborate framework programs and support the countries.

It is, however, interesting to realise that both the European Parliament and the European Commission officially recognised the value of the allotments for the citizens.

On May 8th, 1990 the Commission of the European Community made the following statement in response to a written question of Viviane Reding, Luxembourgish member of the European Parliament:

“The EC Commission recognizes the importance of the leisure garden organisations’ activities both on the level of leisure time occupation and on the level of associative life. The Commission also wishes to underline the historic importance of these gardens for the improvement of the living conditions of the workers’ families that could have in this way a healthy and more abundant food. It is as well doubtless that these gardens have in many cases contributed to the improvement of the landscape. The Commission wishes to support on principle the development of the activities of the leisure garden organisations, hoping that they will contribute more and more to the improvement of the general environment...”



Günther Gartz (D), Malou Weirich (L), Henri Mahu (B), Viviane Reding, Member of the European Parliament, Wilhelm, Wohatschek (A)



Malou Weirich (L), René Steichen, Member of the European Commission, Viviane Reding, Member of the European Parliament, Ursula Schleicher, Member of the European Parliament, Metty Loos (L), Wilhelm Wohatschek (A) Günther Gartz (D)

Before 1992, the European Union put its ideas in this area not only into practice on a legislative level, but also financially supported projects, including projects of the Office, which contributed to the improvement of the urban and natural environment.

So in the early 90s, the Office could get financial support for different allotment garden projects. These were projects which highlighted above all the public function of the allotments. The European Commission motivated its financial support to the Office as follows:

- *“The intention to contribute in this way to the improvement of the quality of urban life, because the leisure gardens are most of the time embraced in the urban areas or in their immediate outskirts.*
- *The aim to guide the behaviour of the “gardeners” in their application of ecological measures;*
- *The support of the social purpose of the allotment movement, because the gardens give food to the urban population inclusive in the towns situated in regions characterised by economic recession”.*

So, the European Communities financially supported for a first time the creation of an allotment site in Nivelles (Belgium). The particularity of this site, which was aimed to be a model site for Belgium, was its multi-functional character, its “paradox” juxtaposition of private vegetable plots and a public green space.

The Commission of the EC additionally supported with this subsidy our international activity consisting in the organisation of our yearly celebrations of the European Day of the Garden. It supported this activity by financing the posters for the first European Day of the Garden. The motivation of this support consisted in the fact *“that these celebrations have an informative character and aim at sensitising people for the numerous functions of*

the garden as a natural living space, as stimulating factor for contacts between people, as element of a nice and natural urban environment, as possibility for a nearby recreation for young and old”.

Furthermore the EC helped, with a second financial support, with the realisation both of a Belgium allotment garden project consisting in the creation of an education centre for amateur gardening in Liège and of a French project on the allotment site of Orangis. The main aim of this last project was to sensitise the allotment gardeners for a nature friendly gardening and consequently the protection of our common environment.

At the same time our international congress in The Hague was also financially supported. The main aim of this congress consisted in motivating the allotment gardeners for a nature friendly gardening.

This financial support we received from the European Community in 1991 and 1992 had an important setback after the application – as mentioned before – of the subsidiarity principle included in the Maastricht treaty. According to this subsidiarity principle the European Union was now only competent to decide measures if the aims could not be achieved in an optimal way by the member states or the regions.

After the entry into force of this treaty the Commission was no more competent for matters concerning the urban environment. The support for educative measures, however, remained within the remit of the European Union.

Therefore, the Office asked for a further financial support for a project concerning soil analyses with consequent fertilisation advice as well as for the financing of our project to issue a brochure on a nature friendly gardening. Unfortunately, even after

discussions with Mr. Palleokrassas, member competent for the environment protection within the European Commission, these projects could not be supported by the European authorities.

After contacts with Mr. René Steichen, the Luxembourgish member of the Commission, competent for agriculture, the Office, however, could finally get a third financial support for the 29th international congress in Vienna and the brochure concerning a nature friendly gardening.

An additional changing in the procedure, which made the cooperation with the European Union even more difficult for the Office, was that a federation could no more present to the Commission projects that it had freely worked out. The submitted projects had to fit in the strict framework set by the European Union which additionally has very narrow deadlines. The Office tried several times together with its affiliated federations to get an additional financial support from the European Union, but all the submitted projects received a negative answer.

Despite this the Office regularly continues to take up contacts with members of the European Parliament in order to succeed that the allotment gardeners and the allotments will be considered on European level. So the allotments could be integrated in 1999 into the European town planning concept.

After the international congress in Cracow in 2008, the Office tried again to take up contacts with the European Commission and the European Parliament by sending the adopted congress resolution to the competent divisions. Following this initiative Claude Turmes, Luxembourgish Member of the European Parliament, sent a written question to the European Commission.

The answer was negative and can be read as follows:

“The Commission considers that the gardens, both allotment gardens and private gardens, can constitute a determinant element for the maintenance of a high quality of life in addition to their unquestionable contribution to the strengthening of the social cohesion and the safeguarding of biodiversity, especially in urban regions. The Commission therefore is of the opinion that it is important to assure their protection and if possible to stimulate their development.

However, this is an area that is first of all in the remit of the member States, due to the principle of subsidiarity ...”

The Lisbon treaty adopted in 2009 includes a right of initiative for the European citizens and stipulates under specific conditions an obligation for the Commission to elaborate a law proposal after such an initiative. The allotment gardeners, however, do not comply with the criteria requested to use the right of initiative.

After the study session in Luxembourg in 2015 it was once more tried to take up contacts with the European Commission. The aim of these contacts was not primarily to get a financial support, but to achieve that both the allotment gardens and the contribution of the allotments for our society could be considered on European

level. Accordingly, letters were sent to Jean-Claude Juncker, president of the European Commission and to Martin Schulz, president of the European Parliament. The national members in the European Parliament should also have been contacted by the national federations so that the latter could support the Office's efforts.

Martin Schulz reacted very late to this letter and underlined the value of the allotment gardens without, however, promising binding support.

Following the letter to President Jean-Claude Juncker, a meeting with members of Commissioner Vella's cabinet, competent for environment protection matters was fixed. This meeting took place on December 15th, 2015.

These representatives informed the Office represented by vice-president H. Bonnavaud and secretary general M. Weirich that the division for environment protection of the Commission was elaborating a general policy on green infrastructures. Are concerned all grounds which are no Natura 2000 areas. They underlined, however, that the Commission has no legislative power, but on the contrary needs the support of the member states. The Commission can only support initiatives taken by the member states in this area.

Meanwhile these guidelines have been elaborated and the national allotment federations have now to undertake, if necessary with the help of the Office, the necessary lobbying initiatives in their country.

Before this meeting could take place, the Office had to register with the Transparency Registry. So, the Office receives information on all citizens' consultations launched by the Commission in the areas that are of interest for the Office. Meanwhile, there have been many citizens' consultations in the area of environment protection, in the areas of youth, education, climate, regional policy and culture, but most of these questionings dealt with subjects that did not directly concern the allotment gardeners. Only one position concerning the decline of pollinators was sent to the Commission.

At the occasion of the 90th jubilee of the International Office, celebrated in Vienna in 2016, Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, sent a message.

Mrs Viviane Reding, member of the European Parliament and former Vice-President of the European Commission, who has since 1988 supported the Office as much as possible, took personally part in these celebrations.

To be continued.

De Roshaag in Peer (B) received the diploma for ecological gardening

De Roshaag is a young and small project, but an example for all ecological parks in Flanders. In 2017 the project was rewarded the Ecological garden label with the highest possible score.



It is a cosy project with 17 gardens and one show / demo-garden. There are 2 shared garden sheds, one containing a small gathering room, a composting toilet and storage room for the gardeners. The second shed is used as storage room for the local board.

Together with the city council they are working on the area surrounding the gardens to make the park more attractive, nature friendly and welcoming for the neighbourhood.

Composting

There is a composting space where the entire city can learn how to compost. There are regular demonstrations and all kinds of different composting methods are tested: in a container, an open composting place, vermin composting (worms), trench composting and bokashi (Japanese). There are info panels that help visitors when no-one is around.

Nesting

For insects, birds and hedgehogs there is much place to crawl, feed and sleep in and around this park. There are dead hedges made of pruning materials, ideal for insects and hedgehogs. There is a hedgehog house, inhabited! Multiple insect-hotels for wild bees and others, a herb garden

and several wild flowerbeds to feed and hibernate in. In and surrounding the park, there are many big trees that give shade or the possibility for wild animals to pass. For example wild bats use high trees as reference points and corridors when flying out.

There are areas next to the gardens which contain wild vegetation. In these areas special attention went to the different layers: the canopy, shrubs and the undergrowth. They tried to mimic a real forest. They gained the following advantages by doing this: more light in the gardens and a higher biodiversity in plants and animals in these zones.

They are working with a beekeeper to produce local honey on the spot.

Pesticides

No pesticides are used in the park. The internal regulation of the park prohibits all chemical pesticides in the park. Workshops and demonstrations are given to advise alternatives. In the show garden they experiment with new techniques and different plant species, the successful are introduced in the normal gardens later on. Also good practices are shown for all the people who are interested.

Constructions

All gardeners share a common shed with a composting toilet. This reduces the space needed for individual sheds. On top there is a green roof and a small solar panel for the light



and toilet. All remaining water is used to water the gardens in dry periods. A second shed is used to store bigger materials and as a lounge to hang around and exchange ideas. Both sheds are built with FSC-labelled wood.

There are a few manual water pumps spread throughout the project as well.

In the gardens the gardeners use recycled materials to build greenhouses, composting bins, etc.

Formation

Workshops and presentations are given for the gardeners, neighbourhood, schools and all other people that are interested. They try to give as many practical workshops as possible in the show garden.

Percentage of participating gardeners

100 % of the gardeners participate in the ecological way of gardening. It is a small but tight group of gardeners.



Swinbrook Road Allotments, Carterton, West Oxfordshire (GB) received the diploma for innovative projects



On request of the National Allotment Society of Great Britain Swinbrook Road Allotments, Carterton, West Oxfordshire, received the Office International's diploma for "Innovative Projects".

The aim of their projects is to improve the soil and working conditions for all the allotment plot holders on Swinbrook Road Allotments and to increase the popularity of the allotments in the local community.

The Allotment site has 45 full plots on a 1.22 hectare site to the North



of Carterton on the edge of the Cotswolds. Many plots are subdivided to accommodate the many families on the waiting list. Waiting time is now 4 years. The site has had open land on three sides of the site but is now being surrounded by new housing. They have improved the site facilities using several innovative techniques, such as reusing materials which would have otherwise gone to landfill or burnt.

The committee have demonstrated great resourcefulness in acquiring the materials for reuse or recycling and have been acquired from many sources, reducing landfill tonnage, minimising pollution and reducing road journeys.

They have negotiated with the Royal Air Force base at Brize Norton to receive all collected leaves and garden waste which would normally go to landfill 25 kilometres away saving transport pollution and landfill. They have approached and received a licence from the Environment Agency to accept and compost this horticultural waste.



Southern Electric were replacing and burning the old wooden overhead supply poles. Following the committee's request they were brought to the site for future use, one use being support for fencing around this huge compost heap in addition to some dismantled second hand wire fencing from a fencing contractor.

Old building bricks and hard-core was acquired from a local demolition site and used for the drainage and leveling of a previously unusable wet area.

They now also receive wood chip-pings from a local landscape gardener who does arboriculture work which is being used extensively for walk ways and footpaths.

Plot holders have acquired and planted 150 trees around the perimeter of the site to screen the new housing built adjacent to the site.

Unwanted fencing is also being acquired which would otherwise have been burnt. This material has been used on site to create new sheds,



raised beds and many other timber structures.

It is now illegal to burn unwanted agricultural plastics. A local farmer brings plastic string for reuse on the allotments.

More recently the committee again approached the Royal Air Force at Brize Norton and have been donated unwanted metal gabion sections from the Gulf Conflict. They are now reusing them for fencing, compost bins, chicken enclosures and plant supports.

They have also utilised a number of unwanted items such as, tarmac road scalplings to make a car park, metal water tanks for raised beds, ICB's to collect rain water, pallets stripped down to make fences, unwanted old paving slabs from a local builder and the list goes on.

It is felt that the plot holders on this site have used great initiative in acquiring the above materials their imaginative and "innovative activities" have greatly improved the facilities of the site not only to the benefit of their members but also their local community. In the process of doing the above they have also minimised air pollution, landfill requirements and smoke pollution from burning treated timber and reduced the need for many road miles resulting in benefits to the wider community.



Integration of refugees

Manfred Weiß



With much enthusiasm this group is the driving force of this project. Without project manager Martina Krüger (6th from the left) nothing works.



As students „Pretty Cashanga“ started 50 years ago to make music in Braunschweig. Similarly to all other musicians they abstained from their fee.

On September 28th 2007 the first intercultural allotment garden was inaugurated in the north of Braunschweig in the allotment association Heide-land e. V. Refugees refurbished the existing allotment shed and newly laid out the garden under the direction of staff members of the migration office. The manager of the project is the Office for migration issues of the city of Braunschweig. The garden started as part of the project “Healthy cities – refugees in Braunschweig (FlIBS) and the following project “Healthy living in Braunschweig”(GliBS) funded by the European refugee fund of the European Union.

The garden is home to people, who fled their homes under dramatic circumstances. They are looking for a place where they are welcome and where they can find a person listening to them, able to offer them solutions to some of their problems. For these people the garden is a place providing security and protection, a

place where they can go without any fear.

Depending on their personal mood the project participants decide whether they want to work in the garden, talk to each other or just find peace. Everything that is harvested in the garden is processed on site, prepared and eaten during common meals.

The project is headed by the graduated teacher Martina Krüger, specialist in questions concerning the promotion of the refugees’ health and their integration. She is the professional who deals with expertise and great personal commitment with the people. Martina Krüger also runs psycho-social advice sessions in the garden. If necessary, the refugees are transferred to regular health or social services. It is worth mentioning that other paid staff members, who themselves have a migration background, are often available to refugees as first contacts or trying to bridge a gap.

In addition to gardening common activities are regularly organised and carried out in the garden, for example:

- Nutritional, self-assertion and relaxation courses,
- Health projects,
- Sport offers,
- Art projects (modelling of sculptures, mosaics),
- Art exhibitions,
- Information days on current social questions,
- African / Haitians evenings,
- Spring- and summer festival.

The project on the allotment site “Heide-land” is now known beyond the borders of Braunschweig. In September 2011 the “intercultural allotment site” received, on proposal of the federal federation of German allotment gardens, the diploma for social activities during the international congress of the International Office of Allotment Gardens in Copenhagen. Jimmy Nestor, member of the music group



Jimmy Nestor takes part since 1997. During the Day of the refugee he made a remarkable speech.



Creating art together in the intercultural garden.



Sculpture in the herb spiral.

“Los Pepinos International”, refugee from Haiti and since 1997 member of the intercultural garden gave the following short speech in 2010 at the occasion of the day of the refugees: “A refugee is somebody struggling with his past so as to accept reality in order to be able to find a new home. Everywhere, in the context of the “intercultural week”, “the day of the refugee” is celebrated. The same also happens in Braunschweig. You may be wondering why we are celebrating the “day of the refugee” in a garden. The intercultural garden is not just a garden, it is much more: This garden

is a home in which we are – despite our different origins, religions and resident’s status – a strong family! It is a place where we are no longer characterised as refugees, but as citizens, where we can speak German without fear, where a person is not sitting alone at a table when eating, but together with the whole family, where one simply comes out of one’s past, out of the stress, the bureaucracy and everything that makes life difficult. When we speak about refugees in Braunschweig I think that the intercultural garden is one of the best places to deal with ones past. In one word I can say it is an anti-posttraumatic garden- hospital. Let us as gardeners celebrate the day of the refugee!”

You cannot better describe this place in the allotment garden association “Heideland”.

The “Der Förderverein” (supporting association)

In the social area much can be done by volunteers. However, the concept and the successful work in the intercultural garden are based on professional support. Support is provided by the Braunschweig national federation of allotment gardeners and “Roots” (Supporting association Intercultural garden). The supporting association was founded in May 2013 to financially and ideologically support the activities in the urban cultural garden established in the allotment association “Heideland”. The fees of the free-lance, which have different contracts, are paid by the municipal office for migration. Over the past few years it has become apparent, that the number of paid working hours is insufficient to maintain or to expand the already high level of offers. In order to support the ongoing operation, respectively to be able to make further new offers, additional financial resources are required. The association considers that obtaining this necessary funding is one of its urgent tasks. The available funds will be used to intensify the care of the refugees in the intercultural garden.

A sustainable project

On September 2nd 2017 the tenth anniversary of the garden was celebrated. It is really something very special, when more than 100 people from many different nations gather on an allotment to celebrate. Densely crowded, the visitors sat and stood and watched the performances. In addition, there was food from the international kitchen and various drinks. The fact that the intercultural garden has now been in existence for 10 years is due to the people, who have been active here right from the start. With the relatively small financial resources made available by the city they succeeded in being successful, both by acting professionally and by, additionally, putting in much volunteer commitment. Since the beginning, it must be fought almost every year for further financial support and thus for the continuation of the project. The supporting association “Roots” was able to generate external funding and donations. From this income additional activities are organised, which otherwise would not have been possible.



That was the start in 2007. The existing shed had to be renovated.



Shed and garden after their renovation.

In her speech social affairs' officer Dr. Andrea Hanke underlined the strong physical and psychological burden with which the refugees have to deal: "While working in the garden where everyone can participate a social cohesion and a feeling of being part of this project is created".

She added: "not only plants grow, but also self-initiatives, self-confidence, togetherness and understanding".

I hope that many more summer parties will be celebrated in the intercultural garden.

The fruit orchard of the Central Federation of allotment holders

Its beginning, development and maintenance

Rudolf Unger and Dipl. Ing. Peter Modl



The education of gardening advisors has always been of concern for the Central Federation of allotment holders. In 2011 the authors of this article started to plan a fruit orchard, following the initiative of president Ing. Wohatschek. The aim was to improve their knowledge and at the same time learn about new methods of fruit growing. Next to stone fruit, pome, soft fruit and wild fruit, the orchard should also include some types of vine and ornamental shrubs. Especially old types of fruit should come back into allotments again, because they can be rarely found nowadays.

This facility should be created in the 21st district of Vienna, on a 3.500 sqm area, that has been unused for a long time.

In the summer of 2011 the first order of fruit trees was made. In doing so,

with regard to the education of gardening advisers, different shapes of trees and tree tops, like half and upper stem trees with pyramidal tree tops, wide and narrow spindles, shrubs for the soft fruit and bushes for the wild fruit were considered, so that they can do the traditional pruning, as well as green and summer cutting work.

The segmentation into rows and the distance between the fruit trees was planned and done before the machine processing of the heavily compacted soil.

To be able to manually process the acreage, shovels, staples and rakes were purchased. A soil auger should make the placement of the tree stakes easier. For the work in fruit growing, shears, saws, two ladders and some small devices were purchased, which were temporarily stored in a tin hut.

After the delivery of 39 soft fruit shrubs, as well as 63 wild fruit and ornamental bushes and 71 stone fruit and pome trees, they began planting on October 24th, whereby half and upper stem trees were the most important with the apricot and apple trees. Next to old and well-known varieties, it was also planned to test out new ones, that should prove themselves to be appropriate for allotment gardens.

As for the currants, well-established varieties like Jonkher van Tets, Red Lake, Rondon, Garden Currant, Bianca and additionally to the black currant, the solid variety Titania were planted.

The varieties Remarka and Invicta, that are tolerant, respectively resistant against the American Gooseberry mildew, were preferred to the old gooseberry varieties. Blackberries,

jostaberries and kiwi fruits complemented the range of berries.

In case of the wild fruit, cornelian cherry, choke berry (Aronia), blackthorn, goji berry, honey berries and dog roses were planted.

The ornamental shrubs are predominantly composed of different coloured hibiscus and weigela shrubs, syringa shrubs, summer lilac varieties, climbing hydrangeas and honeysuckle.

As for the apricots, Hungarian Best, Pineapple apricot and Bergeron were planted. The half and upper stem apple trees, consisted of well-known and robust varieties that range from sour up to sweet-sour tasting. They are less prone to illness in comparison to the resistant varieties and comprise summer, autumn and winter varieties. Next to the well-known varieties, "Berner" rose apple, "Lavanttaler" banana apple and the Styrian "Maschankzer", the "Haux apple", Wiltshire, Wirouge, Styrian "sheep's nose", Remo and Rebella were planted, because they have multiple resistances, but have not yet caught the interest of allotment gardeners.

In contrast to the apricot and apple trees, pear trees in the shape of wide spindles with pyramidal tree tops were planted. Here again, well-known and less known types are to be found. After the early variety "Colourful July pear" and named in order of their harvesting time, "Clapp's darling", white and red Williams Christ pear, Gellert's butter pear, Bosc's bottle pear, delicious one's from Charneu, Conference, Packham's Triumph and Uta were planted. Less known varieties were also planted: Josephine from Mecheln, Duchess Elsa, Soledano and the Asian varieties Man Sam Gil and Hyamata.

The apple varieties Piros, Stark Earliest, James Grieve, Reglindis, crown prince Rudolph, Red Berlepsch, Teser and Topaz were planted in large spin-

dle form too. Here again we see a mixture of old and resistant varieties. 23 apple trees from the Institute for pomiculture of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna have been refined on the rootstock M 9 and provided for free for planting out.

These three-year-old apple trees, that are crossbreeds between the varieties of Idared, Gloster, Granny Smith and the less prone to illness kind "winter banana", were planted in a spindle shape.

With active help from two gardening advisors, the planting holes had to be dug and over 80 poles struck into the ground, to support the fruit trees. After the planting and sluicing of the trees, the forming and the necessary pruning, the first phase of planting out was completed.

Already in March 2012 the planning and measurement for the water pipeline construction took place. To use the water resources as efficiently as possible, they decided to go for drip watering, whose instalment in the planted tree rows was started in April. The assembly of the pipes took place on a wire stretched out 40 to 50 cm above the ground, so that the processing of the soil would be easier.

Fruit tree rootstocks were planted to give the gardening advisors an understanding of the refining of fruit trees. Cherries and sour cherries should be refined on Gisel A 5, peaches and nectarines on the base of Montclar and the plum base GF 655-2, that is to be used for plums and apricots. The refining of apples should take place on the weakly growing base of M 9.

The focus of the work in the following weeks was weed killing between tree rows and shrubs. In June, they began to lay the lawn. At the same time, the planning for the cultivation of stone fruit took place, so that they could start planting in autumn.



In August, under the expert guidance of our colleague Unger, the gardening advisors, who helped with the maintenance of the facility, did the first refinements.

On October 17th 2012 there was a delivery of 34 stone fruit trees, which subsequently had been planted, sluiced, tied to poles and formed up. As with the pome fruit, here again old and new varieties were planted. From the old plums, prunes, green-gages and yellow plums, the Italian plum The Czar, the queen Victoria prune, the great green Reneklode, the Earl Althann's Reneklode and the mirabelle from Nancy have to be named; from the newer ones Katinka, Tipala, with yellow fruit, Hanita, Cacak's Beautiful, Jojo and Elena, that are tolerant and even immune against the Scharka virus.

As for the cherries there are Kassin's early, Bigarreau Moreau, Bigarreau Burlat, Van, Kordia, the big black heart-cherry, Regina, the "Köröszer" sour cherry and the morello cherry that should be mentioned. For the peaches there are the varieties of Sieger, Redhaven, two vineyard selections, as well as one flat peach and one flat nectarine. For the apricots there are the early varieties Orange Red and Kuresia, which are immune against Scharka.

In October the fig trees were, as they were also in the following years, protected with Styrodur plates from the low temperatures in winter.

The planting of eleven more stone fruit trees still happened in November 2012. The focus was on newer cherry and sour cherry varieties: the cherry Earlise, Tamara and Canada Giant, as well as the sour cherry Saskia, Safir, Hungarian Grape-like and the "Morell's fire"; for the apricots the variety "Goldrich" was added. Like the winter before, they did also regular checks this winter every two to three week.

In December the foundation plate for the wooden house, where the tools should be stored in the future, could be concreted. In February 2013 a riding mower was purchased. In March 2013, 25 planting holes had to be – very elaborately – drilled through asphalt and concrete for the planting of vines. Alongside to the fungus-tolerant vine varieties, two Kaki and peach trees were planted.

The main focus of the work during the following weeks and months was again the processing of the soil between fruit trees and shrubs and the mowing of the lawn. Employees of the magistrate department 42 and a group of gardening advisors visited the fruit orchard.

After finishing the wooden hut, the electrical installations were made by Ing. Wohatschek. With the planting of some fruit trees, the fruit-growing year came to an end. Check-ups during the winter months were made in the same way as the last years.

In January and February 2014 scions, that had been ordered by allotment gardeners for refinements or

were used for refinement courses in allotment gardens, were cut for the first time. In spring and summer there were refining courses, tree-cutting courses and guided tours through the fruit orchard, that have been on the programme every year since then.

In May film footage of the fruit orchard was taken that was shown at the international congress in Utrecht.

Already during the summer there were preparations for more planting. With the local "Wachauer" apricot selections the product range was extended in autumn. The apple varieties White dessert apple, Gold Parmaene, Royal Gala, Gerlinde, Merkur, Regine, Sirius and the plums Haroma, Valjevka, Haganta and Bellamira as well as the sour cherry Achat were added. They began with the planting of the tree strips, which up to now had been kept clear through weeding.

In December they planted another 6 elderberry varieties, which were provided by Ing. Novak. In January and February 2015, the first work activities were the cutting of the buds and the forming of the fruit trees, to stop the strong, vegetative growth. The vegetation of the tree strips was continued and completed.

In late autumn 2015 for the time being, last bigger planting was made. It included the new apricot varieties Sweetred, Pinkcot, Silvercot, Big Red, Bergeval and Tardicot and the first fruit trees, created in the course of the refinement exercises, were planted in the form of two-branch-hedges.

In spring 2016 two insect hotels were set up at the fruit orchard, that colleague Unger had built himself over the winter months. The soil between

soft fruit, wild fruit and ornamental shrubs, that had been open until then, was covered with the cut grass, to protect the soil from rapid dehydration and at the same time to serve as nitrogen source.

The following work, like caring for the fruit trees, cutting the ornamental shrubs and lawn, keeping the fences clear, and especially the further training of gardening advisors, who helped with taking care of the fruit orchard is still ongoing. Trainings and guided tours have already been held in 2018 and should take place in the future as well.

Crop protection has been limited to mainly mechanical measures, such as cutting back of shoot tips that were infected with mildew or pests. Also, glued colour boards served as pest control. But, it was also necessary to use chemicals. Copper and sulphur preparations (against leaf curl occurrence and rust mite) were used. Synthetic and biological preparations were used against some animal pests, like plum and apple sawfly, cherry fruit flies, apple and plum codling moth, to keep the fruit clear from pests.

At the moment gardening advisors of the Central Federation of allotment holders have 108 pome and 88 stone fruit trees, as well as 40 soft fruit shrubs, 20 wild fruit shrubs and 40 ornamental shrubs at their disposal for their refinement and cutting exercises done under technical guidance.

Finally, we want to thank those helpers and gardening advisors, who sacrificed their free time on a weekly basis to keep the fruit orchard in a neat condition.

Green manure for more biodiversity in your garden

Bernard Messerli



Improving the soil structure, avoiding weeds, activating biodiversity, limiting erosion and loss of nutrients as well as enriching the soil with nitrogen ... But green manure can do more than just improve soil fertility. Which plants for green manure are suitable? Which are planted on the short term for the wellbeing of the garden, which plants should be chosen and how and when should they be cultivated?

Thirty years ago, I received a call from a young agricultural technician from Changins, Agricultural research station (VD) in Switzerland. He complained that his apple trees remained in their young phase, despite increased fertilisation for two years, sufficient irrigation and minimum size. They would in fact grow fast, but despite this fact they would produce almost nothing. The reason thereof became evident while walking among the tree rows. While looking at the vigorous foliage you could recognize the greedy verticals preventing the flowering and the fructification. So the reason of the problem was not as

assumed ill trees, too much water, too much nitrate or a too important pruning.

Dry soil

Looking now down from the vertical branches to the dry ground, one notices this spontaneous grass cover. Instead of the usual grass you find here the growth of an accumulation of leguminous plants such as clover, alfalfa, sweet clover and other vetches.

It has been known since the 18th century that the family of leguminous plants, butterfly plants, currently *fabaceae* naturally produce nitrogen.

If you pull out with little effort a tuft of clover and clean its roots, tiny modules will appear which are barely larger than a pinhead. Under a good microscope (1000 times magnification) one discovers the bacterial colonies that inhabit these micro places. These beneficial microbes spend their time filtering nitrogen compounds (Gas) from the air in order to convert them into nitrates (salts). They thus be-

come a factor of reproduction and growth. Peas, field beans and beans are of great importance as green manure in a kitchen garden.

The temporary nitrification effect is of great effectiveness. The permanent use in wine yards and orchards, however, can be counterproductive and therefore it cannot be recommended.

Choice and criteria

In order to improve the cultivation suitability of the soil, we have to consider the definition of green manure from an agro botanic point of view. Clover, pees and vetches filter nitrogen compounds from the air. Cumin (mustard, bush and radish) *phacelia*, oat and niger store valuable nitrates. Radish, field beans, sunflowers, *phacelia* and niger improve the deep soil structure, loosen it up and this has as consequence that the soil is easy to work with. Field pees, radish, mustard and *phacelia* suffocate weeds. Beans, sunflowers, mustard, niger and oat have a "guardian effect" and help other crops to develop better.

Lupines, buckwheat clover, sweet clover, marigold, daisies and blueberries are used to promote biodiversity especially of bees and other beneficial insects. They are also used to reduce robbers and parasitoid pests.

Summer- and winter periods

In order to protect the plants against heat and lack of water during the summer months, shade giving plants such as pees, ramtilla and mustard are adequate for this task.



Rye, vetches, winter peas and Chinese cabbage protect the soil during the winter months. *Phacelia* and ramtilla are preferred by farmers on soils that suffer from winter frost. Another advantage of this method is that the soils can be more easily dug up in the spring.

In order to protect the fruit of the fruit trees from the summer drought, there is nothing better than a superficial grass planting such as pomace and mouse barley.

Drop of bitterness in the practical application

Spring opens up many opportunities for cultivation. The choice is important.

As you cannot cultivate all garden beds at the same time, use the free capacity to grow green manure. A mixture of vetches and mustard-buckwheat constitutes a nitrogen source, simplifies tillage, protects against erosion and loss of nutrients. The invasion of weeds is also reduced. The green manure should be broken up between two and three weeks before you start sowing and if possible should be superficially incorporated. Spread the seeds in the trenches you made. If you wish to grow radishes, rocket and water cress, you should use a small proportion of cruciferous plants (mustard, etc) to avoid the risk of transmission of diseases related to this family. The same is true for clover and peas. Avoid too much leguminous plants in places you will plant peas, beans and field beans. You can prevent a snail plague by instead planting rye, sunflowers and Chinese cabbage, mustard, buckwheat peas and beans.

Weeds can be prevented by a mulch-layer placed as a ground cover around the salad bed. It is also possible to plant green manure lines between planks or around the garden files.



Permacultures that are permanently covered should be cultivated with green manure and plants of the same species.

If you are a little bit interested in botany and agronomy and this article has discouraged you a bit, so do not just give on the biodiversity philosophy. Visit a garden centre and just ask for a mix of green manure. At the beginning and at the end of the season there is a large supply for butterflies and ladybirds to keep the soil alive throughout the winter.

Just carefully read the packages and/or let somebody advise you.

Protecting your health whilst using bio-control products

Olivier Guérin



Whether they are bio or conventional, all gardeners battle against bio-aggressors. Contrary to popular opinion, biological products are not entirely benign. As with any risk, you must balance prevention according to the danger and the level of exposure. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is the ultimate preventative measure.

How are you exposed?

The products can enter your body in a number of ways, of which the main ways are through the skin, mucus, and digestive system. Certain factors such as heat, wounds, sweat and the presence of solvents or oily compounds increase the risk by making it easier for the product to enter the body.

What are the health risks?

• Acute intoxication

This has **rapid effects** that can arise during the work or hours after exposure. The symptoms are well known: burn marks, skin and mucus irritations, nausea and vomiting. Amongst

the most common reasons for developing acute symptoms are refilling the spray, cleaning it and maintaining it. The highest exposure incidents are often linked to broken or leaking hose pipes, connection faults and unfastening the pipe.

• Chronic intoxication

The **long term effects** are due to repeated contamination, over many years, even from small doses of the products.

How to choose Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

To help you make a good choice, here are some steps to follow:

1. Identify the danger

Before using a product, read the label carefully. Any mention of dangers, safety advice, and manufacturer's recommendations are listed. New hazard warning diagrams were introduced on the 1st of June 2015 (in France), which you will find on the packaging.

2. Adapt protective clothing to the situation

As already stated, dangerous activities are clearly identified: preparing the products, malfunctioning apparatus and application.

- **Preparing the product:** long gloves, glasses (to avoid spray), apron covering your body, boots (possible spillage of the mixture), mask (you are dealing with a concentrated product).
- **Malfunction of the spray:** break of the hose pipe, blockage of the pipe. Have disposable gloves available and above all avoid blowing into the pipe to unblock it.
- **Application:** overalls are indispensable, as there are a number of opportunities for splashes: wind, movement, especially if you are using a spray on trees (protect your face). Gloves and boots are also advisable.
 - **Gloves:** household gloves do not protect you, only nitrile or neoprene gloves are recommended.
 - **Overalls:** chemical protection clothing category III, type 4 (airtight for mist and sprayed liquid)
 - **Boots:** rubber-nitrile; sandals and canvas shoes not allowed.
 - **Apron:** canvas or leather is totally useless; only a type PB3 (nitrile) is recommended for preparing the product to be used.
 - **Glasses:** watertight, anti-fogging, with lenses made of polymerized resin or acetate.
 - **Mask:** free breathing equipment with cartouche (type A2P3: A – anti-gas and organic vapour filter; P – anti-aerosol particle filter).

After buying your equipment, make sure they are approved for use with phytosanitary products.

3. Choose the best time of day for the application.

The benefit / risk calculation consists of finding good conditions for targeting bio-aggressors and for comfortable application. Morning seems to be the best time: average meteorological values at 6 am, 80 % humidity, 7-10 km / h wind speed, 12° temperature. The conditions are ideal for not

stressing the plants (no risk of phytotoxicity) and the gardener is not uncomfortable wearing the equipment.

4. What to do in case of acute intoxication

What not to do in case of intoxication:

- Do not force yourself to be sick;
 - Do not consume any liquid: milk (fatty substance), water, alcohol.
- Immediately contact a doctor and / or a poison centre. Phone numbers: **15, 18 or 112/or the poison centre in your area.** The phone numbers are

of course different from country to country.

In case of contact with the eyes or skin:

- Wash thoroughly straightaway (for 15 minutes) in clean water and consult an ophthalmologist or GP in case of any doubt.

The classic hygiene rules are still true: wash your hands regularly, shower after an application, and wash the clothes you wore for the application separately from normal washing.

Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society



About us

The Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS) preserves, protects, promotes and campaigns for allotments in Scotland. It's a voluntary organisation, funded by its members and managed by an elected committee of plot holders from all over Scotland. The Society began 100 years ago as the Scottish National Union of Allotment Holders.

SAGS keeps in touch with its members through their website (www.sags.org.uk), a newsletter, and through a Facebook group. We also hold an annual gathering to which all plot holders and others with an interest in allotment gardening are welcome.

How many plots? – current situation

At the end of the Second World War there were about 70,000 allotment plots in Scotland. That number plummeted as land was re-allocated for housing and amenity purposes. In 2007 "SAGS" audit of allotments revealed that there were only 6,300 individual plots left – 70% of them owned by local authorities.

Interest in allotments has soared as people appreciate the social, environmental and health benefits. The number of plots has crept up to 10,000 but there are at least 4,000 people on waiting lists with some people waiting up to ten years for a plot.

Relationship with the National Allotment Society

By a longstanding arrangement with the NAS, Scottish plot holders join SAGS. They can pay an additional subscription which gives them dual membership of both SAGS and NAS enabling them to enjoy the benefits of both organisations.

The Scottish legal system is different from that in the rest of the UK so it is entirely appropriate that Scottish allotment matters are dealt with by the Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society.

High spot of the year – SAGS Annual Conference

Every year in June SAGS holds a free conference for plot holders. In recent years this has been held in the Victo-

ria Halls, Dunblane. Dunblane also has some flourishing allotments in a beautiful and tranquil riverside situation.

Reinforcing our links with the NAS, recent guest speakers have included Karen Kenny and Phil Gomersall.

Publications

In recent years, SAGS has published several booklets to guide plot holders and those involved in allotments generally. These are downloadable from the SAGS website and SAGS has some paper copies on request.

- A Scottish Plot holder's Guide
- Scotland's Allotment Site Design Guide (to help those involved in setting up new sites or regenerating old ones)
- Galvanising the Grass Roots series:
 - Grow your own allotment site – intended to help understand the purpose, benefit and operation of allotments and supporting those who are involved in delivering more allotments in Scotland



- Governance of Scottish allotments (to be published shortly)
- Planning Matters (in the pipeline)

Allotments and the wider community

Scottish allotments have a long tradition of being part of their wider community. Open Days, where some produce is available for visitors, are commonplace and well-attended. There are community plots on some sites for school children and other groups. Many sites donate surplus produce to local causes such as day centres and care homes.

A brighter future for Scottish Allotments

As a result of a sustained campaign

by SAGS committee members aided by plot holders throughout Scotland, some welcome and significant changes have recently been made to the legal position of allotments through the Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015.

The new legislation updates and replaces all existing allotment legislation in Scotland some of which dated back to the C19th and applies to local authority allotments (not ones on private land).

Its main features are: *Statutory Protection of Allotment Sites*

An allotment site cannot be closed without permission from Scottish Ministers in the Government.

Waiting Lists: All local authorities must keep a waiting list and take reasonable steps to ensure that those on it will get a plot within 5 years.

Plot Size: people are entitled to a plot of up to 250 sqm in size unless an applicant has advised that a smaller one is required. This does not apply to existing allotment sites where there are varied plot sizes.



Rent: Rents should be calculated in a fair and transparent manner and should reflect the level of services provided by the Local Authority.

**For further information about Scottish Allotments, contact the secretary: secretary@sags.org.uk
On see www.sags.org.uk and on Facebook**

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