



# Hyphen 72

News from the Office

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# Meet our members in words and pictures; see the realisations they are proud of

## Malou Weirich

Secretary general of the Office International du Coin de Terre et des Jardins Familiaux



Constantly developing until they were pushed aside by other preoccupations in the 60s, allotments have again become trendy over the past years and have registered an explosion of demand during the corona-crisis.

This is not without good reason, because the members, their associations and the federations are characterised by a great diversity of activities, an innovative spirit and contribute in numerous ways to the quality of people's life and health, food security as

well as to the preservation of biodiversity. President Dirk Sielmann outlined them in a concise way in his leading article in Hyphen 71.

The allotment gardeners are entitled to be proud of their performances.

In the last issue you already discovered some of their realisations.

Now you can discover some more examples from Europe and Japan.





# Germany: We are proud of our expert advice

Excerpts from the annual report of the Bundesverband Deutscher Gartenfreunde (German allotment federation) 2015 – 2018

## Introduction

For decades already, in the allotment garden sector in Germany, the tendency to cultivate allotment garden sites and allotments even more consciously than before according to ecological criteria has increased. Ecology in the allotment garden is nothing abstract, but today an elementary prerequisite for a responsible handling of nature and its resources. Nevertheless, allotment gardens are not untouched wilderness and certainly not nature reserves, but individually cultivated open spaces in towns and municipalities. Recently, however, there has been an increasingly clear trend towards nature conservation activities and gardening close to nature. This is also thanks to the gardening expert advice, which operates at a high standard at all federation levels. The expert advice has led to an ecological rethinking in large parts of the allotment garden sector. Allotment gardeners increasingly deal with the natural processes in the garden and orientate cultivation methods and usage according to ecological criteria and the rules of "good professional practice". Advice and further training in allotment gardening will continue to be expanded in the direction of an adapted, nature-compatible allotment garden management.

The aim is a sustainable use of natural resources in order to guarantee a sustainable garden use also for future generations.

## Protection of the soil

The United Nations had declared 2015 to be the "International Year of Soil". Soil has many different functions: It is the habitat of numerous animals, plants and microorganisms. It provides food and renewable raw materials. It filters the groundwater and is the scene of many important material cycles. Soils thus play a key role in the ecosystem and are a basis for life that must be protected. Allotment gardens are mostly located in urban areas, where strong soil compaction, considerable degree of sealing and high pollutant inputs are typical elements. Allotment gardens have a special function in such dense settlement areas, as the soil in areas used for allotment gardening fulfils its original functions as a water reservoir, food source and habitat for animals and plants. In the allotment garden, soil is worked on to cultivate plants with the aim of harvesting and recreation. The sustainable safeguarding of soil fertility and the efficiency of the soil as a natural resource is the basis of all soil protection measures in the allotment garden sector. Therefore, ecologically cultivated allotments contribute to soil protection. This self-obligation was consequently also reflected in the package of measures on the ecological upgrading of allotment gardens adapted by the "Bundesverband Deutscher Gartenfreunde".

<https://www.kleingarten-bund.de/de/bundesverband/positionspapiere/oekologischerkleingarten>

## Plant protection in the home garden and allotment

The National Action Plan (NAP) for the sustainable use of plant protection products is part of the implementation of the EU Plant Protection Framework Directive and was adopted by the German government in 2013. The action plan was prepared with the participation of the federal states and federations. The BDG is a member of the NAP Forum and has positioned itself in working groups and workshops since 2008. For example, the results of the "Nationwide survey on the use of plant protection products in the home garden and allotment sector" were presented in April 2016. This study shows: The differences between home and allotment gardeners in terms of knowledge and application behaviour are significant. Allotment gardeners perform better than home gardeners both in diagnosing and in combating diseases and pests. They also use significantly less chemical synthetic pesticides, give preference to prophylaxis (choice of location and variety), mechanical and physical measures and the use of beneficial organisms. In addition, the advantages of gardening in an association come into play: allotment gardeners not only have a high level of trust in the association's specialist advice as a source of knowledge, but they also consult with their garden neighbours much more often than home gardeners when it comes to actions and measures. The trend to renounce to chemical plant protection in allotment gardens is not

only due to the fact that much more fruit and vegetables are grown there for consumption, but also to the increasing ecological and sustainable responsibility that allotment gardeners are assuming in the 21st century.

### **Insect-friendly allotments**

Agricultural deserts”, “silent spring” and “insect death”: Are there no green places left in Germany? Yes, there are! declared the “Bundesverband Deutscher Gartenfreunde” in 2018 in a press release. 14,000 allotment garden associations all over Germany create diverse refuges for plants and animals. In allotment gardens, nature conservation is not only part of every association’s statutes, but with our trained advisers we also actively support our gardeners in its implementation. For example, we explain how important insects are for our ecosystems – and many of them for our own harvest. We therefore give tips on how to make as many beneficial insects as possible feel comfortable. They not only pollinate the flowers, but also keep pests away from our plants.

The keeping of honey bees has also been promoted in allotment gardens for many years and has long been established in many allotment sites. For example, the BDG 2016 was a co-operation partner of the nationwide planting competition “Macht Bienen glücklich” (Make Bees Happy) – a

campaign of the “Germany hums!” foundation. The aim of the campaign was to initiate, collect and make public good examples for the promotion and protection of wild bees. Allotment gardens thus became an important hotspot for biodiversity – in the countryside as well as in the cities.

In addition, the BDG has accompanied the “Action Programme for Insect Protection” of the Federal Environment Ministry since 2017 through numerous political discussions in order to stop the extinction of insects together with the federal government, the federal states, local authorities and other stakeholders.

### **Further topics: Recommendations Genetic engineering**

In 2015, the “Bundesverband Deutscher Gartenfreunde” again took a stand on green genetic engineering and adopted a position paper on genetic engineering in leisure horticulture.

It recommends not cultivating genetically modified plants in the home and garden. Nevertheless, the BDG pleads for the public debate to continue to deal with the opportunities of green genetic engineering. It is crucial that this discussion remains largely science-based.

### **No glyphosate in allotment gardens**

The majority of our members recognise the value of an ecologically cultivated allotment garden: they accept a certain amount of manual work for the pleasure of the garden and nature. Our allotment gardeners grow fruit and vegetables independently of marketing regulations and abstain from maximum yields. This is why it is much easier to live with pests and diseases and even more so with weeds or wild herbs in an allotment garden than elsewhere. The most important goal of most allotment gardeners is to grow healthy fruit and vegetables. No broadband herbicides are needed. They have not been used for a long time either. In many garden regulations of federations and associations the use of broad-spectrum herbicides is prohibited. A progressive idea!

Broad-spectrum herbicides containing glyphosate have no place in allotment gardens. Managing an allotment garden means, taking responsibility for the environment, for fellow human beings, for plants and animals. A modern allotment garden is managed ecologically – here too, the BDG has long been setting trends.

# Germany: We are proud of our allotment site "Sonnige Höhe e. V." in Chemnitz, Saxony



**Population:** 247.353

**Number of allotment sites:** 214

**Number of allotment gardens:** 17.411

**Area:** 640 ha

**Allotment site „Sonnige Höhe e. V.“ (translates “Sunny Heights”)**

**Founded:** 1925

**Area:** 5,32 ha (of that 4,63 ha garden area)

**Allotment gardens:** 180

**Awarded in 2018 with GOLD in the federal garden competition**

**Quote:** *“There’s no question: Here the allotment garden sector is an integral part of city politics and development.”*

## “Sunny heights”: Historical gem, modern management

Chemnitz is most likely known by people as an industrial site. However, the city is far from being a grey moloch, because Chemnitz is unbelievably green, too. More than 1.000 hectares of parks, meadows and woodlands lie within the city area. Statistically speaking, there are 60 square metres of green area per capita.

That the people of Chemnitz have a heart for the green is also shown by the high density of allotment gardens in the city. Statistically, there is one allotment garden per 14 inhabitants. In fact, there should hardly be a Chemnitz resident who has not already swung the spade. So, it is not surprising that the allotment gardeners have also succeeded to gain political weight. Since 2001, the city has an allotment garden advisory board, which currently consists of five city

councillors and seven expert allotment gardeners. The council meets six times a year and discusses all matters concerning allotment gardening. Once a year, the Lady Mayoress also meets with the city federation of allotment gardeners for their annual talks. The future of the allotment gardens in Chemnitz is laid down in an allotment garden development concept. There is no question that the allotment garden sector forms an integral part of the city policy and development. Also, the financial support of the small gardens by the city is considerable.

“Sunny Heights” easily manages to secure their piece of the cake. The association has a young and remarkably dynamic management. It goes without saying that communication is digital via WhatsApp and the internet – that’s how allotment garden 2.0 works. The bustling allotment gardeners also maintain excellent contacts



with politicians and know how to get their interests heard.

In 2009 “Sunny Heights” could realise a project close to their heart with the help of municipal funds: The redesign and renovation of the historic promenade leading to the association’s house. Colourful flowerbeds line the newly designed path, benches invite you to linger. Other public areas such as the entrance area and the open-air

terrace were also overhauled in the course of this project. This not only made the allotment garden site more attractive – the adjacent housing estate from the 1920s also became more popular due to the beautiful surroundings.

The beautiful site is also popular with non-members – and the allotment gardeners welcome them with open arms. The little ones can run riot at

the children’s parties, and for the older ones there is a plot currently being converted into a senior citizens’ garden. And because everything is easier together, “Sunny Heights” also has a very special cooperation with a carving club that is directly connected to the site. So, the people of Chemnitz not only know how to garden, but also have a knack for strategic partnerships.



# Denmark: We are proud of the joy at the allotment garden, the example of H/F Skovmosen

Grethe Bjerregaard

Editor



The first allotment gardens in Denmark were established more than 100 years ago to make it possible for poor townsmen to get some fresh air and grow healthy vegetable at a cost they could afford. In today's welfare state, money is no hindrance to survival so why do so many people want to be in an allotment garden?

A visit to an allotment society, in this case H/F Skovmosen provides an answer. This society may not be a classical Danish allotment society, however, in spirit it still represents exactly what so often is emphasized when talking about allotment gardens: Pleasure with being in close contact with nature, pleasure with planting and producing your own vegetables, pleasure with togetherness ...

## No limiting hedges

The allotment society consists of very small, 60 m<sup>2</sup>, allotment gardens. There are 172 allotments divided into 4 areas and about 100 members. When a member has tended to one allotment for a year, it is possible to rent up to two more allotment gardens. A string, not a hedge, separates the allotment gardens from each other. As a result, there is a free view over most of the allotment society. There are no houses on the single allotment garden, but a row of small cottages, each 4 m<sup>2</sup>, in the periphery of the society. These cottages are for rent. As there are only 61 in total all members have access to the allotment society's common building and tools, which the allotment society buys, and are put in

tool sheds, one shed in each of the four areas the allotment society is divided into.

## Differences make strong

With about 100 different members there are of course big differences in the use of the allotment. Some members enjoy just being in the garden without great emphasis on the yield. To others it is of great importance to yield as much as possible. Some find togetherness to be the most important, while others focus on the allotment garden and keep more to themselves. Like in all other communities, there are pleasures and challenges, but tolerance and broadmindedness mean that there is a fine atmosphere in the allotment society.



### Community atmosphere and spirit

The four areas of the allotment society serve as small units with each having its own customs and differences. Each area has a liaison person functioning as link between the committee of the allotment society and the members of the area. There is also a mentor for each area taking care of new members so they can get help if in doubt of anything. Tasks such as weeding a certain part of a path, cleaning toilets and so on are divided between all members. What really creates a sense of community spirit, however, are the two days, one in the spring and one in the autumn, when all the members of the allotment society take part in the necessary repairs and weeding of common areas – not least the joint lunch.

### Joy at the allotment garden

Therefore, what is it that makes so many people stick to a small plot year after year when you cannot find shelter for bad weather nor are allowed to sleep the night? Many of the mem-



bers arrive by bus, bicycle or car as they live several kilometres from the allotment society. Some are in the allotment every day, others 2-3 times a week. Many also visit the allotment society in wintertime just to enjoy the wintry scene. Many members are pensioners but quite a few have jobs and small children and visit their allotment after work. Many come from other countries such as Sweden, Croa-

tia, Japan, Columbia and Lebanon. So, what is the common denominator? Of course, the pleasure of being in close contact with nature, the pleasure of planting and producing your own vegetables, the pleasure of togetherness.

**Exactly that is the spirit of being in an allotment garden.**

# Great-Britain: We are proud of our members

Diane Appleyard, Marketing and Mentor Coordinator



There have been allotments in the UK for many years although their popularity has ebbed and waned. The emergence of convenience food and changing family routines in 1960s and 70s was a particularly low point and many plots were lost. Numbers fell from 1,400,000 in 1943 to 330,000 plots at the time of a government report in 1998. However, the last 20 years has seen a concerted effort to preserve the remaining plots. The UK National Allotment Society are convinced that although some land has been lost, the strong interest in allotment growing has resulted in many new sites in recent years and supported the protection of existing sites.

The current situation would have been very different without the hard work of all the volunteers who have come forward and taken on a variety of challenges i. e. raising money to regenerate neglected sites, forming committees to take on site management, campaigning to protect sites from development, sharing knowledge and setting up projects, so that vulnerable groups can benefit from al-

lotment growing, and promoting the movement to the wider public.

Don Booth, NAS Honorary Life Vice President and Chair of both Salford Allotment Federation and Green Penant award winning Tindall Street allotments, Peel Green has worked tirelessly for almost 50 years to promote allotments in the city, regenerating and developing sites and promoting self-management. In recent years he has been instrumental in encouraging Salford council to re-open disused sites that had lain fallow for many years resulting in over 100 new plots.

Eden Gardens Allotment Association have transformed a derelict piece of land into an urban oasis – a stone's throw from the Manchester Ring Road. In June 2019 they were justly awarded the Queens Award for Voluntary Service for their efforts. The nomination for the award praised the fact that it's a place where both members and non-members can come and relax, socialise with the rest of the community and be among some gorgeous greenery. An unused and unkempt

field has been transformed into an allotment worthy of official recognition, with the aid of grants, fundraising and sheer hard work. The site has wheelchair-friendly paths, permanent composting toilet for visitors to use and a patio. The project has had a significant impact on the wider community, helping the local Garden club, where many of the members are advancing in years' and helping the local children's centre revive its overgrown garden and its annual Christmas wreath-making event with a hot meal, which helps to combat loneliness in the community. As if that wasn't enough, the group also donates to local charities, including a recent initiative at the local church to give a free breakfast to children during the holidays.

In 2018 NAS member Rochdale Council realised that the length of their waiting lists meant that aspiring plot-holders would need to wait 31 years to get a plot. In response to this they allocated £ 170,000 into a borough wide allotments scheme to create 100 new plots a year over the next 5 years.



Councillor Neil Emmott, the council's cabinet member for the environment said:

*"We have demand for allotments and it makes use of land which is surplus to requirements and not required for anything else, such as housing. It's also environmentally friendly to have people growing their own vegetables and fruit. We have a waiting list and a plan for allotments, so it makes commercial sense as well. Above all, allotments are really good for your health. They play a vital role in helping people to stay fit and healthy. Costing as little 55p per week, working on your own allotment is a great workout which won't break the bank."*

In 2013 Mile Road Allotments in Bedford were earmarked for disposal, a group of plot-holders got together and managed to overturn council plans to build housing on their 297 plots via a 500-strong petition. They took on management of the site through Mile Road Allotments Leisure Gardeners Association and now run a thriving self-managed site of 305 plots. They also have a community orchard, trading hut, community room and a composting toilet. They are diverse community with members from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds and ages. MRALGA aims to develop a sustainable resource to promote growing our own food and improve quality of life for all; sharing skills and knowledge for the benefit of the community



of Bedford Borough and surrounding area. They do this by enabling the local community to access the site and learn about food growing, gardening and recycling and a variety of members and public events.

Derby's Ashbourne Road and District Allotment Association (ARDA) have set up a fabulous Growing Academy project that sets out to teach people how to become successful, productive growers; at home, on the garden, on the balcony or on an allotment plot! The Growing Academy was the brainchild of Elaine Crick and Julia Slater who welcome students on weekend mornings in the spring and summer to learn new skills whilst producing plants for sale to support the site.

**So, what is the recipe for their success?**

*"Positive Community Partnerships" suggested Julia and "fun, frivolity, caring and sharing" said Elaine. "Open your gates, open your hearts and share what you know. The next generation is behind us, the older generation is in front of us so learn from everyone. We all have allotment knowledge and by working together we can make things happen. Move forward into the 21st Century: get younger people involved with setting up social media accounts for your site and record the knowledge and experience you can collate from your older members. Learn and share."*



Honorary Life Members Rosemary and Colin Smith have created an attractive stand at Malvern – one of the most prestigious Flower Shows in the UK for many years. Their display of allotment produce attracts visitors who may be keen to learn how to get a plot, interested in the allotment movement or just want to spend time talking fruit and vegetables. Their dedication is repeated across the UK at Harrogate, Gardeners World Live, Cardiff Flower Show, Southport Show and host of other local events, where plot-holders aspire to perfection and enter their crops into competitive Flower and Produce Shows.

The combined efforts of National Allotment Society members have en-



sured that future generations can enjoy the benefit of allotment life. Allotments are still high in the public consciousness and waiting lists for plots remain steady across the UK. New sites are being created as part of the new town and garden village developments and NAS staff and vol-

unteers have fed in to this process. Finally, we cannot finish this story without a mention of the commitment of our President Phil Gomersall, who was awarded the British Empire Medal in 2018 for his contribution to Horticulture and spends many hours promoting the Society and the joys of grow-

ing your own food, healthy activity and the social interaction on allotment sites; sometimes even struggling to fit in a visit to his own plot!

# Norway: We are proud of the innovative spirit of our members

Ellen Ingunn Andersen and Britt Eirin Johansen

Photo: Frank Forsell, Ranfrid Forsell, Ellen Ingunn Andersen, Vibeke Dale, Målfrid Trøan, Anne Mari Borgersen, Marit Gunnes and Tove Strand

Translated into English by: Johnny Aasen President NKHF



## This summer Klemetsaune allotment garden association in Trondheim rented eight kittens and three goats.

“Either you love them, or you hate them,” said Hermod Sæther, perhaps the only gardener with goat herd experience. The discussion at the annual meeting in March, when we were going to vote on whether we should dare to have goats, was not easy. Some were very concerned about ruined gardens. Others were worried that the dogs would bark in the garden. The project “allotment garden goats” is now completed. Is it tempting to repeat it?

### Rental goats with GPS

Frank Forsell was the man who raised the proposal for landscape care with

goats in the allotment garden. It takes quite a few hours to keep grass and small shrubs down in the common areas which are not cut with a lawn tractor. If the General Assembly approved the proposal, we could choose between traditional fencing around the areas or instead use GPS technology to keep the animals in specific areas. After a few rounds of voting, the goats were ready for Klemetsaune. Klemetsaune said yes to both GPS and five weeks with goats.

In June the goat farmer Anders Strand showed up with a wagon full of goats, three mothers with a total of eight kids. Frank had promised to herd the goats for the first few days, until we saw that they could thrive with us. In the beginning, Anders came both in

the morning and evening to look after the goats as well as to give milk in bottles to the smallest lastborn and the only peach-colored tiny kid in a sibling group of four! This is unusual, even in the goat world.

### Beyond all expectation

Especially exciting was the “super social” kid that neglected all borders and followed people who passed «the area of goats»

The adult goats with GPS collars stayed in their own area but the kids with the smallest in the lead probably took some trips outside the GPS area. However, I have not heard any negative comments in this regard and I think the goats’ staying at Klemetsaune have exceeded all expectations, Frank says.



The presence of the small goats have led to a lot of cuddle times for both children and adults, and I am very pleased that large parts of the area where the goats have grazed, have become so nice, continues Frank, who wants to welcome back some goats in the early autumn, so they can keep down the growing grass.

Yes, this has really been a huge test project! The allotment garden leader Maria Barrio has the entire board behind her as she gives credit to the initiator Frank.

### Have there been any complaints?

**"No, the board has not heard of any negative reactions",** Maria Barriko says.

And even though a new goat visit in late summer would have been both useful and enjoyable, the board will leave it to the general meeting next spring to decide whether the goats should come back or not. According to the board's summary of this year's goat project, I expect we will have goats in the allotment garden next year too, says Barrio.

The eleven goats that stayed at Klemetsaune for a few weeks this summer, is a small number for the farmer Anders Strand. In total he has 80 goats, in small and large, many of them grazing in "Bymarka" in connection with a Trondheim municipalities' project caring for cultural landscapes.

tion with a Trondheim municipalities' project caring for cultural landscapes.

Goats are effective grazers and easier to keep within a specific area with the GPS collar, or "sound fence" than sheep. I've been trying this out for a company that has developed a so-called "No fence" technology, says Anders.

Placing goats in an allotment garden is almost like sending children into a free candy store, but it worked surprisingly well! The first day in a GPS area is always a bit challenging. **"It takes some time for the goats to figure out whether the boundaries are real, and in fact it is more challenging for goats that have to deal with a small area rather than a big one like in Bymarka",** says Anders, who is very thankful for Frank's helpful presence at Klemetsaune. – We should also be very grateful for the feeding and care of the small goats that joined the herd large parts of the time, says the goat owner. Rental of goats for landscape grazing has become a great supplement for the young part-time farmer who produces meat, skins and wool from the beautiful cashmere goat. And he gladly offers his goats again next year, preferably in a larger area at Klemetsaune and maybe in collaboration with the area's owner Trondheim municipality.

Nevertheless just note that: No goats broke into anyone's gardens. No accidents or injuries except a slight dog attack. And there were no negative reactions that the allotment garden kept up with goats. But there were also warm, pet odour and some damages in the summer weeks of 2018. The grazing from the goats also reduced the number of ticks. Because? The ticks have no place to live where bushes and shrubs are kept down.





# Netherlands: We are proud of our joint gardening for biodiversity



The Netherlands has launched a Biodiversity Recovery Delta Plan, entitled 'Together for Biodiversity'. This plan brings together representatives from a broad range of farming, environmental and nature conservation organisations, businesses and knowledge institutions, which have joined forces to turn the loss of species into the recovery of vital biodiversity. The dream vision of the plan is that in 2030, the green space in the Netherlands is home to a wealth of biodiversity including soil life, plants and insects. The landscape is alive with diverse nature and is a place where people are happy to live, work and spend their leisure time. Landscapes are recognisable by their look, layout and vegetation, and people identify with and are proud of their local landscape.

It is our firm belief that allotment gardens, that for more than 100 years have represented a tradition of vital urban green, must be included in this coalition. Because we are an important player in the field of biodiversity in the urban environment, we have applied for and been granted partnership

in the Delta Plan. For us this may be a logical step, but we are nonetheless proud that society has recognised the vital role we play in ensuring a healthy and green future. We are also proud that within this joint venture we will be helping to bring about that future, together with other parties. Allotment gardens and garden parks are part of a landscape and in fact form their very own landscape.

### Commitment

Our commitment to the Delta Plan is as follows: natural gardening in gardens and shared green areas are the basis for reinforcing biodiversity in high-quality, usable green areas, in an urban environment. In collaboration with other organisations that promote the greening up and development of nature, we are working to establish broader and more in-depth knowledge of natural gardening and biodiversity among our grassroots supporters, and have plans for putting that knowledge into practice via active educational meetings. An important tool in this process is the National Quality Mark Natural Gardening. The

aim of the related consultancy and counselling project is to introduce natural management, maintenance and layout to the shared area of our garden parks. We plan to extend the rollout of our Label project and open the project up to individual gardens.

We broadcast a positive message and are seeing excellent results in terms of knowledge, attitude and behaviour change among our allotment garden-



ers, with visible effects on species diversity in both flora and fauna. We assist our grassroots supporters on the road to monitoring and mapping out the results of natural gardening on biodiversity, and aim to join the partners in the Delta Plan in further extending this process.

In collaboration with other partners from the Delta Plan we aim to contribute to creating broad-based support

and shared values by placing biodiversity – and the irrefutable relationship between biodiversity and allotment gardening and garden parks – high on the social agenda. In more than 70 towns and villages across the Netherlands, we have groups actively involved in joint gardening in our garden parks. Together, they use and manage semi-public green areas of essential or at the very least potential ecological added value. Against that back-

ground, they play an important role in society in promoting quality of life in the living environment. Our aim is to assist our grassroots supporters in further broadcasting the importance of biodiversity and translating that knowledge into closer ties with the local population at neighbourhood, district and municipal level, by implementing and facilitating practical activities and examples.

# Japan: We are proud that the Japanese allotment gardens contribute to people's well-being

Yoshikaru Meguriya

president of the Japanese allotment federation



**Picture 1**  
End of June: the members who love herbs, make a lavender stick.



**Picture 2**  
In August: A member makes a barbecue in which all can freely participate.

We, the members of the allotment garden federation of Japan, are most proud of this fact, that the allotment gardens constitute a beautiful community connecting people's hearts. The allotment gardeners can visit and freely spend their time on the allotments on the condition of respecting the basic rules of garden use. While gardening freely in their own way, they cooperate and support each other.

A second fact we are proud of, is that in an aging society, where allotment gardeners are also getting older, the elderly can continue to cultivate their gardens in good health until the last day for their lives or a few years ear-

lier. When we created the Chigusadai association 48 years ago, we preserved plots of land for middle-class families, living in apartment blocks without individual garden. In this way we also tried to contribute to the development and good health of children. We are very proud that these allotment gardens, which were initially dedicated to the education of children, and which later served as the support for working families, have afterwards also become places, where the elderly can lead independent and healthy lives.

A third element we are proud of is that allotment gardens are an environmen-

tal stronghold within the city. In post-war Japan, priority was given to economic growth and the development of industrial infrastructure according to the rules of the market economy. A gigantic megalopolis emanated, stretching from Tokyo to Nagoya, Osaka, Setonai and as far as Kita-Kyushu like an asphalt jungle. The population is concentrated in these areas. Many young people, living in agricultural villages in remote or mountainous areas, moved to the cities to develop their labour force. In 1969, as a symbol of these changes, the new urban development planning act repealed and replaced the previous law dating back to the Meiji period.





3

**Picture 3**  
When university students from Britain came for a visit, I got them to experience making tempura and organised a tempura luncheon for them.



4

**Picture 4**  
Some members talk by the side of an allotment. They are all over 75 years old.

**Picture 5**  
Parent-and-child agricultural experience classroom. I explain how peanut beans grow up. Then, they harvest peanuts.



5

**Picture 6**  
Tempura is a typical Japanese food. However, young parents cannot anymore fry tempura. For this reason, the Chigusadai Gardening Club held the tempura making course for parents and children.

**Picture 7**  
The meeting aims at observing nature in the Hagadai Allotment Garden. Although the sponsor of this meeting was a student association of Chiba University, the allotment garden circle offered the place and performed the observation tutorship.



6

**Picture 8**  
The commemorative photo of a child science outdoor school.

**Picture 9**  
The other side of this allotment garden is a city area connecting Chiba with Narashino and Yachiyo. Furthermore, the city area is connected to Funabashi, Ichikawa, and the center in Tokyo.



7

**Picture 10**  
The vinyl house in an allotment destroyed by the typhoon.

**Picture 11**  
Members gather and are fixing the broken hut.

**Picture 12**  
I go to Osaka for the lecture on allotment gardens. View of Mt. Fuji.



8



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13

**Picture 13**  
Lecture "By establishing and managing an allotment garden, we make a rich area".



14

**Picture 14**  
47 people participated.

Urban planning zones were designated and within them a distinction was made between urbanisation zones and zones reserved for urbanisation, thus pushing land for agricultural use out of the cities. In the urbanisation zones, the only recognised green areas were refuge areas in case of a disaster, ornamental green areas and agricultural land in the process of urban reconversion. When in 1970, the ministry of agriculture developed the concept of urban agriculture and began to promote the conservation of agricultural areas within urban green spaces. This constituted the recognition of agricultural land as an environmental resource. At that time, I was working in the Prefecture of Chiba as the person responsible for the planning of the agricultural policy. As part of my task in this administration, I worked on the promotion of allotment gardens by writing a manual gathering all the principles of agricultural policy of the Chiba county as well as a manual concerning the establishment of allotment gardens. Three years later, having been contacted directly by a farmer close to the residence where I lived, I set up an allotment garden together with him. This was not a job related to my employment in the Prefec-

ture, but an activity I carried out in my personal capacity and that I have continued to do up to now. The allotment garden and the vegetable garden were surrounded by the neighbouring residences, looking really like a bastion of greenery in the middle of the residential areas.

I monitor the activities of four regional allotment garden associations (Hokkaido, Shizuoka, Nagasaki and Chiba), supporting the Japanese allotment garden federation and I have mentioned the three main things about allotment gardens I feel proud of: A beautiful community that connects people's hearts, a movement that underpines people's whole life from childhood to old age and finally a bastion of the environment.

These three elements synthesise an infinite number of concrete examples that are experienced through activities as varied as going to the allotment garden, cultivating one's own plot, talking to each other as peers, participating in or managing seasonal events, or bringing home the products of one's harvest, prides that one feels at the same moment as one creates them.



# The allotment association “Falan” in Falun (SE) received the diploma for ecological gardening



The allotment association Falan reached the Gold level in the Swedish Allotment Federation's environment diploma programme. This programme started about 20 years ago and so far only 5 associations have managed to reach gold level. There are four levels, basic, bronze, silver and gold. The association as a whole has to maintain one level for a minimum of two years before applying for the next. If they don't maintain the reached level, they lose their diploma. The requirements include ecological gardening (composting, no pesticides etc), promoting biodiversity, water management, choosing environmentally friendly materials and paints etc.

The allotment association worked for many years with many different activities/actions to finally reach gold level in May 2018.

## Some examples of what they do and have created

- They practise ecological gardening. In their newsletter they continually inform their members about sustainable and environmentally smart ways to garden and how to promote biodiversity.
- They cooperate with other non-profit organisations, for instance Naturskyddsföreningen (focus on nature) and organise lectures together with them.
- A meadow that they cut by scythe on the association's common land.
- Hotels for insects and beehives. They also show their beehives and talk about bees with visitors, to increase interest in bees.
- Water for irrigation is collected from a nearby pond and members are only allowed to water their gardens in the mornings and evenings to minimise the waste of water.



# The allotment association “Linnea” in Stockholm (SE) received the diploma for ecological gardening



The Swedish Allotment Federation's environment diploma programme started about 20 years ago and so far only 5 associations have managed to reach gold level. There are four levels, basic, bronze, silver and gold. The association as a whole has to maintain one level for a minimum of two years before applying for the next. If they don't maintain the reached level, they lose their diploma. The requirements include ecological gardening (composting, no pesticides etc), promoting biodiversity, water management, choosing environmentally friendly ma-

terials and paints etc.

The allotment association Linnea have been working for many years with many different activities/actions to finally reach gold level in 2019.

Linnea was awarded gold in the Swedish Allotment Federations environmental programme in August 2019.

As well as gardening in an ecological way, Linnea has for many years put a lot of effort and work into increasing the biodiversity on their land.

- They have a bee group with people who are responsible for the care of the beehives.
- A meadow was recently created on their common land, but there are also several allotment holders who have smaller meadows on their allotments.
- They have made an inventory of “historical” plants. The aim is to preserve them for the future by making sure that allotment holders continue to grow them.
- They have arranged workshops for members to build various types of homes for insects.
- A bee-friendly border has been planted on the association's common land.

In the spring the association makes an organised purchase of manure, soil, sand and gravel for the association and its members. That way the number of car transports within the area is limited.

# The allotment association “Långholmen” in Stockholm (SE) received the diploma for ecological gardening



*On Långholmen's allotment site you find a mixture of plots with and without cottages.*



*Composting is the “motor” of the gardening in Långholmen.*

The Swedish Allotment Federation's environment diploma programme started about 20 years ago and so far only 5 associations have managed to reach gold level. There are four levels, basic, bronze, silver and gold. The association as a whole has to maintain one level for a minimum of two years before applying for the next. If they don't maintain the reached level, they lose their diploma. The requirements include ecological gardening (composting, no pesticides etc), promoting biodiversity, water management, choosing environmentally friendly materials and paints etc.

The association worked for many years with many different activities/actions to finally reach gold level.

Långholmen Allotment Association was awarded gold in the Swedish Allotment Federation's environmental programme in May 2017.

### Among the things they have done you find:

- A border for growing and keeping “historical” plants
- Several beehives and birdhouses
- Seawater is used for all irrigation
- All members have their own composts. Education about composting is available to all members. They also have common latrine compost.
- Coarser materials, like branches and sticks, are shredded on site.
- The association makes a yearly organised purchase of manure and soil.



*In the trees around the association's site you can admire many nicely painted birdhouses.*

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