



# Hyphen 79

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# Josef Burri

Malou Weirich

Former Secretary General of the Fédération Internationale des Jardins Familiaux



Josef Burri, former President of the Swiss Family Gardeners Federation, passed away forever on 1st May at the age of 91.

Seppi Burri was active first at local, then regional level. From 1974 – 1988 he was President of the Lucerne Association. Soon his involvement at national level was added when he became a member of the board of the Swiss federation, first as regional representative, then as vice-president and finally as president from 1991 to 1995.

First as Vice-President, then as President, he represented the Swiss Family Gardeners among us. In addition, he was also an auditor in our International Federation from 1991-1995.

During his participation in our activities, he was a very constructive delegate, presented and defended the interests of his national allotment gardeners and always helped to find common solutions.

Both before and after his presidency, he has taken an interest in international affairs and has questioned many things critically.

Seppi Burri's input in our meetings, the information he gave us about developments in Switzerland were appreciated by all.

We will keep Seppi in good memory.

# Karl-Erik Finnman

Malou Weirich

Former Secretary General of the Fédération Internationale des Jardins Familiaux



On 25th April we received the sad news that Karl-Erik Finnman passed away unexpectedly at the age of 82.

Karl-Erik was a member of the Board of the Swedish Federation for many years and President from 2017 to 2020. Karl-Erik represented the Swedish Federation in our International Federation during this period and was also its Auditor.

Karl-Erik was convinced of the benefit of the International Federation for all, the need to strengthen it and to make it even better known among allotment gardeners. He would have been happy to organise a study meeting in Stockholm with his national federation, had it not become impossible due to the somewhat unexpected need to move the federation to other premises.

Karl-Erik's constructive work and input in our meetings, the information he gave us, together with Ulrica Otterling, about developments in Sweden, was a contribution much appreciated by all. His jovial interaction with the other delegates was an additional positive note in our meetings.

On the first page of the card I sent to Lorna Finnman and the family were written the following words:

*Memories are like little stars shining in the night of our grief (translation).*

We will miss Karl-Erik, we will remember him fondly and we will continue to keep the many shared, beautiful moments alive in our thoughts.

# The tied-and-tested, rethought

Claude Haagen

Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development in Luxembourg



*Claude Haagen*

The example of Luxembourg illustrates very well the challenges that arise in establishing new allotment garden settlements as well as in maintaining existing ones.

Within only 10 years, between the censuses of 2011 and 2021, the population of Luxembourg has increased by more than 25%. This increase brings multiple implications for our country. As in many other regions of Europe, there has been a price explosion on the real estate market in Luxembourg, with the consequence that the building density has increased both in newly developed building land and in existing settlement areas. Even in rural areas, single-family homes with gardens are increasingly giving way to apartment buildings with parking spaces for cars. The number of households without a garden of their own is rising, which in turn increases the demand for garden plots in allotment gardens.

Voices are quickly raised demanding that the public authorities make new land available for allotment garden settlements.

But in a small country like Luxembourg the area of 2,586 km<sup>2</sup> is extremely limited! We Luxembourgers often believe that this is only the case in small countries like ours. With the expansion of diverse economic activities and the accompanying population growth, the demand for more building land is increasing in order to build public infrastructures of all kinds such as schools, sports fields or hospitals and the roads needed for them.

The pressure on land has increased to such an extent that in a recent survey 55% of farmers stated that they perceive the loss of land as a threat. But at the latest since the start of the Ukraine war, it should be clear to everyone that we also need to protect land for food production.

At least as important, if not even more urgent, is the need to use the existing free land to actively counteract the greatest challenges of our time, climate change and the loss of biodiversity.

So are there no more chances for new or even existing allotment garden settlements?

Yes, there are! There are even very attractive solutions. There are even very attractive solutions if the design or redesign of these gardens is designed not only to meet the legitimate needs of the allotment holders, but also to fulfil multiple other functions that are relevant and important for our society.

This issue looks at interesting possibilities and gives concrete examples of how allotment garden sites can take on important socio-economic and environmental functions, thus promoting the existence and, where appropriate, the creation of these garden infrastructures.

However, not only in terms of challenges, but also in terms of solutions, Luxembourg can offer some good examples, and not only of some exemplary allotment garden sites. I am thinking here of the garden show that will take place from May to October 2025. The LUGA- Luxembourg Urban Garden, whose motto is making the invisible visible, aims to combine very complex themes. Recreation, leisure, nutrition, art, cultural heritage, social inclusion, resource conservation, circular economy, environmental and climate protection, climate adaptation and the promotion of biodiversity will be made visible and interlinked. This should also generate attractive ideas and inspiration for the design of allotment garden settlements.



# Allotment Garden Sites and Urban Development Planning

Guidelines adopted in Sandnes, June 29th, 1993



*Already 30 years ago the federations, which at that time were united in the federation, dealt with the question of what allotment gardens can do for the individual but also for the general public. The following resolution already dealt in 1993 with the different forms that allotment gardens can and should take and it has not lost any of its topicality today.*

## Guidelines

By an adequate urban development planning and especially by an adequate green belt planning one should safeguard and develop the existing aspects of towns and regions, improve the quality of life and create the best conditions of life for us.

The allotment gardens in the countries, unified in the International Office, represent characteristic and traditional forms of green- and leisure grounds.

They are very often a component of a coherent green belt system.

They constitute an important compensation for those groups of the popula-

tion that live in dense urban quarters with not sufficient green spaces.

The allotment garden continues to assume an important social function. The allotment gardeners are mainly leaseholders of flats without home gardens. The allotment gardens offer them a compensation to insufficiencies of the residential areas and their environment as well as to the frequent monotony of the work. They enable them to create themselves there a private recreation area in a natural



environment. This fact is most important for families with small children who find often insufficient play areas in the residential areas.

In addition one has not to forget the economical value of the allotment garden for people of the lower wage categories and for the families with many children.

Additionally they enrich the offer of recreational grounds for the rest of the population.

They are of great importance for elderly and disabled persons, for schoolchildren, because very often specially outfitted plots for elderly and disabled persons as well as schoolgardens are integrated in the allotment garden sites.

They contribute both to the protection of nature and environment and to the improvement of the quality of life and assume in this way a public function. This happens under financially favourable conditions for the authorities, because the allotment gardens



are looked after by their users themselves.

They continue to constitute however for the individual user a private function by allowing the citizens for example to grow healthy vegetables and fruit, to engage in a light physical activity, to rest and to maintain or if necessary to restore their physical and mental balance.

Therefore the allotment gardens must be foreseen in the urban and green belt planning.

Therefore a far-reaching maintenance and protection of the existing allotment gardens and allotment garden sites must be obtained.

Therefore an adequate number of allotment gardens, in form and number, must be planned, created and judicially protected.

Only by a simultaneous and coordinated working of measures of public and private law and of associative regulations one can reach that urban planning requirements, associative aims, equipment measures of the garden sites, outfitting requirements and use of the allotment gardens are adequately taken into consideration.

## 1) Urban planning requirements

- Allotment gardens are individual recreation areas included in the green belts. They must therefore both in their aspect and in their utilisation form preserve this specific character.
- As part of the urban green system the allotment gardens ought to be integrated in the urban green belts.
- The allotment garden sites, as a recreation area, ought to be accessible for the public and allow people to pass through the sites. In this way, the sites ought to stimulate relations between people.
- The allotment gardens ought to be favourably situated as far as the residential areas are concerned and even if possible at a near distance from sports and leisure centres.
- They ought to be accessible by foot or by public transports so that they can be used as well during the daily free time and not only during week-ends.
- New allotment garden sites ought if possible not be created aside

from residential areas.

- Allotment gardens should be as much as possible free of pollution (noise, pollution of air and ground) similar to all the other green areas.
- By planning new sites or rehabilitating existing sites one ought to take the aesthetic aspects sufficiently into consideration.
- The existing allotment gardens ought to be as much as possible judicially protected – they must not be considered as reserving grounds for uses of higher value.

## 2) Associative aims

- Criteria for obtaining a plot: Inhabitants of gardenless flats and persons that have a particular need according to their personal situation, should have the possibility to get a garden plot for their personal and recreational needs. These plots cannot be used for commercial purposes.
- The obtaining should be regulated according to objective and social criteria.
- The costs both in case of new allocating a plot and in the case of a transfer ought to be kept as low as possible.
- Increasing of community activities (both social events and collective gardening activities).
- Creation of allotment garden information services in the towns and villages, that give informations and advices to the allotment gardeners and this in collaboration with the competent technical bodies and the allotment gardeners' federations.





### 3) Regulations for the internal equipment of the allotment garden sites

- The allotment gardens ought to present a great diversity in their equipment and avoid uniformity.
- A particular importance should be given to the equipment of the individual plot.
- The allotment garden plots ought to have generally a size between 250 and 450 sqm. Different sizes of plots ought to be offered.
- Elaboration of different equipment concepts.
- The allotment garden sites ought to be clearly structured and ought to present an equilibrated balance between public, semi-public and private areas.

- The urbanisation plans ought to contain a detailed frame-work of urban planning requirements that have to be observed when new sites are created or when existing ones are rehabilitated.

- The principles of simplicity and economy ought to be observed when equipping allotment garden sites.

- The paths inside the garden site ought to be planned in order to get a diversification and to serve the visual and functional structure of the garden site.

- The use of natural materials should be preferred.

- The parking ought to be planed in such places so as to avoid perturbations.

- The sites ought to be fenced in such a way that the fence gives protection and serves the optimal framing but without giving the impression of closure.

- The allotment garden sites ought to have collective equipments that are accessible to the members of the association and are partly accessible to the public too.

- When providing the allotment garden site with water one ought to insist on the quality of water and its parcimonious use.

- The standard of the disposal facility ought to be simple in order



to preserve the green character of the site and the need of disposal ought to be kept as low as possible.

- Waste that can be composted ought to be used on the site.
- The need of electricity (for gardening works) ought to be kept as low as possible in the allotment garden sites.

### 4) Forms of equipment and use of the individual allotment garden plot

- The allotment garden ought to be cultivated on the greatest part of its surface for the personal use of the gardener.

- The plantations and the outfitting ought to comply with the requirement of diversity and the local character ought to be respected.

- Model- and schoolgardens ought to be created.

- The regulations of the garden site ought to insist on the necessity to use products and to apply methods that are respectful of nature and the environment.

- The allotment garden house or shelter ought to fit into its surroundings and into the general aspect of the site.

- The allotment garden house ought not to be a second residence, except if the legislator allows or stimulates it.







- Size, materials and forms of the houses or shelters ought to take into consideration the requirements of town planning, the local characteristics and ought to remain as less expensive as possible.
- Creation of different sorts of allotment gardens: utility gardens, recreational gardens and allotment gardens.

## 5) Conclusions

### Following:

- to the constant demand for allotment gardens in all European countries;
- to the necessity to take all elements and so also allotment gardens into consideration in an equilibrated urban and spatial planning;
- to the necessity to determine at long-term the use of the grounds and this according to the needs of all users' categories;
- to the necessity to safeguard the green spaces including allotment gardens by their integration in the urbanisation plans, if necessary in

the national constitutions;

- to the necessity to create for the future towns that are adequate for man under the avoidance of the errors committed in the past,

**The allotment garden federations that are unified in the International Office as representatives of the European allotment gardeners ask all the Governments in Europe as well as the European Communities and the Council of Europe:**

- to take the allotment gardens in their different forms into consideration, as a component of the urban and regional planning;
- to foresee an adequate number of allotment gardens in the urban planning schemes;
- to give them by their integration in the urban planning schemes, together with the other green areas, a legal protection, that means a guarantee for a use for a longer term and
- to lay in this way the basis and to allow the creation and an equipment of garden sites respecting

both the urban planning and the environmental necessities;

- to favour the creation of alternatives to the allotment gardens f. ex. terrace apartments, interior courts with gardens ..., in order to diminish the pressure on the necessities for allotment gardens as the grounds available in urban areas cannot be increased.
- to suggest to give constitutional guarantees to all categories of green areas;
- to elaborate in the frame-work of the working out of a model-city a allotment garden concept, if possible in collaboration with the allotment gardeners' representatives and under observation of the afore-mentioned guidelines;
- to stimulate the creation of a allotment garden legislation, in those countries where there doesn't yet exist such a legislation;
- to foresee the members of the allotment garden organizations as consultative members of urban planning commissions;
- to propose the creation of a allotment garden division in the urban, regional and national committees for green belt planning.



# Belgium: New Ways of Garden Design

Willy Goethals

Honorary President of allotment garden park 'Slotenkouter', Ghent, Belgium  
Board member of East Flanders' Provincial Allotment Association



Allotment garden design has evolved over time, and new approaches and ideas continue to emerge.

## Here are some new ways and trends in allotment garden design:

### *Vertical Gardening:*

Vertical gardening is gaining popularity in urban areas where space is limited. This design technique involves growing plants vertically on structures such as trellises, walls, or stacked containers. It maximizes space utilization, allows for more plants to be grown in a smaller area, and creates an aesthetically pleasing vertical garden.

### *Permaculture Design:*

Permaculture design principles are being increasingly applied to allotment gardens. Permaculture aims to create sustainable ecosystems that are self-sufficient and require minimal external inputs. Design elements include companion planting, water



catchment systems, composting areas, and creating habitats for beneficial insects and wildlife.

### *Bee-Friendly Gardens:*

With the decline of pollinators, allotment gardens are being designed to support bee populations. Incorporating bee-friendly flowers, providing nesting sites for solitary bees, and minimizing pesticide use are essential aspects of this design approach. Bee-friendly gardens promote biodiversity and enhance pollination within the allotment.



### *Raised Bed Gardening:*

Raised beds are becoming a popular design feature in allotment gardens. Raised beds provide several benefits, including improved soil drainage, better control of soil quality, and easier access for planting, maintenance, and harvesting. They also create defined spaces for different crops and can be aesthetically pleasing with the use of attractive borders.

### *Sensory Gardens:*

Sensory gardens are designed to engage all five senses – sight, smell,







touch, taste, and sound. These gardens include a variety of plants with different colors, fragrances, textures, and flavors, as well as elements such as wind chimes or water features. Sensory gardens offer a multi-dimensional experience, promoting relaxation, mindfulness, and sensory exploration.

### *Community Spaces:*

Allotment gardens are increasingly being designed as community spaces where people can come together and interact. Design features may include communal seating areas, shared tool sheds, gathering spaces, and areas for social events or workshops. Creating spaces that foster community engagement enhances the social aspect of allotment gardening.

### *Edible Landscaping:*

Edible landscaping combines ornamental plants with edible crops, creating visually appealing gardens that also provide food. This design approach incorporates fruit trees, berry bushes, and colorful edible flowers alongside traditional vegetable beds. Edible landscaping adds diversity, aesthetics, and practicality to allotment gardens.

### *Smart Garden Technology:*

Advancements in technology have led to the development of smart gardening tools and systems. These include automated irrigation systems, soil sensors, weather monitoring devices, and smartphone apps for tracking and managing garden tasks. Smart garden technology helps gardeners optimize

resource usage, increase efficiency, and monitor plant health.

These are just a few examples of new ways and trends in allotment garden design. Ultimately, the design of an allotment garden can be customized based on individual preferences, available space, and local environmental conditions. The key is to create a design that maximizes productivity, promotes sustainability, enhances aesthetics, and suits the needs and interests of the gardeners involved.





# Switzerland: Our garden areas must become gems in urban greening

Otmar Halfmann

VP SFGV | FSJF



*Garden land "Viererfeld/Mittelfeld" – visualization: Raderschall Landschaftsarchitekten AG, Meilen (winning team "VIF! Idea contest for urban planning Viererfeld Mittelfeld") / Copyright: City of Bern*

The following considerations for the direction of our family garden movement are based on direct experience and impressions in the Swiss environment. The extent to which these are transferable in whole or in part to other European countries must be assessed there.

For the members and functionaries of our Swiss association landscape, it is also painfully noticeable that there is no national legislation on which our allotment gardens can base them-

selves, but rather, with the exception of the Canton of Basel-Stadt, which has a constitutional anchoring of the *acquis* area, only various official regulations or also, as in the case of the area where my wife and I cultivate our plot, none.

This inevitably makes the exchange of experience between our officials more difficult, because in order to deal with a subject at the national level, one always has to know and keep an eye on the local peculiarities.

Developing or formulating generally valid, concrete goals under these conditions is much more difficult than where the legal framework is in place nationally.

But that is not all: the extent of official intervention can also vary; in one canton, for example, the waiting lists for plots are administered by the municipal gardening department and new members are assigned to the associations by the authorities when there is a change of tenant.



It is encouraging that the interest in owning a garden plot continues unabated. After a peak in 2021 [Corona], the excess demand in the agglomerations still amounts to more than 20.0 %.

On the other hand, we are losing more than 10.0 ha of open space every day through building or sealing for infrastructure projects, mainly in the already densely populated non-alpine regions.

In addition, the resident population [today almost 9.0 million ...] continues to grow rapidly; supplemented by a "cross-border commuter traffic" of almost half a million [with a good 5.0 million employees, this corresponds to almost 10.0 % ...] people living in France, Italy or Germany who come to work in Switzerland every day – mostly by car.

Furthermore, the legitimate renaturation of watercourses and riparian zones and the special protection of species-rich areas take up land.

And even excessive and largely commercialised recreational needs cannot do without land consumption, construction or sealing.

The starting point for finding a medium-term orientation for our family garden movement is further complicat-



ed by ecological requirements for plot management – which are of course undisputed, but differ from canton to canton. These requirements, in turn, unfortunately lead to an increase in conflicts within the associations themselves.

This increase in conflicts and the increasing technical and administrative demands on association boards are accompanied by an equally growing shortage of members who are willing to make themselves available for an honorary function.

This shortage will become even more serious in the coming years, because demographic change means that we are losing long-serving officials on a daily basis.

### **After these key words on the „outlook“, let's move on to shaping the future: *Raise association fees***

In order to be able to work on all the different "fronts", associations need resources. If these resources are not available in the association due to a lack of suitable or professionally qualified people, service providers or craftsmen have to be commissioned.

If the association lacks the resources for this, it finds itself in a spiral towards implosion, which in some cases stretches over a period of infirmity.

Having sufficient regular income is the sine qua non for coping with various – existential – demands.

### ***Relieving the burden on volunteers and strengthening the association's self-administration***

Especially for large associations with hundreds of tenants spread over several areas, taking on a board function can often take up a full workload, all the more so as breaches of rules, arbitration between tenants, enforcement of official or regulatory requirements and legal disputes increase.

To prevent more and more committed members from giving up in disappointment after a short period on the board, these tasks must either be compensated accordingly [provided that members have the necessary time and professional qualifications ...] or, better still, outsourced entirely from the association to third parties. This externalises "minefields" for conflicts and thus protects cohesion.

At the same time, the board has more time for gardening or building issues.

### ***Participation in spatial planning***

If the leases between the association and the landowner are not secured in the long term, or if there are foreseeable developments, proactive committee work at the community level is indispensable.

This is the only way to protect the association from surprises, the members from disappointment and to avoid bad investments on a collective and individual level.

If the destruction of an area is recognised at an early stage, it is much easier to start negotiations on replacement areas than if there is no more time available.

If the voters in a municipality\* have already repeatedly approved a devel-



opment that would wipe out the garden area, then it is already years too late for a protest in the media and any sympathy for those affected is no longer helpful at this point.

In a Swiss agglomeration, for example, our board member responsible there estimates that about 1/3 of the current sites are threatened. In such a situation, the board members must be able to concentrate on solutions as a matter of priority and with all available capacity.

\*With "direct democracy", the power to decide on changes to communal zoning plans lies with the voters.

### *Cultivate alliance partnerships*

Last year's important vote in four municipalities in the Zurich agglomeration on a zoning change for a local recreation area, which also affected a garden area there, shows how much we depend on alliances.

After a referendum was held there, which was initiated by renowned nature conservation organisations and locally respected people, primarily because of the biodiversity in the affected zone, nevertheless only a wafer-thin majority voted for the preservation of this "green lung".

If this partnership had not existed, the association would have been hopelessly overwhelmed. For the preservation of the garden plots alone, there would never have been even a referendum.

Even if these are unpleasant-sounding statements, they correspond to reality, unfortunately.

In another large city, the voters have just decided in favour of two new buildings at the expense of two garden plots. Where housing is scarce and expensive, every project that could mitigate this is accepted.

Where it is promising to take legal action against projects, this will only be possible with the help of partners from the numerous nature conservation organisations.

### *Absorbing nature conservation projects and social initiatives*

We are already doing a lot in species protection, but a lot is not enough: efforts to create and maintain ecological niches in the areas must be multiplied.

Media-communicative orientation is also of growing importance; not only the information itself, but also its continuous updating.

At which site is there already a poster, for example: "At our last hedgehog count in May, 34 hedgehogs were sighted, since we can assume a factor of 5 for the actual population, there are 180 hedgehogs on this site, which means 2 hedgehogs per plot and tenant"?

Wherever biodiversity [... also in plants] or its conservation is discussed in the neighbourhood or community environment – also in schools – we must be spontaneously present in the awareness of the population as a possible contact and possible partner.

This openness is also important towards social initiatives. At the moment, the integration efforts of refugees are in the foreground, but the spectrum is very broad and also dependent on local circumstances [is there, for example, a children's ridge around the corner that is currently

looking for an area for "garden children"?]

### *Opening up and opening through, ... where necessary.*

The area where I garden consists of two zones, with a road running between them. This road is also the connecting path to the local forest and a recreational area for countless walkers.

If this road did not exist, a thoroughfare would be indispensable for our area: the shortest connection between two points is and remains a line. We do not generate public sympathy if fellow citizens have to walk, for example, 800 m around a garden area until they reach the sports field, the cemetery or the multi-purpose hall.

Of course, thoroughfares have consequences, especially when they affect areas that have existed for decades: Fencing, litter, vandalism and security are all challenges. Finding a solution to this with the authorities is the constructive way to categorically reject it, which is counterproductive. For the preservation or possible expansion of our areas, the passive or better still active support of the population and our direct neighbours is indispensable.

The same applies to openings. In connection with a new development project, the city gardening depart-





ment, which is involved in the planning, will implement an open “garden landscape”. There will be garden islands in this zone. This will create an open, green zone that meets the local recreational needs of the residents. Analogous to the thoroughfare, such openings result in previously unknown problems not only for the associations but also for the municipality, which must be met with new solutions, because not everything new can or must always function immediately and by itself. Adaptations to new necessities are inevitably the result.

Insisting on the tradition of “gated communities” as customary law is futile and only generates resistance from the community.

### *Consistent deconstruction when plots are abandoned*

If we want to credibly oppose building development, we must first show that we keep building and sealing to a minimum in our areas, i. e. that we often reduce it.



Currently, in the public and media perception – and that alone is decisive – more and more garden houses are being transformed into holiday homes.

It is disheartening that large stand-alone garden centres are now imposing requirements for deconstruction when tenants change: the associations probably lost the initiative here decades ago; it is imperative that we win it back.

Above all, this return to structural moderation is necessary with a view to avoiding conflicts between the association and members who are over-committed to construction: Conflicts do not end up in court because of a belatedly removed “thistle”, but almost exclusively as a result of violations of building regulations and the like.

### *Subdivision of large plots before reallocation*

In view of the continuing surplus demand and the younger, following generation, which is increasingly being challenged professionally, old garden houses should be demolished and large plots subdivided – if the initial conditions for this are available.

The new plots thus reduced in size should preferably only be leased with club-owned or precisely specified tool sheds.

### *Develop and implement design and maintenance concepts*

Unfortunately, I know of no association that has a long-term design concept. This requirement is becoming more and more important as native woody plants and “eco-niches”, among other things, gain in importance for species conservation.

Such a concept must also do justice to the increasing changes of tenants. With the departure of the “baby boomer” generation, tenancies of the past that lasted for decades are disappearing [unfortunately ...].

Similarly, in many places the maintenance of community facilities and buildings is reactive. I am not aware of any proactive maintenance concepts. The longer our areas exist, the more the “ravages of time” wear away at buildings, fences, paths or even hedges.

All these objects and their condition have an effect on the appearance.

### *Ensure prioritisation of common areas*

Based on my own experience, I can state that the working time per square metre of garden area is about the same as the time I have to spend for a careful execution of “front work” outside or adjacent to our plot [again per square metre ...].

This is underestimated in the majority of the time requirements for community tasks. Again, it is not the individual well-kept plot that is representative of the garden area and the goodwill of third parties, but the overall picture.

In the first instance, we are not all tenants of a plot, but members of the association. It is only thanks to the existence of the association and the area leased by it that an individual plot can be available at all as a place of retreat in the countryside.

### *Enforce plot allocation criteria*

Plots are only to be allocated if and to those who qualify as applicants for association membership.

Without a probationary period, this will not be able to lead to an objective result. Only after one year of “candidacy” should a permanent lease be offered.

Countless disappointments could be avoided in this way.

Unfortunately, due to the high demand and the attractiveness of oversized garden houses, the habit has spread – despite numerous sensible

barriers developed by clever association boards – that the previous tenant has a decisive say in who should take over his plot [and the garden house ...] depending on the amount of the down payment.

This practice must be stopped.

*Note: It is much easier for an external property management company to implement this than for a president who is faced with a plot neighbour of decades' standing, which in turn underlines how sensible it can be to opt for outsourcing of administrative tasks.*

### Adjustments to land use laws for the plots

Where new areas are being created, primarily as replacements for existing areas, it is possible for associations of a manageable size to forego sub-leasehold contracts for plots and to link membership of the association with an entitlement to the horticultural use of an area to be determined. This avoids the unfortunate linkage of leasehold and association law and thus simplifies the separation of "tenants", in this case only members, who cannot be integrated into the association.

Certainly, the exploitation of such an option is only possible very slowly and presupposes special conditions, also with regard to the responsible municipal gardening department, which usually represents the landowner.

### Support for new members

New members are usually left alone with a pile of documents and the advice to please ask if there is something they do not understand or would like to change.

This is obviously not enough: Especially new members with limited knowledge of the national language are thus overwhelmed. It is understandable that when it comes to gardening, they first fall back on the imprints they have experienced in their cultural area.

Even if language restrictions are removed, we have to look more closely at the introduction of "newcomers"

and, wherever experienced members are available, entrust them with such supervisory tasks.

If a newcomer has bought a "Thuya emerald" from the nearest nursery and only finds out weeks later during a garden inspection that it is forbidden to plant it in Zurich, the dispute is already pre-programmed.

### Demarcation criteria

In Switzerland we have thousands of "wild" gardens; in our small town alone there is one large area and at least three smaller ones.

On both sides of the motorway that passes our town there is also a so-called garden area. The image that these "gardens" convey is pitiful. Such areas, which thousands of people drive past every day, help to shape our opinions, whether we like it or not.

That these "associations" do not belong to our federation is not communicable, how could it be?

In this respect, we have to develop demarcation criteria. Standards must be defined for this and implemented step by step.

Parallel to the implementation, this must be accompanied by appropriate communication content.

Likewise, the areas themselves must refer to these standards at their interfaces to the public.

This is the only way to create recognisable features and enable differentiation among our fellow citizens.

The family garden movement and numerous associations have been active for more than a hundred years, and our association will celebrate its centenary in 2025.

With a hundred years of experience, it should be possible for us to adapt to changing framework conditions and

significantly intensifying competition for land use in a success-oriented manner.

*Note 1: The author feels obliged to use the generic masculine form of language and asks for your understanding that he would like to dispense with gender asterisks for reasons of age.*

*Note 2: This contribution is not a position paper of the SFGV/ FSJF. It reflects only the personal views of the author.*

# Austria: Climate-friendly gardens are in vogue

Fritz Hauk

Vice-President of the Central Federation of Austrian Allotment Gardeners



It is becoming more and more apparent that not only sustainability and biodiversity are in demand in our gardens, but also that the advancing climate change must be taken into account, especially when it comes to planting. There is still enough water in Austria, but we are already seeing problems in agriculture.

The following tips are general recommendations that will become particularly relevant in relation to the approaching climate change. You should try to see the connections in the natural cycle when working in the garden, because then you will be flexible enough to take on new challenges.

In order for your plants to grow healthily, species-appropriate light requirements and soil conditions are basic prerequisites to be prepared for climatic stress. This reads well, but especially in the beginning extreme situations you should pay attention to the fact that it can also become

more "Mediterranean" in the choice of plants, but above all that you pay attention to what still looks healthy in the gardens and in the nature of your surroundings and get one or the other plant into the garden.

## Here are some more tips for your garden:

- Extremely dry summers cause stress in many plants, often resulting in stalled growth. Symptoms can be: Flower buds do not blossom, fruits are dropped before ripening, premature death of perennials. Plants can cope
- better with drought stress if they are watered sufficiently at longer intervals. The formation of deep roots is promoted by less frequent watering. In practice, extensive watering at longer intervals is better than distributing a little water in the garden every day.
- During wind and heavy rain, soil that is not overgrown erodes and silts up. To protect it, either vegetation or another protective layer must be applied. The best protection is provided by a plant cover (ground-covering plants, green







manure). Where vegetation is temporarily not possible (e. g. vegetable garden, summer flower bed), the soil can be covered with mulch (e. g. leaves, grass cuttings, wood chippings, bark material).

- Planting deciduous trees in our gardens is a big trend. Trees provide shade and evaporative cooling in summer, and in winter they let light into the house. They bind CO<sub>2</sub>, slow down the wind, produce oxygen and act as an effective fine dust filter. Deciduous trees are irreplaceable for a pleasant living space in the future.
- How we deal with our water will also be more important in the future. For this reason, there has been a recommendation for some time to collect rainwater from roofs and use it for watering the garden. The water can also be used for a wetland biotope or you can simply let it seep into the garden where you want it. Sealing of surfaces, such as paths, eaves or



terraces, should be largely avoided. In principle, watering should be geared to the needs of the plants. Plants have different needs for irrigation water, so it is better to supply the garden areas individually than to wet everything evenly.

- And finally, it is also about “weed control”, which should be carried out extremely selectively. Nowadays, wild plants can be tolerated and included in the design of the garden, a new garden wave is emerging. An area overgrown with wild herbs is in any case preferable to one without – it is not only valuable for the soil, but also for the insect world.

You may have noticed it, there is a trend back to the natural garden, to a garden with shrubs, with beds full of flowers and vegetables, where at least one tree provides shade and not just a measly awning, a garden full of plants that not only survives a longer time without intensive care, but also look good.





# Germany: Modernisation of an allotment garden association, Innovative redesign of an old site

Joschka Meyer

Photographer: Roger Gloszat

Due to the growing city of Hamburg, allotment garden associations unfortunately also have to sacrifice areas so that new living space can be created. However, as is so often the case, changes also have positive aspects and old allotment garden associations in particular can benefit from such measures. This is also the case in Veddel, a district of Hamburg enclosed by the Norderelbe and the Süderelbe. The allotment garden association "Unsere Scholle" e. V. – 716 -, had to give up some of its land here for new rental flats. But thanks to skilful negotiations at the "Round Table" and a city that has a fundamental interest in preserving allotment gar-



dens in the inner city, a very open and modern site has now been created on the banks of the Amsinck Canal. Old harbours not worthy of preservation were disposed of by the city, large plots were divided and re-parcelled in order to give as many people as possible access to an allotment garden again. The entire association has received new water and even electricity pipes and a new association house is also being provided by the public authorities.

The overall layout has remained rectangular, but the parcelling within the association is very creative and is made up of different geometric

shapes. The non-existent enclosure of the individual plots makes it almost impossible for walkers to see where boundaries run between the plots. In this way, there are beautiful, far-reaching view axes across several plots and the feeling of an association community is visually reinforced. A large wide main path, glistening with the mother-of-pearl of the mussel shells used in the path surface, runs through the entire green space, in which the allotment garden association has been

harmoniously integrated. Benches invite you to linger and a publicly accessible playground, maintained by the association, makes even non-members feel welcome. The many different types of arbours, painted in different colours, illustrate this colourful mosaic of people who run an association here together. Public green spaces, as well as common club areas, are to be subject to extensive near-natural maintenance, creating long grass and flower meadows. An “acceptance

strip” is mown along paths and plot boundaries. This signals that the area is subject to regular maintenance. In addition, the maintenance of the association hedge is independent of the mowing date and the use of the paths is not impaired by meadow plants lying down. More intensively used green areas should be laid out as flowered gravel lawns and thus correspond to the use of an ordinary lawn, but with a much higher ecological function.



# Sweden: Årstafältet

Ulrika Flodin Furås

Editor-in-Chief of Koloniträdgården magazine



Årstafältet is Stockholm's youngest allotment area and in addition to nearly a hundred allotments, there are also communal areas and gardens that are looked after by the allotment holders.

Just outside Stockholm's city limits, between two suburbs and the city's party halls, there is a large field that is being developed with a completely new neighbourhood and a large park is planned adjacent to it. The Årstafältet allotment area is part of this future park.

As part of the park, the allotment area itself has been designed by landscape architects. The fences are painted in a soft light green colour and the gravel paths between them gently curve in an arc shape that makes the area more lively. There are many allotment holders out on the plots, watering and fixing the kitchen gardens and flower beds. This year, spring is late here in Stockholm and there is a rush to get everything in order before the summer season begins.

The fact that the allotment area was planned as part of a park means that it has more functions than just being an area with allotments and a clubhouse, there is also a kitchen garden with old heritage varieties, a fruit and berry grove, a health garden, six meadow and fruit groves, all with different themes. Inside the orchards there are benches where passers-by can sit down. The neighbourhood should feel invited.

*"More and more people are finding their way to us," says Lisa Borgh, the area's chairman, "They walk around and think it's cosy. Above all, it is the residents of the neighbouring areas, Årsta and Östberga, who come here.*

*At the architect-designed clubhouse there are also wooden tables with benches where the neighbourhood is also welcome to sit down.*

*When the Årstafältet colony area was inaugurated in 2003, it was located at another end of the Årsta field, but*

*when that site was to be exploited in 2018, the colony area was moved to its current location. The district helped to ensure that both the allotment houses and plants could follow.*

*In connection with the move to the new location, our district administration wanted us to also have a cultural heritage garden, berry garden, health garden and fruit grove with meadows, this is included in our agreement with the municipality and it is we colonists who take care of them.*

*The land is leased by the municipality and it is important that the allotment area is looked after and cared for.*

*Our relationship with the district administration is good, says Lisa, we have a good dialogue. The fact that so many areas are managed by the colonists means that there are many different groups that colonists can get involved in. There is a small group of colonists who are very active, some who are more or less active and some*





*who don't do very much. But there are more and more active ones, I think, and that's fun.*

*Right from the beginning, in 2003, we have invited the public to our markets," Lisa continues, "and now we also have popular cafés every fortnight during the summer. The cafés can be a lot of work, the whole day before they are used for baking and other preparations. You can be exhausted, but then, when you see how happy the visitors are, it makes you so happy.*

She adds that the markets and cafés are a way of raising money for the association, which has paid for the clubhouse, among other things.

*But it is also important that we colonists do fun things together. It is also fun to meet across the generations. In the café group, for example, the youngest is eight years old and the oldest is 80.*

Her own involvement in the Årstafältet allotment association is because she wants to do things that make other people happy.

*"I don't just want to be a member of an association, for me the social networking in an association is very important. Doing things together. We share an interest, cultivation, and at the same time we have a social exchange."*

She returns to the café activities and talks about the pensioners who come for coffee.

*"They tell us how much they like our café and when it's over they say they can't wait for the next time. Then you melt with joy and happiness."*

The association also has a communal kitchen garden where they grow vegetables that are sold at the markets. The association is also part of a network of allotment garden associations south of Stockholm. This network organises lectures, which are



free for anyone with an allotment in one of the network's allotment associations.

#### **Facts:**

Årstafältets koloniförening was inaugurated in 2003 and is thus Stockholm's youngest allotment garden association. The association is located on a large field between several Stockholm suburbs. Parts of the field are being developed with housing





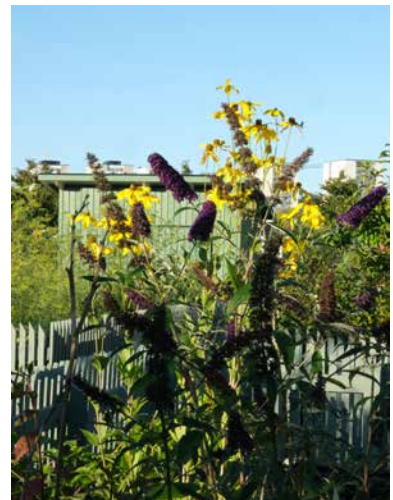


and due to this exploitation, the area was moved in 2018 from a part of Årstafältet to its current location. The area has 94 plots, 64 have cottages and 30 are cultivation plots.

The area has six meadows that are also fruit groves, a heritage garden with classic vegetables and a fruit and berry grove, part of which is a health garden for rehabilitation.

Årstafältet has regular markets and cafés for the public.

[www.arstafaltetskolorniomrade.se](http://www.arstafaltetskolorniomrade.se)





# Sweden: Nordmaling's allotment society

Nomination for Diploma for social activities



The Nordmaling allotment society is located in Nordmaling, a village in the north of Sweden, near Umeå. The area was created after a citizen's proposal to the city council in 2016. The society was created and signed a contract with the council in 2017 and in 2018



the first plot holders started working, growing vegetables and flowers.

What is unique with this new allotment area is that the initiators already had their own gardens and cultivation opportunities. Their goal was that everyone who wants to, should be able to cultivate, but wanted to spread the joy of cultivation, knowledge, community, etc to young people, immigrants, the elderly and others who are curious. In the first year, 10 plots were plowed up. In the second year, the number of plots was doubled!

Even though the society is only five years old, its members have already managed to achieve the first level of the Swedish Allotment Federation's Environmental certificate which includes sustainable and organic gardening, spreading of knowledge, promoting biodiversity among other things. One of their members is also active spreading this as one of the programme's ambassadors.

The allotment society organizes joint working days, buys plug plants, seed potatoes, seeds in larger lots to get a better price for the members. With contacts and a few simple conversations, the association has received tools, utensils, tables/chairs, plants, fertilizer, water tanks etc. sponsored by local companies. The association organizes harvest markets, lectures and is always „open“ in the area every weekend during the season.

The allotment area has become a meeting place across all imaginable borders! For this reason, the Swedish Allotment Federation would like to nominate the Nordmaling allotment society for a diploma for social activities.

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