

Soil Alliance News

Newsletter of the European Land and Soil Alliance (ELSA),



Edition 1 / 2017

Dear members and friends of the European Land and Soil Alliance,

Urban Gardening – changing the landscape of our cities with gardens: in the cities of this world, people dig, plant and harvest in every possible and impossible location. Flowers are cultivated and vegetables are pulled from the soil on brownfields, roofs, walls, and grass strips. With each patch a piece of nature is brought back into the city. The boom of gardening in urban areas can no longer be overlooked.

The idea of gardens and agricultural areas in cities is not new. The citizens of the ancient world and of the Middle Ages were 'agricultural citizens'; gardens around the houses were an integral part of the city landscape. Since the 19th century, there have also been allotments on the outskirts of the town and in allotment colonies.

The urban garden movement, which has been steadily growing since the mid-1990s, has its roots elsewhere: in the New York community gardens of the seventies. The community gardens were – and are – green oases in inner city wastelands with flower beds and vegetable cultivation grown for self-sufficiency. The novel thing about these gardens was the fact that they linked together horticultural, nutritional, economic, social, artistic, and urban design issues. The idea spread rapidly throughout North America.

Different concepts of non-commercial collective garden projects developed and disseminated from these early community gardens: intercultural gardens, city farms, neighbourhood gardens, children's farms, school gardens, guerilla gardening, and many more. Garden initiatives enrich municipalities and cities on many levels. From an ecological point of view, they create healthy soils, invigorate green spaces or brownfields, create spaces for beneficial insects, and positively influence the microclimate. The (community) gardeners profit from bountiful plants and healthy food. From a sociopolitical perspective, shared gardens stimulate public areas and create new places of encounter. Sustainable green and open space planning offers better life quality, and living in the centre with all its advantages becomes even more attractive.

This year's **annual ELSA conference on the theme of 'Gardening together - enriching municipalities and cities with gardens' will take place on 18 and 19 May in Linz, Austria.** It will lead from the roots of urban gardening in New York over numerous initiatives from the recent years in Europe to the diverse community gardens in upper Austria. Central questions about soil protection in the garden, the initiation of new (intercultural) garden projects or the sustainable green and open space design in municipalities are answered practically in workshops and excursions.

We would like to invite you to join us!

The Board

Soil Alliance News is published regularly. We appreciate your suggestions and criticism. In addition, you have the opportunity to disseminate news, projects, events, etc. Just send us a

short [email](#).

Top subject: Urban Gardening – changing the landscape of our cities with gardens

Urban gardens have many names and forms: The foundation association 'anstiftung & ertomis' will provide a database with over 500 practical examples from all over Europe and many tips on urban gardening. Browsing will pay off!

[Additional information](#)

Travelling exhibition 'The productive city' and 'Carrot City': The exhibition proposes new images of urbanity and shows new perspectives for sustainable urban design. It documents the new gardening movement as well as the traditional urban agriculture, taking the example of cities like New York, Toronto, Berlin, and Munich. It consists of the parts 'Carrot City' (international) and 'The productive city' (Germany). The exhibition can be borrowed for free excluding shipping costs (about €30 within the EU).

[Additional information](#)

European Award for Ecological Gardening 2017: The award recognizes already implemented, high-quality projects and services, which are based on ecological gardening. We are looking for innovative and sustainable projects with an exemplary nature, which are designed in a natural way, are ecologically cultivated and can also integrate social and economic aspects. The award is aimed at individuals, municipalities, educational institutions, networks, and associations from all European countries.

[Additional information](#)

"Gardens of Integration" competition of the German environmental aid organization 'Deutsche Umwelthilfe' (DUH): We are looking for projects and initiatives from Germany that can be classified as 'urban gardening', involving refugees or being initiated by fugitives. In June, September and November, one project will be distinguished as a 'Garden of Integration' and receive a prize of 500 euros. The submission deadline for the first award is 15 May 2017, the last submission is 31 October 2017.

[Additional information](#)

Soil improvement – Looking for support!

Save the soil! Signature petition for more soil protection in Europe: The EU-wide petition 'People4Soil' continues! One million signatures are needed to bring the European Citizens' Initiative ('Europäische Bürgerinitiative' - EBI) to success. The main objectives of the petition are: Recognition of soil as a common good to be protected at EU level. The European Soil Alliance supports the initiative.

Supporters can support the petition either online or by signing the list!

[Additional information](#)

European Citizens' Initiative against Glyphosate: At the end of 2017, the EU will decide whether the pesticide glyphosate will be approved for another 10 to 15 years. The cancer research agency of the World Health Organization has classified glyphosate as 'probably carcinogenic to humans'. The European Citizens' Initiative against glyphosate calls for the

pesticide not to be reintroduced and for more transparency in the approval procedures for pesticides in the EU.

Supporters can support the petition either online or by signing the list!

[Additional information](#)

Additional Reports

Updated inventory control and assessment of policy instruments on soil protection in EU Member States: In collaboration with experts from 28 EU Member States, a wiki-based inventory and an up-to-date assessment of EU soil policy instruments are being developed. The project, conducted by the Ecologic Institute, outlines existing policy instruments and gaps in soil protection and provides a basis for future policy action regarding soils in the EU.

[Additional information](#)

Soil Stakeholders' Conference - 05/12/2016 - Brussels: On the occasion of World Soil Day, a stakeholder conference with almost 200 stakeholders from different areas took place in Brussels discussing soil. The goal of the conference was to increase awareness of the importance of soils and their ecosystem services and to contribute to the implementation of the theoretical soil protection strategy. Presentations and project results are now available for download.

[Additional information](#)

European Soil Partnership (ESP): The ESP has a new Facebook page, which they use to report on soil-related activities throughout Europe.

[Additional information](#)

New chairman of the Commission for Soil Protection ('*Kommission Bodenschutz*' - KBU) at the German Federal Environmental Agency ('*Umweltbundesamt*' - UBA) - UBA President Maria Krautzberger has appointed Prof. Dr Bernd Hansjürgens as the new chairman of the Commission for Soil Protection (KBU) at UBA. Since 1998, Professor Hansjürgens has been working on a joint appointment at the Martin Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg and the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, where he heads the Department of Economics. Key issues for the commission in the coming months will be the European Soil Protection, the assessment of ecological performance of soils and the impacts of certain substances on soils.

[Additional information](#)

New Edition of the German Sustainability Strategy - Soil Protection: In the current and comprehensively revised sustainability strategy for Germany, the 'consideration of soil-relevant focus will be further strengthened' (p. 197). For this purpose, the development and introduction of a soil indicator will be examined.

[Additional information](#)

Model trial for the area certificate trading has been completed: On behalf of the Environmental Agency UBA, the Institute of the German Economy in Cologne, together with seven partners and 87 municipalities, tested in a simulation whether trade in area certificates works in practice and can help cities and municipalities reduce new land use and strengthen internal development. The (positive) results are now available.

[Additional information](#)

German Sustainability Award for Towns and Municipalities: Towns and municipalities, which, within the scope of their economic possibilities, are able to carry out comprehensive

sustainable urban development and have implemented successful sustainability projects in the important administrative areas, can now apply for the German Sustainability Award.

[Additional information](#)

WWF Quiz 'Do you know what soil is?': In the WWF online quiz, you can learn a lot about soil.

[Additional information](#)

The Earthworm Manifesto: In the earthworm manifesto of the WWF, you will learn why earthworms are so important for the soils and how worm scarcity affects agriculture and water balance.

[Additional information](#)

Soil in Sound and Film - The Soil Cantata: This piece was composed by Tobias Morgenstern on the occasion of the 'International Year of Soil'. Using audio-visual art, it demonstrates the beauty and diversity of soil – as well as its endangerment and need for protection. The cantata can now also be viewed online.

[Additional information](#)

Soil Exhibition 'Exploring Soil – Discovering Treasures': A large soil exhibition will be held at the Wiesbaden Museum until the 17th of April. Over approximately 700 square meters, the exhibition presents numerous aspects about soil. Interactive stations allow children to test and explore independently.

[Additional information](#)

The Soil Idea

Precious landscapes in Ottensheim along the Danube (AT): For several years, the municipality of Ottensheim has been working on the implementation of an 'edible community'. Holistic open space design concepts for brownfields and inundation areas were developed and implemented in a 3-year participatory design process. This project fosters the creation of open gardens such as 'snack gardens', 'neighbourhood gardens' and 'nature experience spaces', allowing everyone to 'self harvest'. In its entirety, the project is a contribution to food sovereignty and soil awareness within the community.

[Additional information](#)

Soil Alliance Internal News

Annual Conference 2017: This year's annual conference on the theme of 'Gardening together - enriching municipalities and cities with gardens' will take place on 18/19 May 2017 in Linz, Austria. Central questions about soil protection in the garden, the initiation of new (intercultural) garden projects or the sustainable green and open space design in municipalities are answered practically in workshops and excursions.

[Additional information](#)

New Website: The new website of the Soil Alliance has been launched. We appreciate your suggestions, praise and criticism. Take a look at it!

[Additional information](#)

Board Meeting: The next Soil Alliance board meeting will take place on 17 May 2017 in the state capital Linz (Austria).

Event information

23 March 2017, Berlin (Germany): 'Surface conservation - surface trade - surface change', final event of the research projects 'Model trial for certificate trading' and 'Action plan: surface conservation'

[Additional information](#)

30/31 March 2017, Bremen (Germany): Contaminated sites symposium 2017 of the Engineering Association for Contaminated Site Management and Area Recycling [*Ingenieurtechnischer Verband für Altlastenmanagement und Flächenrecycling e.V.*]. (ITVA)

[Additional information](#)

25/26 April 2017, Vöcklabruck (Austria): 'Municipal Spatial Planning and Soil Protection', seminar for municipal staff, mayors, etc.

[Additional information](#)

26/27 April 2017, Tulln and Absdorf (Austria): 24th conference of the work group "Sustainability with focus on soil protection and sustainable land use" by the working community of the Danube countries

[Additional information](#)

3/4 Mai 2017, Dresden (Germany): 9th Dresden Land Use Symposium (*Dresdner Flächennutzungssymposium* - DFNS)

[Additional information](#)

18/19 May 2017, Linz (Austria): annual ELSA conference on the theme of 'Gardening together - enriching municipalities and cities with gardens'

[Additional information](#)

21/22 June 2017 in Frankenhausen (Germany): Eco field days 2017

[Additional information](#)

Imprint

European Land and Soil Alliance (ELSA)
The Soil Alliance of European Cities, Districts and Municipalities
Klaus-Strick-Weg 10, 49082 Osnabrück
Tel.: +49 (0)541 56003 25 | Fax: +49 (0)541 56003 37
Email: mail@soil-alliance.org
Web: www.soil-alliance.org

Headquarters: Osnabrück, District Court Osnabrück, Register number: VR 3124

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