Looking for oases

Marianne van Lier and Willy Leufgen
(Stichting Oase [Oasis Foundation],
Netherlands)
Looking for oases

Willy Leufgen & Marianne van Lier
International Wildlife Gardening Conference
November 23rd 2016, Natural History Museum, London
The main Dutch wildlife gardening organisation is called Stichting Oase, ('Oasis Foundation'). In this talk, Willy and Marianne tell the story of how it came about and what has been achieved in the 13 years since.

“Looking for oases - and, in an organic way - to find, to share and to spread them, became for us, during all the years we are working now, a style of life.”
Marianne and I were born in Rotterdam and Cologne with the River Rhine as a connecting stream.
Being born in big cities explains probably our fascination for the autonomous power of nature, her dynamics, for all kinds of pioneers in cities or urbanised countryside.
The early beginning of Oasis

Research instead of frustration

Heem- en natuurtuinen geïnventariseerd

Een onderzoek naar de verscheidenheid in werkterreinen in de Nederlandse natuur- en heemtuinen en -parken

Willy Leufgen
Marianne van Lier

IVN, vereniging ter bevordering van het milieubesef
We’ve now written our 3rd guide. Go to: www.stichtingoase.nl/tuinlocaties-per-provincie
We started with 80 subscribers

...and a strong statement

“We hope that we learn to live equivalent with nature in our kind of gardens.”
The evolution of “Oase”, the magazine

There are now 1100 subscribers
The following slides look at some of the key figures and gardens which were the inspiration for wildlife gardening in The Netherlands, starting with Jac Thijsse, who, created Thijsse’s Hof in 1925 in Bloemendaal ('Hof' means 'Court')
Thijssse’s Hof still exists today
Dr Thijsse wrote very popular and accessible books.
Cees Sipkes, 1895-1989, was a Dutch plant breeder who developed into a wildlife gardener, and created... Heemtuin Tenellaplas at Rockanje
Another pioneering wildlife garden showcasing all the habitats of the area
The great garden at Amstelveen – horticulture with native plants

Phyteuma spicatum subsp. nigrum and Equisetum sylvaticum: Black rampion with wood horsetail.
Rob took common hardy annuals and make seed mixtures, themed by colour. He launched this commercially in 1990, and it was taken up by Nigel Dunnett at the University of Sheffield.
The company where you can buy all your wildflower seeds and plants in The Netherlands.
About 10 little companies are now growing professionally wild plants in NL
Louis le Roy and his Eco-cathedral in Mildam, a big influence on natural gardens.
Ger Londo of the Institute for Forest Research and Nature Management
Left above: Our founding fathers and one mother, 3-9-93
Willy and Marianne’s own garden, 1994-2009
A special garden house from loam, wood and straw with a green sedum roof.
English visitors called what we were creating: Artistic Ecology. (Garden’s Illustrated, March 2005.)
After a year of preparation with some founding meetings and an excursion to the Prionagarden in Schuinesloot we **founded Wilde Weelde** in The Hague, **December 1994**

About the association of green garden experts: **Wilde Weelde**
A lot of support by Wilde Weelde-members, spring 1998
Floriade 2012, Venlo, Wilde Weelde Wereld
Vakgroep Heemtuinbeheer, founded in 1995
Excursions of the branch of professional nature garden managers
Small books, big impact...
Following the path of Alex Oberholzer
A part of the books, published around the millennium change in German language, written by Alex Oberholzer and Reinhard Witt, who had quite an influence on our work!
...and from Reinhard Witt
Freiburg – A Mecca of natural playing grounds in south-west Germany.
Berlin – ‘Green makes school’
Palatine School, Worthing (above and left)

Jessie Younghusband School, Chichester
If the children don’t come into nature anymore, let’s bring nature to the children!
“Free play for nature and children”

October, 18, 2007, Castle Groeneveld
A suitcase full of ideas
De Speeldernis
in Rotterdam
Green schoolyard, Primary school in Zoetermeer
Seminar with 10 professionals following the process of planning, realizing, maintaining and using educational green playing and learning landscapes around schools each in his or her own surrounding all over the Netherlands, 2016.
Elyseum, 2-years training for ecological gardeners in the Netherlands (started in 2006)
The oldest wildflower garden in Belgium, Hortus Michel Thiery in Gent.
Looking after our roots and the brown stuff.

Sarah Rubalcava
(Bord na Mona, Ireland)

Bord na Móna are the custodians of 7.5% of Ireland’s boglands. These boglands provide a space for biodiversity, which is important on a local and national level. Incorporating and investing in biodiversity brings value to our company, but also to society in general. Through Bord na Móna’s amenities, people and communities can come and freely enjoy the rich biodiversity Ireland’s boglands have to offer.
The Brown Stuff – Looking after your roots!
The Brown Stuff

♦ Overview of Peatlands & Peat
♦ Threats to peatlands
♦ What are the alternatives to peat
♦ Some peat based compost #peatfree
♦ Our Eco-pledges
What is Peat?

- Sphagnum in Ireland approx 15 species
- Slow growing approx 1mm/year, in waterlogged conditions – 90% water, 10% organic material, with the odd dead body thrown in
- Historically used as animal bedding in 19th C
- Mid 20th C – used in mushroom industry and then in the horticultural industry
- 2003 2.6M m³ harvested for horticultural sector generating €48M including exports to UK! Extraction far exceeds accumulation!!
Overview of different types

- In the past represented > 17% of our landcover
- Peatlands – fens & bogs
- Fens are fed by rain and mineral groundwater – alkaline 7-8 pH
- Wider diversity of species
- Bogs – raised, blanket (upland & lowland) & cut over bogs
International Peatland Areas

Ireland is flying the flag for the EU, with 8% of the world’s raised bogs!

http://www.wetlands.org/Whatarewetlands/Peatlands/tabid/2737/Default.aspx
What Peatlands do for us

- Water storage & regulation – flood protection
- Carbon sink – twice as much C stored than in forestry!
- 2\textsuperscript{nd} best carbon sinks in the world (oceans are top)
- Biodiversity – mammals (frogs, otters, hares), birds (peregrine falcon, hen harrier), pollinators, highly adapted flowers (e.g. orchids, bog rosemary), carnivorous plants, orchids etc..
80% lost due to drainage, afforestation, large scale turf cutting, dumping, inappropriate burning, over grazing & invasive sps
Threats

- Drainage – once drained, the moss dies
- Conversion to other land use e.g. agriculture, forestry
- Mining has led to the destruction of 25% of peatlands worldwide
- Invasive species, such as Sarracenia.
- UN vs IPCC differing classifications! The UK classifies it as a fossil fuel, the IPCC as a slow renewable fuel!
- Non rehabilitation of privately owned after harvesting
What are the alternatives

Monty Don: “digging it up is on a par with ripping up ancient hedgerows to make sawdust”

- Coir – coconut fibre
- Bark/wood fibres
- Soil
- Mountain resources – sheep & bracken
- Worms & the Irish spud in Donegal
- Garden Resources (leaf mould, garden compost)
Coir – Coconut fibre

- Residues from coconut processing
- Recycling material from over-seas transport costs/CO2 emissions??
- Holds water well vs needs frequent watering
- Improves aeration
- Sterile like peat
- Supports healthy root development
- Good for making mixed composts
Westland’s Gro Sure

- Based on special composted wood fibres known as “West+”
- 4 month slow release Fertiliser
- New Horizon range
Bord na Mona Gro Wise

- Green waste forms 25% of their composts
- Peat free range
- Operates recycling of green resources to help implementation of peat dilution policy
- 100% peat replacement

By 2030!
Soil based John Innes

- Seed & Cutting, No 1-3
- Loam based *with some peat*, grit & fertilisers
- Benefits of soil!
- Longer lasting
- Easy to rewet
Dalefoot Composts

- Old Victorian garden recipe
- Bracken ferns – potash rich – needs to be managed to protect Uplands
- Sheep’s wool – providing slow release nitrogen
Living Green Compost

- 17 Million worms eating Irish spuds!
- Certified Organic
- Contains some peat 20:80 peat:worm casts
- Produces 17M tons compost
- Provides worms to anglers/tackle shops
- Excellent results in plant trials – seed germination & root development
Our Garden Resources

Leaf Mould:

♦ Free! And Fungal!!
♦ Great for seed sowing
♦ Additive to garden compost/commercial compost
♦ 1-2 years - How patient are you??
♦ Weed seeds???
Leaf Mould

How to:

♦ Collect – choose your day wisely!

♦ Old fashioned peg & chicken wire or black bin bags

♦ Aeration & moisture

♦ Time & patience
Different leaves have different rates of decomposition

Shredding can be helpful – watch out for hedgehogs!

Beech, hornbeam & oak are best/quickest

Finished product – personal choice & depends on end use
Garden Composting

Benefits:

♦ Its free and will save you money
♦ Nutrient rich includes micronutrients!
♦ Recycling – avoiding landfill
♦ Great for soil: texture, structure helping aeration & moisture retention
♦ Good to add to other composts
♦ Feels good
Garden Composting

The Five Essentials:

- Green & brown stuff
- Air – who’s breathing?
- Moisture
- Space/size
- Particle size – expose those surfaces!
- (6th – Time)
Gardening Composting

The Green / Brown Mix:

♦ The decomposers need food & energy!

♦ Green stuff: provides N₂ – protein e.g. grass, soft leafy stuff, fruit & veg

♦ Brown stuff: provides carbon – energy e.g. hedge trimmings, paper, autumn leaves

Air!

Moisture:

♦ Soft leafy stuff

♦ Water!
Garden Composting

Particle size:

- Expose and increase surfaces for action
- Get the balance right to build heat and maintain aeration
- A good working compost can achieve temps 60-70 °C which will deal with weed seeds.
Bins, piles & worms!
Eco-pledge

♦ Composting workshop
♦ Make your own compost/leaf mould
♦ Consider using peat reduced/peat free
♦ Ask your local nursery/garden centre what they use?
Compost is alive with wildlife!
Some root nodules

♦ I’m on Facebook: Rubalcava Heritage Services
♦ Twitter: @sarahrubalcava

♦ Thank you 😊
19 years of Garden for Life: working together to promote wildlife gardening in Scotland
Dr Deborah Long and Juliette Camburn (Garden for Life Forum, Scotland)
19 years of Garden for Life

Working together to promote wildlife gardening in Scotland

www.gardenforlife.org.uk
#garden4life
Who are we?

We are a partnership of Scottish environmental organisations working together to increase enjoyment and understanding of wildlife in gardens.
What do we do?

We support action by gardeners for the benefit of biodiversity.

We promote the benefits of gardening for health and well being.
How do we do that?

By promoting sustainable gardening as a way to increase people’s enjoyment and understanding of the importance of biodiversity.

Enabling people to garden with sustainability and wildlife in mind.

Celebrating the environmental and health benefits of people growing their own food.

Sharing good practice between Forum members.
The last 19 years....

- 1997: Plant for Wildlife forum established
- 2002: Reports written
- 2006: Leaflets created
- 2007: First Living Garden
- 2008: 
- 2012: Celebrated Year of Natural Scotland
- 2013
- 2014
- 2015
- 2016

Secretariat

Chair

Funding

£0!!

No one!
Current initiatives

• Our members
• 6 monthly Forum meetings
• 2 active sub groups
• Industry seminars
• Website & blog
• Materials
• Biodiversity Award
• Living Garden
• Living Garden workshops
• Wildlife gardening Q&A
Garden for Life Forum members

SWHA
Scottish Wild Harvests Association

BTO
Looking out for birds

Scottish Wildlife Trust

Buglife

trellis
Supporting health through horticulture

Keep Scotland Beautiful
Sharing the best in Gardening

Royal Horticultural Society

Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society

Bumblebee Conservation Trust

Butterfly Conservation Scotland

CSCN
Central Scotland Green Network Trust

giving nature a home

froglife

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Gardening Scotland

Plantlife

Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens

HTA

Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society

Community Food & Health Scotland, Grounds for Learning, National Trust for Scotland, Soil Association, The Conservation Volunteers
Keep Scotland Beautiful provides the secretariat, and meetings can have up to 20 attendees, where we discuss plans, share information and work together on projects. And have cake!
Sub groups
Living Gardens; Ecoschools; Communications
We try to have an industry seminar every two years. The most recent was focused on Going Peat Free.
Website & blog

www.gardenforlife.org.uk
https://gardenforlifeblog.wordpress.com/
Materials

Leaflets
Garden for Life
Garden for Orchards
Garden without peat
Garden for birds
Garden for butterflies
Garden in pots and containers
Garden for food

Badges

Pop ups and banners

Living Garden funders report
Garden for Life Biodiversity Award

This particular group has done many things, including planting Kidney Vetch for Small Blue butterflies.
The Living Garden Colonnade

Each of the Garden for Life members has a little stand at Gardening Scotland at the Royal Highland showground, Edinburgh.
Living Garden workshops

Visitors can explore how to garden for nature through exciting & informative workshops led by forum members – e.g. this year:

• Gardening for Butterflies
• Using native plants in your gardens
• Sustainable gardening – recycling & reusing
• Bunting making using vegetable printing
• Easy ways to ‘garden for life’
Wildlife Gardening Q&A

Supported by the Royal Horticultural Society, at the show we have a panel made up of forum members.
Ministerial support at Living Garden

Each year, the Minister for the Environment visits Gardening Scotland and spends time going round Living Garden area, speaking to Forum members and finding out about that year’s garden design & theme.
Promotion

At the Living Garden each year, the BBC Beechgrove Garden features our show garden.
Members of the Garden for Life forum were encouraged to use #garden4life when tweeting about the show and Living Garden activities. 48 tweets used the hashtag, reaching in excess of 70,585 people.
Living Gardens
2007 - 2008
Living Gardens
2011 - 2012
Living Gardens
2013 - 2014
Living Gardens
2015 - 2016
Living Garden 2016

One Planet Picnic Pocket Garden competition
The winning designs:
building the gardens
The finished gardens
Future plans

• Keep Forum going!
• Adding more resources to website
• Updating leaflets and adding new ones
• Industry seminar on alternatives to bedding plants
• Education sub group
Living Garden 2017

In 2017, The Garden for Life Forum will be working with partners to build a Living Garden. This time our theme of wildlife gardening will be linked to Scotland’s Year of History, Heritage & Archaeology.
Plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.