



Loki Schmidt in the tropical greenhouse at Hamburg. Photo: I. Roehrbein

Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Loki Schmidt

This year our foundation will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the late Loki Schmidt. She was the founder of our International Gardeners Exchange Project and one of the leading conservationists of Germany at her time. Loki Schmidt was born on March 3rd, 1919, and grew up in Hammerbrook, a bleak and densely populated working-class district of Hamburg. The love of plants was sparked early in young Loki. Lady's-mantle and royal fern, spotted on family field trips, were part of her childhood memory. As a schoolchild, she would visit the old Botanical Garden of Hamburg right in the centre of the city. All this had a lasting influence on her. She remained devoted to both field and garden botany, and managed to combine both fields in a unique way during a public career which lasted for more than thirty years.

Loki Schmidt started as a conservationist late in her life, at the age of 57, when her husband Helmut Schmidt was Chancellor of Germany. Many of her campaigns and initiatives are still very alive, and some of them have turned into full-fledged regional or national projects. Her charming personality and

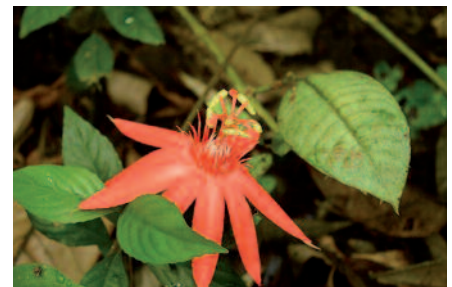
her constancy won her many lasting friendships to scientists, politicians, gardeners, administrators and journalists. Loki Schmidt was the centre of a huge informal network of friends and experts.

In 1977 she created the German foundation for the conservation of threatened plants which today is named for her "Loki Schmidt Foundation". In 1980 they started the campaign "Flower of the Year" publicizing rare plants like marsh gentian or wild daffodil. This was new for Germany. Loki was a true pioneer, and she was immediately copied by ornithologists, entomologists, foresters and the like. Otherwise, her foundation sponsored the first Atlas of the German flora, still buys pieces of land with rare plants, arranges symposia and is engaged in a vast number of conservation activities.

Concerning Botanical Gardens, Loki Schmidt organized a symposium "Establishing a Gene Bank for Threatened Native Plants" as early as 1981 and invited stakeholders from all fields concerned: Agricultural seed banks experts, field botanists, and curators,

superintendents and gardeners from botanical gardens. Never before such a variety of experts had met in Germany. Admittedly, the immediate success was negligible, but Loki never gave up. She would have been very pleased to know that today a project called WIPs-DE II, set up by the ministry of the environment, organizes the conservation of wild plants of special concern in cooperation with botanical gardens and gene banks. The chief gene bank involved is aptly named for her as "Loki Schmidt Genbank".

In 1987, Loki initiated the International Gardeners Exchange Project in order to foster the cooperation of German botanical gardens with their partner institutions abroad. It is another enduring project which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2018. Up till now, some 270 individual travels have been sponsored. You will read more about our current activities in in this newsletter.



Passiflora vitifolia, a passion flower from Costa Rica. Photo: M. Rauscher

Ten years later in 1997, Loki published her magnum opus "Die Botanischen Gärten Deutschlands", the first and only comprehensive book on this subject. It is a very personal book based on first-hand experience. In order to write it, Loki Schmidt visited all botanical gardens in Germany and talked to its directors, curators, superintendents and gardeners. No other person has been regarded, loved and adored by the staff of all botanical gardens in Germany like Loki Schmidt. She was made honorary member of the association of superintendents (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Technischer Leiter) in 1998 and of the Federation of Botanical Gardens of Germany in 1999.



Once again in 2018 our foundation has helped gardeners from botanical gardens to travel to and from Germany in order to boost their professional expertise.



The staff of the Botanical Garden Canberra with Anna Reichel. Photo: A. Reichel

At the Garden of Bayreuth (Germany) Anne Reichel is in charge of the collection of Australian trees and shrubs. She travelled to Canberra to learn how these plants are cultivated in their home country. *Weeds are a problem both in Germany and down under. Oxalis is cursed at in both places. I have tried to uproot this wicked plant where I find it, which pleased my Australian colleagues.*

Plant diversity in Costa Rica. Markus Rauscher from Tübingen and Ulrich Hörner from Hamburg took part in a specialist botanical excursion led by Michael Schwerdtfeger from Göttingen. This small country, situated between two oceans, houses nearly 5% of the global plant diversity. This is due to an exceptional richness of different vegetation



Costa Rica is a paradise for epiphytes. Photo: M. Rauscher

zones. Here you will find mangroves, rain forests, seasonal forests and tropical alpine vegetation as well as active volcanos. They returned from the tropical country to their home gardens highly motivated, because they had seen so many new plants species and met so many like-minded friends and colleagues.



Into the canopy with professional safety gear. Photo: P. Steppke

Tree climbing at the Arnold Arboretum (Boston, USA). The Arnold Arboretum is the place to be if you want to learn more about cultivating and curating botanical tree collections. Pierre Steppke from Munich says: *I worked with the arborist crew in the Fraxinus collection and climbed into the canopy to learn new techniques of tree care.*

Alpine cooperation revitalized, between Munich and Katse Garden (Lesotho) The co-operation between these two gardens began in 2005. After a break of several years, it got a new start when Jenny Wainwright-Klein, Clara Friedrich and Andreas Gröger from the Munich Botanical Garden visited the Katse Garden last year. *We were very pleased to see that the parts which we had helped to lay out in 2010 were well-kept and even*



Treating seeds with fire. Photo: J.Wainwright-Klein

have expanded. This time we concentrated on seed propagation. In some species, treating recalcitrant seeds with fire and fumes seems to be a successful method to break their dormancy.

Alpine cooperation started between Hamburg and Innsbruck (Austria).

Philipp Bornemann is in charge of the Alpine collection of the Hamburg Botanical Garden. He visited Innsbruck to learn how they do it there, and to see how to apply their methods for his task at Hamburg. *They have a cute little pikaxe to weed between the rocks which is made especially for the Innsbruck garden.* Philipp also visited their Alpine Garden at the Patscherkofel in 2000 meters altitude.



Soldanella in its native haunt. Photo: P. Bornemann

STIFTUNG INTERNATIONALER GÄRTNERAUSTAUSCH

International Exchange Project of Gardeners between Botanical Gardens



A German gardener at Talca. Photo: R. Huber

The Botanical Garden at Talca (Chile) was the place which junior staff member René Huber from Bayreuth visited last year. For the most time I worked together with Misael Errázuriz. We renovated the shading system and mixed the substrate for re-potting. My Spanish is not very good, and the colleagues were very patient with me and were glad to see that I made progress. My sincere thanks go to the people who made this journey possible. It was a great and unforgettable experience.

From Hamburg to Bogor (Indonesia). Arnaldy Indra Prasetya and Tim Reich were still serving their apprenticeship at the Botanical Garden Hamburg when they got the opportunity to visit the famous tropical garden at Bogor. They worked in the nursery and helped to pot orchids but also were involved in the documentation and identification of the collection.



In the nursery of the Bogor garden. Photo: A. Indra Prasetya

From Bochum (Germany) to Singapore. Lukasz Wisniewski is a junior staff member at the Bochum Botanical Garden and has been fascinated by orchids from his childhood. In his report he states: *I was overwhelmed by the plant diversity of the tropics. It was great to see plants in their natural habitat which so far I have known only from our botanical garden.*

Pyrrhosia piloselloides, for instance, which does not very well in our greenhouses, grows healthily in the full sun... The substrate for orchids consists of pieces of charcoal and nothing else. This has the advantage that it lasts very long because there will be no fungi to decompose it. I shall try to experiment with this method in our tropical greenhouses at Bochum.



Orchid diversity at Singapore. Photo: L. Wisniewski

From Berlin to Kew (England). It had been the dream for a long time for Constanze Ludwig from Berlin to visit the Royal Botanical Garden Kew, and it became true last summer. She was stunned by the dimensions and the variety of the place. At first it seems to be impossible to grasp the richness of this grand garden and its collections. At Berlin, Constanze is partly working with the seed collection, so it was mandatory for her to visit the Millennium Seedbank at Wakehurst Place, the largest of its kind worldwide for threatened plant species. *It was a great experience to learn which techniques they use and how they organize their processes. Everything they do here is extremely professional.*

Hamburg and Jerusalem - the revival of an old partnership. After having finished their training at the Hamburg Botanical Garden, Jana Henschel and Klara Korb visited the garden at Jerusalem, the place where the International Gardeners Exchange had started in 1987. They were met by Michael Avishai, the founder and first director of the garden. The two young gardeners reported: *Michael Avishai was one of the first persons we met at Jerusalem. He welcomed us with great enthusiasm and told us about his connections to the Botanical Garden of Hamburg and how he had organized the*



Michael Avishai and the two gardeners from Hamburg in spring 2018. Photo: J. Henschel.

first gardeners exchange project together with Loki Schmidt in 1987. He still works at the garden every day, and the door to his room was always open to us. Patiently he answered all questions we asked him about the garden and its history, about the state of Israel and about the Jewish religion. Michael Avishai had an eventful life. He was born in Germany, survived the holocaust and emigrated to Israel after the War. Having met him has enriched our visit and was an unforgettable experience for us.

Michael Avishai sadly passed away at the age of 83 in the end of 2018. Hans-Helmut Poppendieck, chairman of the International Gardeners Exchange, remembers: *Michael visited the Hamburg garden several time in the 1970s and 1980s, mostly to look for South African succulents which he wanted to have for his new garden at Jerusalem. He had great personal charm, was very enthusiastic and eloquent, and always seemed to be in a hurry. It was a wonderful to know him, and to know that in Jerusalem I had a dear and sincere friend. The last time we had met in person was around 1992, but every phone call and every mail at once brought back the old familiarity. Together with Loki Schmidt he was the founder personality of our exchange programme.*

For the complete reports of the exchange projects of 2018, please visit www.gaertneraustausch.de/reiseberichte.html



NaturNah

Photo: NDR, NaturNah

American Indian Life: An exhibition at the Hamburg Garden linked to the Gardeners Exchange. “Indian Summer” was the theme of the festival at the end of the exhibition “American Indians – Lost Worlds” which was staged at the Hamburg Botanical Garden in summer 2018. While the important role of the buffalo for the Native Americans is more or less a commonplace, surprisingly little is known about the crucial importance of plant biodiversity for their civilization. To give a full picture of the ethnobotany of some of the prairie tribes was the goal of this unique exhibition which took place both in the open grounds and in the greenhouses, and which was complemented by an exhibition in the natural history museum focussing on the zoological aspects of native American life.

It all started more than 10 years ago when gardeners Niels Kleissenberg and Volker Struß from Hamburg travelled the prairie regions of the USA on a tour sponsored by the International Gardeners Exchange. At the Double Ditch Indian Village in North Dakota they saw the traditional way of cultivating vegetables practised by the resident tribes of the Arikara, Mandan and Hidatse. They learned about the Three Sister Gardens for beans, maize and squash, and about other techniques. All this was far away from the American Indian stereotype to

be found in boys’ adventure books. They realized which potential the ethnobotany of the prairie tribes might have for an exhibition in the botanical garden. But it was a long way before it finally took place in 2018.

Quite unusual, the exhibition was conceived and curated by a team of gardeners led by Niels Kleissenberg and Frederic Gilbert. There were displays in the greenhouse and in wigwams set up on the big lawn as well as a nature trail with 50 information panels in the prairie department of the garden. Apart from being a big public success, the exhibition helped to strengthen the team spirit and the togetherness of the garden staff.

At the Gardeners Exchange Foundation, we take pride in the success of this wonderful achievement.

This shows how two important goals of our foundation have been fulfilled: To further the education and the personal development of the gardeners involved and to help their understanding of the civilization of foreign countries.

For a video showing the activities of the gardeners when preparing the exhibition, please visit www.ndr.de/fernsehen/sendungen/Die-ganze-Welt-in-einem-Garten,naturnah1424.html.

Projects for 2019

Once again we will have a full variety of interesting projects.

David Eder from Kiel will travel to Denver, Colorado, in order to study hardy succulents in their native place. Anna Afanasyeva and Natalia Fedorova from St. Petersburg will visit the Hamburg Botanical Garden in April in continuation of a long-standing partnership of the two gardens. Frederic Gilbert will undertake another field trip to the Appalachian Mountains in order to collect plants for the North American department of the Hamburg garden. Lynn Kaddatz recently started to work with the rhododendron collection at the Copenhagen Botanical Garden; she will travel to the Rhododendronpark at Bremen in order to learn more about rhodos from the specialists there. There also are funds for young gardeners from Germany who want to visit foreign gardens. These may be applied for at any time.

Applications for 2020

are open until September 15th, 2019.

Young gardeners may apply any time for travel funds up to 500 Euro.

For applications from outside Germany, a partner garden in Germany is required.

Contact and information

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