

## **Sankt-Peterburg – Hamburg**

### **The Peter the Great Botanical Garden – The Loki-Schmidt Garden**

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In 2019 between The Peter the Great Botanical Garden and the Loki-Schmidt Garden the traditional and long-standing partnership and business relationship was continued. We had an opportunity to take part in the International Gardeners Exchange for professional study in Hamburg. During 21 days we had to find out life of German gardeners, become acquainted the country and its culture and language, discover the architecture and landscaping of city.

First of all, our apartments located in the slightly and green part of city called Gross Flottbek. We were impressed by landscape design of private areas and blooming spring trees!

The Program included the acquaintance with botanic outdoor collections of the Loki-Schmidt Garden and Pflanzen un Blumen. Special botanical excursions were organized for us. They included next areas: the Plant geography area, the Desert garden, the Bible garden, the Mediterranean plant area, the Gross garden, the Alpine section, the Plant systematic area, the Cottage garden, the Ferns section. For example, the master of geography section devoted a lot of time to show and tell us about structure and segmentation of the collection, as well as the history of area creation. Also he demonstrated the photo from different botanical expeditions aimed to collect the species for replenishment of collections.

We took part in current work of gardeners such as weeding and cultivation, pruning plants, planting of perennials, cleaning and preparation of the territory for the exhibition. One of the items of our work was the acquaintance with water system of the garden (the methods of inclusion and water supply and technical tools of the system). To gain knowledge of the botanical labeling and tool storage organization was the important point for us, as well as the gardeners` utility rooms exploring.

The idea of studying in special Gardeners` school was unusual for Russian gardeners. We were pleased and surprised by the existence of this opportunity. It is very important to get professional training and practicing. There is no school for Gardener in the Saint Petersburg Botanical Garden right now.

We had the unique experience of plant shopping in the shop called Trox and Ruhlemann`s. There are similar stores in Russia. But we were amazed of the comfortable conditions for buyers, as well as the varieties of plants species and gardeners`goods.

In the Loki-Schmidt garden we were excited by the alley of huge *Sequoiadendron*, *Araucaria*, blooming *Magnolia*, *Prunus*, *Camelia*. We spent a few days in the open garden library where special thematic books were appropriate for our professional interest.

Our work was going on greenhouses such as subtropical plants and special propagation greenhouse (anzucht) a few days long. The masters told us about the circle of their duties and interests, the professional secrets of cultivation wild plants, shared the knowledge and working skills. Under the guidance of the masters we carried out different kind of work such as making cuttings, picking seedlings, etc.

It was the new experience for us to supervise the automatic computer control of temperature, condition, shade, light!

Planten un Blumen is the second workplace where we had a practice in the greenhouses. First of all, the local gardener conducted a circle tour of the main greenhouses: the tropical and subtropical houses with the collection of palmferns, ferns and succulents. We learned about special economical water collection technology in pool. Especially interesting thing in the demonstration was the biological protection of plants by insects. And is was the first time in our professional activity we took part in the pruning of palmferns!

In the Loki-Schmidt Garden we could exchange the plants. From Russia special Iris lokiae was delivered to Hamburg. The cuttings of such species as *Platanus*, *Microbiota*, *Camelia*, *Rose*, *Magnolia*, *Acer*, *Prunus*, *Salix* and bulbs of *Narcissus* and *Iridodicrium* were transferred to The Peter the Great Botanical Garden.

Some time was dedicated to the visits to gardens in other towns. The journey to the Berlin-Dahlem botanical garden was an unforgettable event. The gardener showed us special close greenhouses for cultivation of the genus *Nymphaea* where we were able to evaluate the high level of technical equipment. The exposition of greenhouses we could visit independently and there was great opportunity to appreciate the huge botanical variety of the garden`s collections, comfortable infrastructure for visitors and small pleasant details.

The trip to Hannover was successful and useful for us: we knew about famous German gardens – “Berggarten” and “Grobe Garten”. Our attention was sent to collections of Berggarten where the multitude of perennials was combined with strong trees making up classic English landscape style. The unique atmosphere of the place was emphasized by the oldest trees. During our visit different bulb species and cultivars of *Muscary*, *Fritilaria*, *Tulipa*, *Narcissus*, *Iris* were blooming. Also we visited the thematic exposition on the greenhouses of orchids, succulents, tropical plants and flora of Canary islands. Our imagination was amazed by the variety of cultivars of orchids, their rich blooming and design of hothouse. The royal garden of regular French style called Grobe Garten was also magic. It has the similar style with the Peterhof in Russia.

One of the interesting gardens was the Arboretum Ellerhoop - Thiensen, where we got acquainted with the history of the formation of theme gardens in Germany. It was a whole world of garden aesthetics and landscape design in one territory. A special tour of the garden was organized for us, with an introduction to the history of this area. Particularly memorable were the larch hedges, the greenhouse with camellias, swamp cypresses and the Japanese garden with delicate pine trees.

We were also lucky to get to the big Pflanzenmarkt fair. This is a large sale of plants in all of Northern Germany, which takes place only 2 times a year. The fair was held in the open-air museum in Kiekeberg. The German village of the 18-19th centuries, their life, crafts and agriculture were recreated on the territory of the museum. We do not have events similar in scale and organization, so we were impressed with this.

We noted that our cities have similar natural conditions: both are located on the riverbank, near the sea, have high humidity and changeable weather, are located at similar latitudes and, in addition to perhaps mild winters, have a similar climate. Therefore, it was important for us to see how to grow and care for plants in such conditions.

In our free time, we visited various city parks of Hamburg, Lake Alster, the zoo, admired the architecture of the city, the city Hall, St. Nicholas Church and the famous Reeperbahn.

Among other events, a varied cultural program was organized for us. One day there was an excursion to the main attractions of the city: the going up to the observation deck of the Elbe Philharmonic, a ferry ride along the Elbe, and a walk along the promenade.

In honor of the revival of the traditional and long-standing partnership between the botanical gardens of St. Petersburg and Hamburg, an official meeting of program participants took place in the Röperhof restaurant. It was a warm meeting between old and new generation, where they discussed plans for the future and remembered the past. We especially want to note the warm welcome that the German side has given us. During the internship, we met all the staff of the Loki Schmidt and Pflanzen un Blumen botanical gardens.

It was especially nice to know that the people who work there are in love and passionate about their work, are not afraid to experiment, to learn something new and to share their experiences. Once again, we were convinced that the gardener is a creative profession. Throughout our stay, we felt at home, precisely because the whole team was very friendly and opened to communication.

We were invited home to dinner, the trips to the North Sea and a bike ride along the Elba embankment were organized for us. All this will be remembered by us for many years of life!

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