

Report

on the exchange visit to

The Hamburg Botanical Garden

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From June 1st to 15th 2014, thanks to International Exchange of Gardeners, we had the opportunity to work with and to be part of The Hamburg Botanical Garden staff. We met special people, we visited new places and we tried to acquire as much knowledge as we could.

We might say it has been a complete experience, all our objectives being fulfilled beyond expectations. Although our job was to inform how it is cultivated the plants, about practical work and the organization in the economic sector, we have not missed the chance to learn and to gather information about:

- Botanical Garden Plants Collections and their management
- Diseases and pest biological control
- Training and improving staff
- Ecological education within the Botanical Garden
- Spontaneous plants in Germany's flora
- Rare plants in Germany's flora
- Botanical Garden Herbarium Collections and their management
- Decorative plants within Botanical Garden used to decorate Botanical Garden
- Involving volunteers in the activities of The Hamburg Botanical Garden

We have worked alongside well-informed and very passionate gardeners, a fact proved by the image of a garden which is very well taken care of, very rich in taxa, illustrated through numerous informative displays for mass audience. Unfortunately, there is no school to train gardeners in Romania, so the people working in garden's sectors are not qualified and learn how to achieve tasks firstly on the work ground. Training subordinate people as well as a needed and constant supervise of them are engineers' and biologists' duties.

We were impressed both by the extraordinary conditions (locker room, dining room, equipments, tools and means of studying) offered to The Hamburg Botanical Garden staff and by their self-educated spirit. Not just once, we have spotted gardeners studying in the library stocked with plentiful books.

We have met open-hearted, hospitable people, willing to help us extend our knowledge and to introduce us into the German life, culture and history.

Many visits both inside the greenhouses and in the outdoor sectors helped us identify solutions to some of the problems we face at Bucharest: fighting diseases, pest control, creating micro-climates needed for species' surviving, labeling taxon. Unfortunately, we couldn't find a solution for The Bucharest Botanical Garden biggest problem: weeds. The soil quality, climatic conditions and lawns regular maintenance turn weeds into a minor problem for The Hamburg Botanical Garden. Also, guided visits to the outdoor sectors of the Botanical Garden, to The Botanical Garden Museum and to The Pinneberg Arboretum inspired us to think of new ideas for a better exposition of The Botanical Garden's collections.



Regarding the economic sector where we spent most of the time, we can say that there are a few differences between the two botanical gardens. The Bucharest Botanical Garden's economic sector was created in 1956 and was initially formed from 4 subsections: Orchard and vine, Cereals and vegetables, Medicinal Plants, Industrial Plants. After 1990, some of them have been shut down because subject Horticulture have not been studied at The Faculty of Biology any more. The only sector left was the one generically called "Useful Plants" which gathers medicinal and industrial plants to show the practical application of plants on human life. In 2010, with the help of a volunteer students' organization, "Grandma Garden" sector was set up allowing visitors to see a traditional Romanian garden and also to get acquainted with the aromatic vegetables and plants used in the Romanian gastronomy. This space is useful to the students as well, for they can see here representatives of some important plant families. Also, from 2013 we have been sowing here traditional Romanian species of tomatoes, pepper and cabbage.

The economic sector of The Hamburg Botanical Garden contains mostly plants of alimentary interest, emphasizing on preservation of the traditional species. There is a great focus on the educational value of this sector, most of the ecological education lessons taking place here and many informative displays providing information not only on the usage of alimentary plants but also about species origin, world level of production, culture and breeding and genetic diversity.

The real working experience in here taught us that the success of such a sector is brought not only by the increased number of sowed taxon but also by the way of showing their value keeping some spontaneous plants among the layers of sowed plants to create a microhabitat similar to a natural one.



Our involvement in the activities from Economic Sector gave us the opportunity to use new tools. So we could make a comparison between their effectiveness to those used in the garden in Bucharest. Thanks to colleagues from the Garden we could carry with us in Romania a few tools that we use now giving good results in Grandmother's Garden.

The informative trips in the natural reservations and ruderal places in the surroundings of Hamburg to study spontaneous flora was opportunities to learn new things, new plants and to share knowledge with well-informed gardeners who accompanied us.



The touristic visits in Lubeck and Meldorf accompanied by Lydia Thiessen, were great opportunities to see new plants and habitats, to collect seeds, to visit interesting museums but also to meet and live for several hours in a traditional German family.



Because the Association is headquartered in Hamburg we had the honor to meet the members (Mr. Heinz Holert, Mr. Hans-Helmut Poppendieck, Mrs. Gisela Bertram) who gave us the chance to be in this program. We had a great pleasure to continue the discussions started in the garden and to know each other better, after a few days, in a more relaxed frame at a festive meal at the restaurant.



We would like to pass our gratitude to foundation for International Horticulturist Exchange (Hamburg) for the support of our visit in Hamburg. Thank you Mr. Carsten Schirarend for accepting us to be part of the garden team for two weeks. We also want to thank the staff of Hamburg Botanic Garden for every effort and kindness to work with us and their technical guidance on their various field of expertise. Thank you again to Mr. Holert for the barbecue from the last day when we had the chance to say goodbye to colleagues from the garden and to feel once again like a part from a big family.

Special thanks to Lydia Thiessen, Dorothee Kelch-Leppler, Volker Struß and Susanne, our new friends who taught us about plants but also about German hospitality and German life style.



