

# Schoolgardens



*EIONET website is happy to share articles of its members - even if we do not fully agree with their content. Below, Miklós Marton writes about school gardens.*

Traditionally main purpose of school gardens was to educate horticulture and work in general. Education for sustainability, education for cooperation has come to the fore today; health education, experience-based, action-oriented learning based on reality.



School gardens are the "heavenly classrooms" of learning, "open-air laboratories". In accordance with the very local conditions, school gardens are usually set up in the courtyard of schools and kindergartens.



*Herb garden in a Green Kindergarten*

The school garden gives people of all ages the opportunity to learn about the garden, and thus to treat with our natural environment, to use it properly. By taking care of the school garden, the children learn to use

their natural environment properly and consciously; acquire basic natural science experiences and have the opportunity to practice them in practice, to apply the lessons learned in the courses.



*Watering the compost – Regina garden*

An important outcome of school gardens is that teachers, children, and parents directly interact with each other. Getting known each other also helps other school activities.



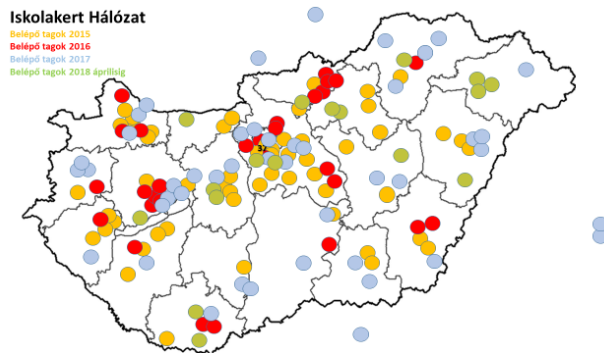
*a father drizzling the compost at a school backyard in Budapest*

At the beginning of 2018, a survey has been carried out on school gardens in Hungary by the association *Hungarian Foundation for School Gardens* on behalf of the Parliament, the Klebelsberg Center and the Education Office. The survey embraced 1118 school gardens and kindergarten gardens. The survey revealed that many educational institutions recognized the importance of school gardens.

However, experience has shown that school gardens may soon become deserted if it is not integrated into the everyday life of the school; if it does not have an operating community that can sustain it in the long run. Some of the school gardens have recognized that networking helps their daily work and joined the 200-member Hungarian Foundation for School Gardens (*Iskolakertekért Alapítvány* <http://www.iskolakertekert.hu/> ). Through the network, isolation of school gardens is abolished, flow of information is ensured, and members are given the opportunity to learn and take over the well-functioning practices of others.



*Hungarian Foundation for School Gardens* (*Iskolakertekért Alapítvány* <http://www.iskolakertekert.hu/> ) has been registered in March 2015. Main goal of the organization is to inspire the establishment of school gardens, to organize the networking of school gardens and to help them in all ways. In the spring of 2018, the Hungarian Foundation for School Gardens expanded to more than 175 members nationwide and abroad; membership has been expanding ever since.



*Hungarian Foundation for School Gardens, and its members from 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.*

*Resource: [www.iskolakertekert.hu](http://www.iskolakertekert.hu)*

The Foundation carries out a significant knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer task for the schools that make up the network, maintains a communication interface on its website, Facebook page, and newsletter. In addition, the Foundation provides its network members with tender opportunities (eg. with the assistance of NÉBIH (<https://portal.nebih.gov.hu/> ) proposals for soil quality testing, knowledge sharing, etc.), as well as an annual award for exemplary school gardens. Schools participating in the network can learn about each other's activities also at their national meeting organized by the Foundation every year, and learn from each other good practices. These meetings always give strong motivation for those present.

### **Engaged teachers**

The school garden movement is typically kept alive by some enthusiastic and dedicated teachers. Creating or renovating a school garden and operating it is a great challenge; the source of the tool supply is not completely solved, there is no pedagogical directive with sufficient depth, there is no official status for the teacher who manages the garden.



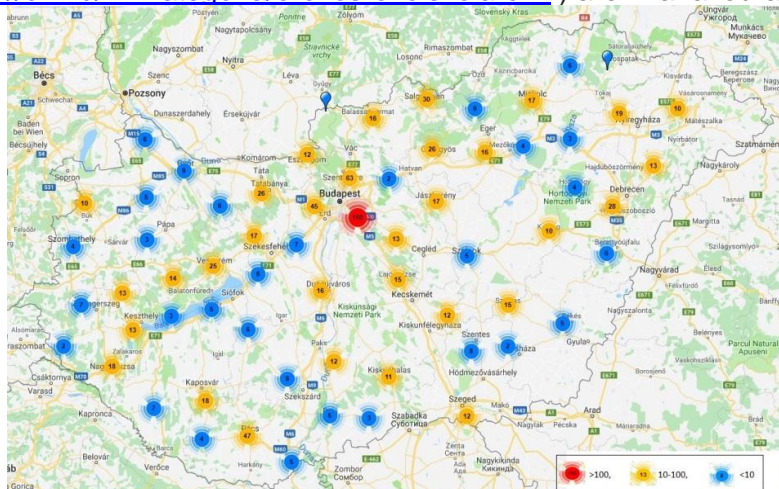
*Feeding the birds at a Green Kindergarten*

### **National School Garden Development Program**

In October 9, 2018, a meeting was held between the *Hungarian Foundation for School Gardens* and the Deputy State Secretary for Environmental Protection, which resulted in an agreement on the launch of the **National School Garden Development Program**. The program is coordinated by the *Hungarian Foundation for School Gardens*, the international firm **Syngenta** (<https://www.syngenta.hu/> ) can contribute to the program with seeds. For the year 2019, the Foundation received a grant of HUF 50 million Hungarian Forints from the **Ministry of Agriculture** (<https://www.kormany.hu/en/foldmuvelesugyi-ministerium> ) to launch the program.

Already in October 2018, the National Chamber of Agriculture (NAK, <https://www.nak.hu/> ) joined the program, and also the Diocesan Caritas of Vác city (Váci Egyházmegyei Karitás, <http://www.karitasz.vaciegyhazmegye.hu/> ) took role. The latter works in ten schools in the county. The **Szent István University, Faculty of Landscape Design and Settlement Planning (SZIE TTK** <https://szie.hu/karok/tajepiteszeti-es-telepulestervezesi-kar>) also joined the activities; they prepare school garden plans and participate in research programs.

In the program, ecological schools (ökoiskolák <https://ofi.hu/okoiskola> ) and Everlasting Ecological Schools (örökös ökoiskolák <http://ofi.hu/hir-kategoria/orokos-okoiskola-cim> ) are in a favourable position.



*Network of Green Kindergartens in Hungary (with number of Green Kindergartens in the region)*

Within the framework of the **National School Garden Development Program**, a call for proposals for beginner-, advanced-, and mentor school gardens was launched in 2019. The winner institutions obtained:

- For operating the garden some 200,000 to 1,500,000 Hungarian forints for gardening tools and seed packages;
- Free 30-hour basic training for a delegate of the institution;
- Expertise from a bio-gardener on growing technology and plant protection;
- Expertise of an experienced school garden manager on pedagogical aspects;
- Plans for the gardens prepared by landscape architect students of Szent István University, Faculty of Landscape Design and Settlement Planning

### Student's Garden at Drávafok

The Sándor Csikesz Primary School of the Pécs Reformed College (Pécsi Református Kollégium Csikesz Sándor Általános Iskolája <http://www.pecsirefokoll.hu/altisk-dravafok> ) education on orcharding has been launched in 2010, while students' garden has been established in 2012.



In most of the cases these are senior students and horticulturists who do the job with their teacher or assistant, but on special occasions, the whole school is involved in taking care of the garden. Its area is approximately one hectare.



The school was among the first ones to join to the network of school gardens coordinated by the *Hungarian Foundation for School Gardens* and regularly participates in the national meeting of the school gardens. They regularly present their experiences and practices, and elaborate professional documents. One of these is the book titled “Winter ideas for school gardens” (*Iskolakertek téli ötlettára*), that introduces great activities for the months that are not suitable for outdoor gardening.



*Pictures from the book titled “Winter ideas for school gardens”*

The school follows ecological approach, and pays special attention to genetic conservation of local species. Education highlights personal responsibility. All elements of gardening is done locally, starting from collecting the seeds ending at preparation of food.



*Open gates day at the Students' Garden in Drávafok.*

Resource: <https://www.facebook.com/iskolakertekert/photos/gm.1587340424731548/2149323811855824/?type=3&theater>

Within the frame of the **National School Garden Development Program**, the school in 2019 could gain tools and machines of around 600 000 Hungarian forints. Expertise from a bio-gardener and from an experienced school garden manager were utilized, and one of the teachers could participate on a 30-hour basic training. Among others

- fruit drier and jam preserving machine was purchased to process fruits, herb-, and spice-plants;
- a meteorological observation station has been deployed for representing connections among science subjects and gardening.

The school also plans launching of a students' enterprise for a better merchandise produced and processed goods.



**For further information:**

- Homepage of **Hungarian Foundation for School Gardens** is here: <http://www.iskolakertekert.hu/>
- Hungarian language „**School garden guide**” (Iskolakeri kalauz. Szerkesztettek: Dr. Halbritter András Albert, Mátyás Izolda Beáta, Pauliczky Nóra, Iskolakertekért Alapítvány, Budapest 2018) is here: <https://eionet.kormany.hu/download/4/18/62000/Iskolakerti%20kalauz.pdf>
- Hungarian language article: latest news on school gardens is here: <https://www.kormany.hu/hu/foldmuvelesugyi-miniszterium/hirek/az-iskolakertek-fejlesztese-hozzajarul-a-fiatalok-kornyezettudatosaganak>
- English language booklet titled „**The Hungarian Green Kindergarten Network**” is here: <https://eionet.kormany.hu/download/5/18/62000/Green%20Kindergarten%20Network%20-%20Hungary.pdf>

