

PROJECT OF
PRESENT DEN HAAG (THE HAGUE)

SOCIAL GARDENING: GREEN TOGETHER

DURATION: SEPTEMBER 2021 – DECEMBER 2023



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Organization

Primary contact	Authorised signatory
Malou Oosterhof Junior Fundraiser +316 18 58 75 53 malou@presentdenhaag.nl	Eva Mabayoje Director +316 81 61 43 57 eva@presentdenhaag.nl

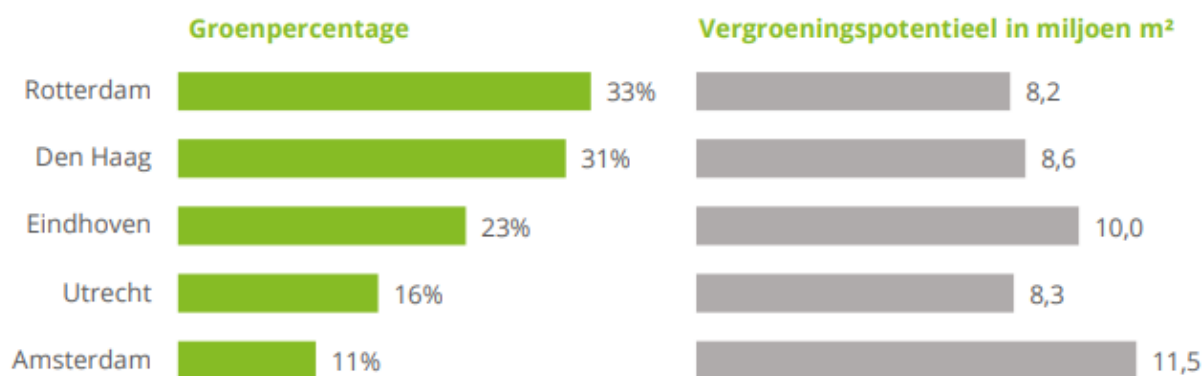
The Present Den Haag Foundation is building a social movement in which it is natural to look after each other. We do this by bridging the gap between groups of volunteers who have something to offer and people who need help. To realize this, Present Den Haag acts as an intermediary in which we organize, facilitate and supervise volunteer projects from A to Z.

Cause

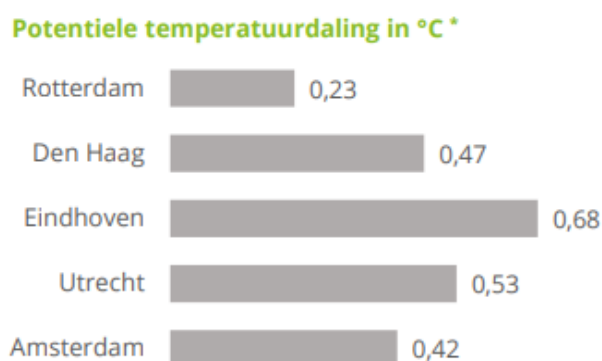


Since 2018, Present Den Haag has been more aware of the theme of sustainability and we are trying to implement this more widely into our projects. A program that has proved successful in recent years in tackling this theme head-on is Social Gardening. In 2019, following the example of our sister foundation in Amsterdam, we successfully tackled the gardens of status holders (Koolwitjelaan in the Ypenburg district) with the volunteers from the company Facilicom.

Research by Deloitte shows that in urban areas there is a loss of biodiversity, an increase in heat stress and water problems due to the high degree of petrification.



From research report Deloitte October 2019¹



The Hague performs below average with a green percentage of 31% (nationally this is 36%). The biggest outlier in the Haaglanden region is the municipality of Wassenaar with 70%. Although this is a wonderful start, The Hague has a greening potential of up to 8.6 million square meters! If we counter the tiling trend, together we can recover almost half a degree of heat and create a cooler living environment for our and future generations.

Another idea behind this project: a garden that we tackled in 2019 was on the list for maintenance in 2020... We have studied and listed the obstacles that have caused this.

¹ <https://www2.deloitte.com/nl/nl/pages/deloitte-analytics/articles/state-of-state-data-analyse-brengt-groenpercentage-tuinen-in-kaart.html>

‘Just put some tiles in, I honestly wouldn’t know how to take care of those plants and with my disability I would never be able to keep up with the maintenance.’

Aid receiver of the project Social Gardening, 2020

Firstly, a lack of network: after our help, there was no support to maintain the garden. The aid recipients have physical and mental limitations that prevent them from being able to do many things independently. There exists a feeling of shame to ask for help, which is reinforced by, for example, the pride within certain cultures for solving problems within the privacy of their own home or by a lack of connection and sense of responsibility at the neighbourhood level.

A second hurdle of powerlessness is poverty stress: tiling makes the garden low-maintenance and residents spend little time and money. These people do not have the means to become more sustainable and because they

often do not know that they can apply for grants for sustainability (as an individual and as a neighbourhood), a green alternative is often not even considered!

Thirdly, there is a lack of knowledge about plants and gardening itself: which plants actually provide more oxygen, which plants bloom beautifully in spring and how can you enjoy plants all year round (with *evergreens*)? Practical information about plants that can be harmful to facades and foundations (climbers) or to animals (toxic species) is also important. If something doesn't work out in gardening, one becomes demotivated; with such basic knowledge in your back pocket, maintaining a garden becomes enjoyable for yourself and the neighbourhood.

Present Utrecht has set up a multi-year program since this year and is busy implementing it. This inspired us to give a new meaning to this (normally one-year) programme: Green Together, with a duration of two years. This ensures that we can visit neighbourhoods more often to support them in the road to independent connection and becoming ‘green’ at neighbourhood level, that we have the time to disseminate information and to enter into a lasting relationship within and with The Hague.



Setup

To combat petrification, knowledge, a sense of connection in the neighbourhood and, above all, a low-threshold initiative are required. That is why we have divided this program into 3 initiatives.

Initiative 1: Knowledge is power

A lack of knowledge creates a feeling of powerlessness, both among the aid recipients and the volunteers. By providing the basic knowledge about gardening, self-confidence and fun arise when they are busy in the garden, which in turn contributes to the connection between the two! In addition to promoting a garden that can be maintained for a long time and with great pleasure, that is what we are committed to: a garden! Emptying the jungle after which a desert of tiles is created is something that we as an organization no longer support. In the context of sustainability, we want to make a green garden accessible for aid recipients. That is why we work together with our sister foundation Present Utrecht, who have engaged a landscape gardener and a garden designer to devise alternatives to prevent tiling. A sustainable solution for the neglected garden is thus based on expertise. These options are recorded in an information brochure that we can have printed in The Hague and take with us to the project days (see initiative 3) to entice aid recipients with a sustainable alternative to a tiled garden. We also offer our volunteers the opportunity to undergo training in collaboration with our sustainable partners to promote expertise in Social Gardening: for example, we can offer the aid recipient and the volunteer the opportunity to learn more about which plants to remove and more important: which plants to nurture!



Initiative 2: Green Together

Equality between help recipient and helper is the basis for a healthy reciprocal relationship. Everyone has something to offer, whether that is a cup of coffee or putting the plants in the soil yourself. Because the aid recipients participate in the garden, their self-esteem and the sense of ownership of the garden increase. Before working on the garden, we want to involve social workers, neighbourhood

networks, residents' associations, residential groups and/or community officers, etc. in this project to ensure community-wide awareness. In this way a foundation is laid for sustainable change: (groups of) volunteers who may be willing to commit themselves to one of the aid recipients. A strong network in the neighbourhood gives such a buddy system the opportunity to grow and prosper.

Initiative 3: Social Gardening Day

By transferring knowledge and activating the neighbourhood, we are working towards the *ultimate moment*: Social Gardening Day. The locations for this day will differ per district: one district has a tiled neighbourhood square that needs to be tackled (because of problematic 'wild parking', flooding, heat, etc.), another district has a social housing flat with a communal garden where the residents can participate in the work, a third neighbourhood has a number of gardens of individual houses that have been neglected. The day itself builds on the Social Gardening projects of recent years, with a few adjustments. Firstly, the location will be given a new *look*: where in previous years the tile trend to keep the garden low maintenance, the gardens will now be planted in a biodiverse and sustainable manner. Secondly, we will mobilize a large group of volunteers in a deprived area in one day: at the same time, the outdoor space in a neighbourhood with the vulnerable residents of The Hague will be renovated, providing space for connection and meeting. The plants are supplied by our partner Duurzaam Den Haag. A second Gardening Day in the season after it helps² in establishing long-term relationships in the neighbourhoods. Looking after each other as local residents is desirable and also pleasant.



With these three initiatives, we regularly strengthen social contact to combat loneliness, promote social cohesion at neighbourhood level and we all contribute to a healthy living environment in The Hague: Green Together!

² In the experience of our sister foundation Present Utrecht. Their report on the pilot: <https://stichtingpresent.nl/utrecht/wp-content/uploads/sites/152/2020/07/Evaluatieverslag-Sociaal-Tuinieren-pilot-Present-Utrecht-2019.pdf>

Elaboration

We want to apply these three initiatives in a number of deprived areas in The Hague. We are currently considering various options, including Oorden en Raden, Bouwlust, Vrederust, Morgenstond, Spoorwijk, Transvaal and Mariahoeve. The latter neighbourhood is on our list because our partner Vestia has indicated that help is needed there and they would like to help in strengthening the neighbourhood cohesion. In the preparatory phase of this program we will weigh up the options and consult with our local partners and local residents. We also keep a close eye on the current situation in the neighbourhoods in order to be able to offer help where it is really needed.



Vestia proposal for Social Gardening in Transvaal: seesaw tile and bedding plants on the neighbourhood square!

A Social Gardening day can be completed in various ways. This mainly depends on the volunteer offer and the time of year. The following options allow us to work seasonally, but also to remain active with our initiative for the remaining months.

Option 1. Planting season

Option 2. Harvest Festival

Option 3. Winterize

Option 4. Maintenance & Refurbishment

March – June

July – August

September – October

Whole year through

‘We are so pleased with our vegetable pad. The clients come outside more often to water the plants and care for them. The kids love to see how nature works: a seed grows into a product we buy in the supermarket!’

Social Worker Women’s Shelter Stichting Perspektief, 2021

In order to give an impression of the different phases in this program, we have set them out broadly below: preparatory, executive and ultimately evaluating.

Preparatory phase (October 2021 – February 2022)

Knowledge is Power	Print information folder	Distribute leaflets to volunteers	
Green together	Make contact with partners and possibly. neighbourhood organizations	Promotion Social Gardening	Choose neighbourhoods
Social Gardening Day	Schedule	Coordination project day 1 and 2	

Executive phase (March 2022 – October 2023)

Knowledge is Power	Distribute information leaflets	Offer training to volunteers	
Green together	Checking long-term neighbourhood collaboration in new neighbourhoods	Contact with partners and possibly. neighbourhood organizations	
Social Gardening Day	Coordination project day 3 to 14		

Evaluation phase (November 2023 – December 2023)

Knowledge is Power	Impact measurement volunteers	Impact measurement aid recipients	Impact measurement society
Green together	Contact with partners and possibly. neighbourhood organizations	Evaluation through surveys	
Social Gardening Day	Thank you letter to neighbourhoods with any photos and encouragement for future project		

Intended purpose

With Social Gardening: Green Together, the Present Den Haag Foundation aims to bridge the gap between the living situation of a vulnerable fellow citizen and making our city more sustainable. With this we want to contribute to greening and a healthy urban life for residents of The Hague. We hope to get volunteers and neighbour networks moving for Social Gardening by offering various tailor-made projects.



Target audiences

1. The social organizations we focus on are Middin, the Perspektief Foundation, the Salvation Army and Impegno, all located in The Hague.
2. With this project we expect between 140 and 1,300³ Residents of The Hague who receive help to reach these organizations and contribute to their well-being.
3. Delivering Social Gardening: Green Together is a sustainable project with which we can get many volunteers on their feet; we think we can activate at least 200 volunteers from different networks (companies, students, churches).

Cooperation partners

By definition, the Present Foundation works together with professional assistance and will also cooperate with social organizations that provide care to residents of The Hague in 'Social Gardening: Together Green'. Because we have been able to organize various projects in The Hague in the past 13 years using the Present method, we have built up warm contacts with, among others, Middin, Perspektief, Impegno, Duurzaam The Hague, The Salvation Army and Vestia.

For the implementation we will approach Middin, Perspektief, Impegno and other daytime activities in order to be able to guarantee the maintenance of the gardens with their clients. Impegno recently let us know that it would like to participate with groups of volunteers. Sustainable The Hague has been a partner

'Clients learn to take care of something and experience what effect their effort has when they tend to it regularly. It has stimulated a feeling of responsibility amongst them, making them divide different tasks and planning ahead, for example when to water the plants!'

Social Worker Women's Shelter Stichting
Perspektief, 2021

³ Minimum = individual aid receivers, maximum = local residents that will experience the benefits of these projects

of the Social Gardening initiative for a number of years. This time we involve them as before in the sustainability process of the gardens in The Hague. They will supply responsible plants and provide practical information that we can use during the project days. Housing corporation Vestia has indicated that it manages apartment complexes in a number of neighbourhoods with social rental homes whose gardens must be planted sustainably. They help us with the distribution of the digital flyers and physical posters to activate the neighbourhood and involve it in the movement that starts when the gardens are tackled. We also have good contact with Streetsport The Hague, which means that we can deploy neighbourhood sports coaches throughout The Hague to activate and enthuse local residents. We will also carry out projects in neighbourhoods that we are not yet familiar with, through which we will establish new contacts with, for example, neighbourly networks, housing associations, entrepreneurs, neighbourhood coaches and local police officers.

Promotion and evaluation

Present Den Haag has its own accounts on various social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn) where we report on the projects we carry out. For this project we will use *#socialtuinieren* *#samengroen* and any other #'s if needed. There are a number of moments when we evaluate and reflect on the progress of the program. After the project days, we do our usual oral evaluation (in corona time this is by telephone to ensure safety), in which we check how all participants experienced it. We then speak with the volunteer, the social worker and preferably with a number of neighbourhood professionals (sports coach, community police officer, etc.). Weekly keeps Present Hague an internal evaluation of the current and upcoming projects. In addition, a report is drawn up every month of the projects carried out for our own administration and ultimate accountability.



Because we want to fund this program sustainably in the future and want to attract companies that want to finance us structurally, we use a number of moments to measure whether we really make a difference. We can use the results to detect teething problems and motivate companies to commit to Social Gardening. We measure this version, Green Together, on a number of components that we have linked to *sustainable development goals* and to our own vision.

SDG 1

- Thema: armoede
- Wat is de impact voor degene die in armoede leeft en van wie de tuin wordt opgeknapt?

SDG 11

- Thema: duurzame steden en gemeenschappen
- Wat is de impact op de sociale cohesie in de wijk? In hoeverre draagt dit bij aan gezond stedelijk leven?

SDG 15

- Thema: leven op het land
- Wat is de impact op de leefomgeving?

Visie Present

- '... een beweging op gang brengen in Den Haag waarbij steeds meer mensen het vanzelfsprekend vinden om naar elkaar om te zien.'
- Wat is de impact op de vrijwilligers? Blijven zij in beweging?

In addition, in 2023 we have the prospect of new measuring instruments that we will be developing in collaboration with Present Nederland. This mainly allows to measure the social impact on aid recipients. We expect that before Social Gardening: Green Together is completed, we will be able to use these measuring instruments for a more extensive evaluation.

Expected results (quantitative & qualitative)

In a 28-month period (September 2021 - December 2023), we expect to be able to organize 14 projects. With this we will at least help 140⁴ vulnerable people to a green living environment and we indirectly expect to be able to make about 1,300 local residents around the locations happy with the renewed green environment. We expect to mobilize 220 volunteers to realize this project. In order to be able to distribute green knowledge among those involved, we will distribute 500 information leaflets. Our volunteers are also offered the training of one of our partners.

In this project we work with partners and care providers who help vulnerable people to reintegrate or offer a day care program. By offering them the opportunity to become part of this project, we give them the opportunity to learn and develop. Partly for this reason, we see a high qualitative added value in these projects and we expect that the results of the impact measurement will reflect the same.

⁴ Because of COVID measures this is a low estimate since group size will have to be reduced when necessary

Strengths and weaknesses

A hard thing in times of the pandemic is the attraction and recruitment of volunteer groups. Fortunately, we have now attracted many partners who are interested in going green and who have the theme of sustainability high on the agenda. Furthermore, this project will only start when the vast majority of the Netherlands will (presumably) be vaccinated. For us, this means a greater chance of groups of volunteers who were previously unable to register due to fear and the internal security policy of companies.

This program is sustainable: both for nature and financially. We expect to be able to attract our partners and other companies to also guarantee financing in the future. By participating in this programme, they can give substance to their sustainability objectives and give substance to corporate social responsibility in a different way. The social quotient and a sustainability aspect make this program more than suitable for various parties who want to get started in our society in The Hague.

As mentioned before, offering opportunities is a strength of this program: the day care trajectories, reintegration trajectories and other people who are recovering from a difficult period in their lives. As is often the case with Present, these people can be on both sides of the project; both as an aid recipient whose green environment is tackled, and as a volunteer who helps to make the countryside more beautiful and sustainable!

Although loneliness is experienced throughout the Netherlands, the Haaglanden region has the dubious honour of being at the top of the list: almost half of all residents of The Hague are lonely, one in eight residents of The Hague experiences this as a serious issue⁵. This makes us number 1 in the whole of the Netherlands, both under the terms 'lonely' as 'severely lonely' (as defined by the GGD, our national health agency). Social cohesion in the city is necessary to reduce these high figures. With Green Together we provide an accessible way of making contacts and expect to strengthen the connection at neighbourhood level: gardening is the means to bridge the gap between the one half of The Hague that does not feel lonely and the other residents of The Hague who desperately need their attention!

'With visible pride a regular volunteer tells me he has reached his milestone of one year of clean-time in his recovery from addiction. Because of the structure and possibilities Present has offered him, he stayed clean and is grateful for the new chance he got in life, furthering himself in his career and path of reintegration.'

Eva Mabayoje, director Stichting Present
Den Haag, 2021

⁵ <https://www.volksgezondheidenzorg.info/onderwerp/eenzaamheid/regionaal-internationaal/regionaal#node-ernstige-eezaamheid-ggd-regio>