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**Ferenc Albert Szigeti**

*coordinator of the Hungarian Hub for Nature-based Solutions, lead expert of the BiodiverCity network*

As the greenest district in Budapest, Hegyvidék has a huge responsibility to maintain the greenery, to properly communicate with the residents and to raise their awareness of environmental issues. The Green Office was established in 2016 as one of the departments of the municipality that has several roles to address the needs of the residents and to develop the district's sustainability further.

## TOOLS TO ACTIVATE RESIDENTS TO TRANSFORM THEIR PRIVATE GARDENS INTO BIODIVERSITY OASES

Experiences of Municipality of Hegyvidék, district 12 of Budapest

Very often the most urban green area is owned privately. In the shadow of the ecological crisis it is thus crucial to engage residents and local companies, nurturing them to more pro-environmental behaviours and using more biodiversity-driven approaches in their gardens making them more resilient to the negative impacts of climate change too.

The Municipality of the 12th District (Hegyvidék) is the local government body responsible for the administration of Budapest's greenest district, a hilly - partly suburban - area in the western part of the Hungarian capital. Hegyvidék can be divided into three zones: a densely built-up zone in the centre, a mostly residential zone with private gardens and a forest zone called Normafa as part of the Buda Hills and the Duna-Ipoly National Park. It has not only lots of green spaces, but it provides habitats for rare, endangered and even endemic species.



### THE GREEN OFFICE'S MAIN TASKS CAN BE DIVIDED INTO 3 MAIN AREAS:

- 1 Day-to-day tasks connected to official issues (littering, noise, uprooting ragweed, planting trees etc.)

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2

Organising and joining programs to address local needs (e.g. awareness-raising activities and programs, participatory activities and events, programs to give guidance and aid residents)

3

Manage and implement national and international projects to learn and share new approaches from all around Europe and beyond, to build a solid local network and communication among the residents, NGOs, private sector, academy sector, business sector, etc. in the district.



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The Green Office has a massive, ever-growing Residential Programme, which seemed inspiring for the 10 partner cities of the BiodiverCity URBACT Action Planning Network, thus the below summary has been made based on that.

### 1. Provide a free-of-charge branch-cutting service!



Based on preliminary registration residents can get a free-of-charge service once in a season to cut the fallen or removed branches (max. 10 m<sup>3</sup>) by a mobile cutting machine. There are strict rules for the preparation of the branches and provision of accessibility for the mobile machine, but the most important issue is that the municipality does not transport the mulch away, it has to be used in the garden for covering the soil or composting.

### 2. Provide composting boxes!

It is a key to reduce household waste and if someone has a private garden, it would be “compulsory” to compost and not to waste natural resources the compost provides. Starting in 2008 the municipality provides simple composting boxes every autumn for private owners and institutions to foster pro-environmental behaviours (ca. 200-250 boxes each year). It is also free of charge, but applicants must attend a short training session.



### 3. Promote fruit trees among residents - they are good for nature and resistant!



Within the “Fruitful Hegyvidék” programme, the Green Office announces a discounted fruit tree sale for residents who are willing to plant and cultivate native fruit trees in their gardens. This will enable them to produce healthy fruit locally, but native fruit trees are also more climate-resistant than many ornamental trees and good for pollinators. Within the framework of the program, a maximum of 2 fruit tree saplings can be purchased per property at half price. With each purchased fruit tree, the Green Office provides a "Care Package" free of charge.



#### 4. Distribute native trees among residents!

As part of the Árnyas Hegyvidék (Shady Hillside) Program, the Green Office regularly announces a free tree distribution for residents who are willing to plant native trees in their private gardens. This initiative aims to further green the gardens to provide shade as part of the climate action. Within the framework of the program a maximum of 4 free native bare-root saplings, each 1.5-1.8 meters tall, can be requested per property, regardless of its size and nature. The Green Office also provides a planting and care guide along with the trees.



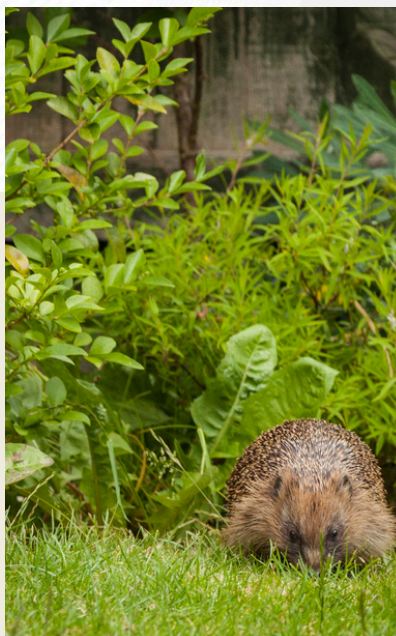
#### 5. Organise a yearly competition and certification for nature-friendly gardens!



With the title of "Nature in My Garden" (Kertemben a természet) the Green Office yearly launches a competition for garden owners to showcase their gardens to a professional jury and, if the garden meets the criteria for a nature-friendly garden, to receive the "Nature in My Garden" award. Applications can be submitted continuously, but each year the jury checks applications received by 10 May. All gardens rated as nature-friendly will receive a "Nature in My Garden" plaque.



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#### 6. Be a Bird-Friendly City/Garden!

In Hungary, BirdLife Hungary has a comprehensive guide ([in Hungarian](#)) to support cities and established a network. It has also a certificate programme for gardens in many Hungarian cities. Inspired by this, but separately the Green Office works together with BirdLife Hungary to implement local activities. The Green Office organises thematic walks, publishes guidelines (e.g. tips for feeding in wintertime) and presentations with experts, distributes birdhouses and birdfeeders for residents and has a bird-friendly model garden in one of the public parks.



## 7. Promote climate-tolerant, native, and pollinator-friendly flowers!



Besides changing the plantation methods in public areas (e.g. using perennials instead of annual flowers), the Green Office has also changed the main principle of its flower distribution programme has been running since 2008. The aim is the same (helping residents, especially in the downtown area to green and beautify homes, balconies, and gardens), but biodiversity is better promoted now by using biodiversity related aspects within these running programs.

## 8. Support residents with tree pest control!

Climate change often causes an increased number of pests. While the municipalities can tackle this issue directly in public areas, in such a green district support is needed for residents to save endangered trees and raise awareness. The Green Office thus has launched a residential action to control the main pests of horse chestnut, plane, and oak trees. The support is available until the allocated budget is exhausted and is provided on a first-come, first-served basis. The support covers half of the costs, with the municipality covering 50% of the procedure costs (either the spraying during the second breeding season or half of the cost of a single injection).



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## 9. Support residents in rainwater harvesting!

Blue is the new green and private owners might have a crucial role in decreasing the amount of runoff water by installing water retention measures. In many European cities, municipalities give financial and thematic support to residents by installing raingardens, green roofs and vertical gardens. The Green Office has started to support rainwater management and utilization on private properties. To this end, 300 rainwater collection kits (300-litre tank, tank lid, base, and tap) were provided to district residents at a discounted price, within the limits of the available budget (each property is eligible to receive one rainwater collection kit upon payment of a small self-contribution fee).

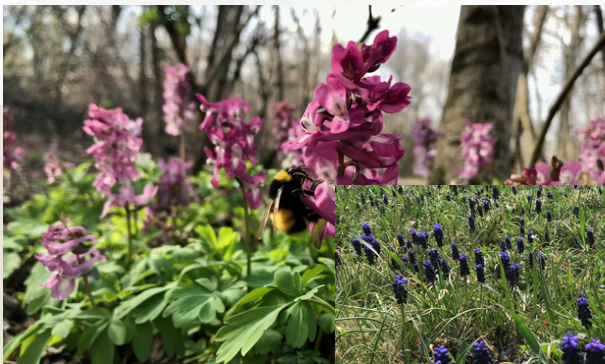




## 10. Become a pollinator-friendly city!

The Municipality of Hegyvidék has a well-structured programme for that (Bee-Friendly Hegyvidék), in which the Hegyvidék Bee-Friendly Network operates. The volunteer members of the network are dedicated representatives and supporters of pollinating insects and the biodiversity. Within the programme the Green Office:

- ✔ Creates natural habitats, thereby promoting and enhancing biological diversity. For instance: bee pastures, almond-lavender gardens, collaborating with the Metropolitan Waterworks to manage their protected sites in a pollinator-friendly manner, and the Urban Meadow Program.
- ✔ Educates and implements an awareness-raising program, for example: honey breakfasts in district kindergartens, bee-friendly educational programs for kindergartens, professional lectures and walks, publications.
- ✔ Engages residents not only by inviting them to join the network but also by involving them in programs that have been fine-tuned along the principles of the pollinator-friendly city concept (e.g. the Fruitful Hegyvidék Program, Flowering Hegyvidék), allowing them to actively participate in the network.
- ✔ Created a thematic walk in the district, connecting interesting sites both regarding pollinators and local cultural-natural values.
- ✔ Practices beekeeping and offers insights into the world of pollinators (e.g. community apiary events work now, but a demonstration hive also used to work for years).
- ✔ Promotes a healthy, eco-friendly lifestyle that encompasses everything from pollinator-friendly gardening to the rejuvenating power of nature, from consuming beekeeping products to close cooperation with nature (e.g. promoting products made by network members; a competition to support and reward the creation of nature-friendly gardens - "Nature in My Gardens").



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## 11. Raise awareness!!

The Green Office, supported by the Association of Climate-Friendly Settlements organise a series of events titled "Climate-Friendly Evenings". These events aim to provide engaging and high-quality leisure activities through scientifically rigorous yet popular lectures on climate change and climate adaptation for an audience interested in and eager to learn about environmental sustainability. In the frame of the above residential programmes, the Green Office also organises lots of thematic walks and other specific events, as well as publishes guidelines and books.



## 12. Promote gardening!



The Green Office also has a grant application for the establishment of raised garden beds in the courtyards of apartment buildings and housing cooperatives, to increase green spaces in more densely built-up areas of the district and raise awareness. This is a non-repayable monetary grant paid for applicants.

Last, but not least it is worth mentioning that the Green Office regularly organises other “green” events and programs, not strictly related to urban green spaces (e.g. bicycle breakfast to promote green mobility, organised collection of used cooking oil at public schools, organised events to collect hazardous waste).