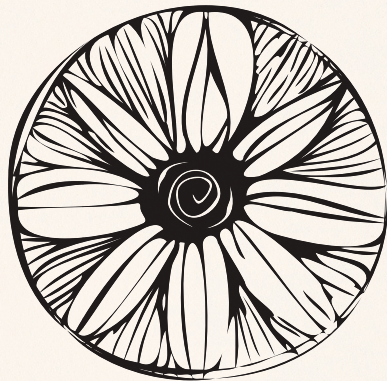


# GARDENERS' DIALOGUE



The aim of the gardeners' dialogue is to support new knowledge and foster understanding through the exchange of ideas, working together and discovering through art, design and education. This manifests directly in conversations between gardeners and also in gardener's dialogue with the garden. The garden and the gardener can also be read as a metaphor – gardener can be someone who cares for a specific place or space, shaping it with their actions and thoughts. This gardener could be an earthworm in the soil, an artist establishing a garden bed or a designer thinking about their practice as a garden. As gardeners living with others we can care for our actual or notional territory. The dialogue can be in the form of words, images, objects or actions. It's important that the counterparts can react to each other.

The gardeners' dialogue takes place in the territory that is actually or notionally a garden. The whole planet can be considered the planetary garden and if the planet is a garden, we are all gardeners – perhaps not aware of it, yet the choices and lifestyles of each of us have an impact on the biosphere and on our collective, vital space.<sup>1</sup>

To support biodiversity it is important to acknowledge the agency of non-human gardeners and consider them as capable dialogue partners. See also the method card “Exercises for interspecies co-creation.”

In today's world, which is focused on individual success, working together and in dialogue can be seen as a form of resistance. This is necessary for resilience and also emotionally durable relationships with our surroundings. In a culture where sustainable thinking and image can be bought as a service, it is important to create proactive change by doing things ourselves and acting together.<sup>2</sup> Collaboration offers long-term satisfaction and strengthens relationships. In cultures which remain resilient, the practices of art and craft and communal collaboration continue to be practiced.<sup>3</sup> Gardeners' dialogue requires a willingness to understand why someone thinks and acts the way they do. This can involve many participants with different opinions, backgrounds, beliefs and experiences, but approached with a positive spirit of inquiry and shared sense of responsibility.<sup>4</sup> By thinking and acting together through differences, the dialogue can lead to new meanings and empower those involved.

Sharing the harvest is also part of the gardeners' dialogue. In the practice-based action research study of 2023–2024, activities that took place in various gardens were shared through seed exchanges, exhibitions, learning encounters and written articles.

<sup>1</sup> Clément, Gilles 2021. In practice: Gilles Clément on the planetary garden. *The Architectural Review*. 16.02.2021.  
<https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/in-practice/in-practice-gilles-clement-on-the-planetary-garden>.

<sup>2</sup> Fletcher, Kate & Tham, Mathilda 2023. *Earth Logic Gardening: A practical guide to growing ecological, social, cultural and economic change*. Macclesfield and London: Earth Logic Publishing, 1k 1–77.  
<https://earthlogic.info/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Earth-Logic-Gardening.pdf> (accessed 20.12.2024).

<sup>3</sup> Kull, Kalevi 2024. Terve Eestimaa élan vital. *Postimees*. 16.10.2024.  
[https://teadus.postimees.ee/8116368/terve-eestimaa-elan-vital?fbclid=IwY2xjawF9Bs9leHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHUjusXB-BzCPZoo6y3iWGYnqWPufzuhw28\\_Is7VBzDuwG\\_YPQpSeOluoqQ\\_aem\\_WW8ekAKYkEyHmAlYPIWg](https://teadus.postimees.ee/8116368/terve-eestimaa-elan-vital?fbclid=IwY2xjawF9Bs9leHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHUjusXB-BzCPZoo6y3iWGYnqWPufzuhw28_Is7VBzDuwG_YPQpSeOluoqQ_aem_WW8ekAKYkEyHmAlYPIWg) (accessed 20.10.2024).

<sup>4</sup> See also: Haraway, Donna J. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.



## Exercises

- Collect seeds and share them with other gardeners. Distinguish between heirloom and hybrid varieties.
- When exchanging plants, seeds, and soil, be mindful not to introduce unwanted species or varieties into gardens. In addition to seeds and plants, exchange gardening knowledge – this helps keep communication with neighbours alive. Seeds can even take on the role of mediators in a dialogue.
- Just like with seeds, share your harvest.
- Notice the traces left by gardening, walking in nature and other shared experiences on textiles, footwear and tools, and appreciate them as nature's response to us. Emphasise these stains by printing with plants or respond to areas of wear by embroidering abstract or nature-inspired patterns, thus engaging in a dialogue with nature.
- Create opportunities for activities that encourage dialogue – learning encounters, shared cooking, mending, drawing walks and brainstorming workshops. To ensure that participants feel included in the process, the gathering must be thoughtfully planned and offer diverse ways of engaging. A natural and essential part of such meetings is reflection – on the activity itself, on past similar experiences, and on the broader context. The artefacts and objects created or transformed – a garden, whether literal or metaphorical – serve as a record of the dialogue.

Photos: Anna Aurelia Minev, Paula Solvak.



*The exhibition “From Sowing Confusion to Gathering Knowledge” that took place at the Tallinn Botanical Garden recognised the value of chaos and disintegration. It unfolded as a dialogue between gardeners – we placed objects, drawings, entries from research diaries and keywords into a visual dialogue with one another. The seed exchange point invited visitors to swap seeds – herbs and decorative plants – as well as stories about those seeds. A collective seed journal was created. Similarly, a collective journal emerged during Jane Remm’s “Interspecies social sculpture” walk, where participants filled sketchbooks with drawings, notes and reflections.*

Photos: Kärt Petser ja Aurelia Minev.



*Much used gloves have gained additional layers in various gardens. They have become holey from use, then been darned and dyed using woad. Repair is a dialogue with the object, and dyeing workshops become a dialogue with other gardeners. In the repair workshops led by Marta Konovalov, both the menders and the mended objects enter into a dialogue.*