

# Innovation report inspiration trip RHS Garden Hyde Hall

During a visit to **RHS Garden Hyde Hall (Essex)** we were told how one outdoor attraction bets on increasing visitors during the winter months, how they do have responded to the opportunity to attract a new target group and how they are working on an expansion of their business.

- Walking in nature is healthy. People like to spend time outside, also in the colder seasons. RHS responded to this and laid an Autumn and Winter garden to. This involved smart routing when designing the gardens in colder seasons: short loops that lead back to the visitor centre for hot chocolate or soup.
- RHS mainly attracts garden lovers and grandparents with grandchildren during midweeks: a nice cross between special interest and the general public. RHS realized that apart from the focus on gardening and offering specific activities for children, investing in a playground is a smart move would be. The playground is close enough to the visitor centre (with cafeteria and toilets in the neighbourhood) and surrounded by trees to create an exclusive outdoor space creating where children can play freely and undisturbed.
- RHS organizes events based on seasons and around the flowering time of plants. Every event or activity relates to plants and gardening.  
For instance:
  - Rose weekend in June: learn how to care for roses, which roses are best for you and how to make paper roses yourself, there are rose products in the shop sold and used in the restaurant ...
  - Last summer, RHS saw an opportunity to promote the “Dry Garden”. Even during the dry hot summers, such as last summer, plants flourished. The Dry Garden is specially designed to show people that you also have a garden without having to give too much water to plants. In co-operation with the local water company, RHS has built a water reservoir, through which they are self-sufficient and do not need tap water to enter the gardens to maintain.
  - Events for gardeners: exhibitions with experts that visitors can join to talk; flower shows ...  
Everything is always linked to the DNA.
- By organizing large events, the organization sees the number visitors increase. Management and employees brainstorm about how to deal with this growing number of visitors and how they can ensure that they can maintain the good service they want. With increasing pressure on existing facilities, parking, restaurant ... RHS the visitor management and personnel management by thinking about it including the spread of visitors over 5 days instead of 3, changing from opening times (eg open one hour earlier and close one hour later)...
- RHS Garden Hyde Hall is a charity with a focus on education and stimulate gardening. RHS works with 150 volunteers who help with gardening maintaining the 360 hectare site and giving information to visitors. The volunteers receive travel allowance, discount on products in the store, tickets for garden fairs ... Their help is essential for the continued existence of RHS.
- Free school visit to take children into the philosophy of gardens and gardening.
- RHS has a vegetable garden with a mix of vegetables and herbs (locally, but also some exotic ones). With trends in mind such as “working with local products”, “Transparent food chain” and “zero food miles”, all vegetables and herbs are used the restaurant.
- The shop in the visitor centre offers products that are made locally (honey from our own beehives, beer brewed on the basis of home-grown hops ...) and products with a link to the destination.
- RHS has invested in new energy-efficient buildings (passive heating, recycling of rainwater ...) and is now thinking of new collaborations and hosted events (e.g. weddings) to optimise the use of the buildings at the most energy and cost efficient level.

