

ISU congress in Germany 8.-13. august 2010

After weeks of planning, organizing, calculating (and of hope and fear) nearly 80 members from 11 different countries and - very pleasant – also from USA are welcomed in Germany.

Harbourage and starting point is Holland Hotel, stylish, steeped in history and located directly in the centre of Baden. A nice Mix-up of the participants during the welcome-dinner allows a first 'sniffing' and getting to know the many newcomers; but it is also a reunion of friends and colleagues; it only takes a short time to feel a good atmosphere. A funny auction by our ISU auctioneer Nico Rijnbeek fortifies the good mood and the ISU bank account. We had a good start of the congress.

The nursery of Thomas and Sigrid Eidmann was our first visit on Monday. A very nice place with an old farmhouse and lots of arranged beds – lovely to walk around. Thomas Eidman has a big knowledge of perennials. He is specialised in alpine plants. You can also find novelties and hip plants, for example a very good assortment of Heucheras at his nursery. The perennials are mainly sold to private persons directly from the farmyard as well as to landscapers and urban communities. The Eidmann Family, living amidst their nice nursery (including children's rabbits and guinea pigs) said good buy with wine and different kinds of cheese, made by a special dairy.

In the show and trial garden Hermanshof in Weinheim Cassian Schmidt and his head gardener explained the various examples of plant communities and plant combinations, inspired by nature. Creating plantings with low maintenance costs but with a high attraction is one of the goals of the research program at Hermanshof. Walking in Hermanshof is like walking in nature and the clever combination of contrasts in colour and structure offer endless motives for photographers.

The day ended with a smooth summer evening in Baumschule Huben, a big nursery with a large assortment of shrubs and trees from all over the world. Very impressive was the show garden with water elements but also with a boutique, offering lots of garden books and decoration materials. Georgia Mesche, employee at Huben and member of our organisation team has taken over planting and maintaining the ISU trials. An award was given to Pennisetum Redhead, to Miscanthus Little Zebra, to Cortaderia Golden Goblin and to Miscanthus Aperitif. A delicious barbecue and good drinks closed our first day.

Baden-Baden offers many attractions, friends of culture, wellness-freaks and those who want to do shopping in the various boutiques get the possibility to have some hours for their own. A guide through the beautiful parks, such as Lichtenthaler Allee and the rosarium shows the rich and magnificent garden-site of Baden-Baden.

A 'must have seen' for people from abroad is Heidelberg palace build on a terrace of the Königsstuhl. We get to know a lot (more than we wanted) about German history and wars and kings and dukes and architects and styles. Very interesting but good to have a settlement in the gardens of Schwetzingen afterwards; it is an extraordinary well-tended park. Very good guides loving 'their' park told us many interesting stories and everybody enjoys Colourful plantings, water gardens, wideness, and calmness of the English garden and all those particular nice bathhouses and temples.

One of Germany's warmest regions is the 'Kaiserstuhl - area'. Here we visited the Menton nursery. This is a big nursery producing 1,6 million perennials each year, including a large range of solitary perennials and grasses. Menton uses own designed information- price labels. A gardening engineer is occupied with the controlling procedures and is developing improvements on flow of work. One result of it is the interesting and well-organised logistic system. In a cosy greenhouse, we had a tasty cake and coffee and time for good talks and discussions.

Street-café's, a pulsating market, impressive cathedral; this is Freiburg, popular university city. Time for relaxing and enjoying sunshine, holiday-feeling, a good glass of wine and the famous 'red sausage'.

Our next highlight is Hügin nursery. Ewald Hügin, known as breeder of Sedum Matrona is multi-engaged. Plantsman, guide, speaker, advisor, and designer of fantastic plant-arrangements. Perennials combined with extraordinary annuals, pleasing combinations, many eye candies in a very small, but lovely place. The gardener museum at his place gives an imagination of dramatic changes in horticulture during the last 50-100 years and snatches us in past times.

Paeonias, Iris, Hemerocallis and Papaver – this is main focus in the nursery 'Gräfin von Zeppelin'. Located in a beautiful landscape with vineyards all around. More than 90% of the plants are sold to private customers; parcel-shipment is an important trade aspect. Further attraction is the bookshop and a small boutique inside the nursery. Owner Aglaya von Rumour, bookseller as profession established Germany's biggest specialist bookstore for gardeners.

A long lasting evening with very good wines in a cosy vineyard, almost 600 years old Owner Freiherr Roeder von Diersburg and his wife enjoyed to tell the family story and presented their private museum with lots of tools and toys used in old times. We were able to visit the vine-cellar with wooden barrels, handmade by the grandfather and carved with nice details. It was very hard to leave this nice place!

Last day: visit of Häussermann, a very big nursery of about 40 ha. Owner Martin Häussermann is merging in his business and he is a technical-freak. Many individual techniques, as the irrigation system, the electricity supply system, and preparation of substrates were very worth seeing.

The afternoon started with rain, so the group who decided to visit Porsche museum in Stuttgart instead of walking through Killesberg-Park was lucky. Glamorous cars, old timers, racing-cars and the interesting story of Porsche family. It is a quite different world from gardening business but all over fascinating. Luckily, the evening ends up with fine weather and the farewell dinner starts on the terraces of the Holland-Hotel. Pity to say good bye, but a projection on the next congress in Holland (August 2012), and a slideshow presentation about the next excursion to Norway (July 2011) gave comfort and hope to meet again soon.

Doris Pöppel