



conventus europaeus amicorum ad cactus succulentaque colenda

In the beginning ...

In the programme of the first 3LK in 1966, the president of the organisation committee, W. Ewals

(NL) wrote: "We live in a time of international collaboration. Also in our hobby this collaboration will manifest itself even more than before." It had taken four years of discussions between hobbyists from Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands before all organizational problems were solved. The pioneers Frank (NL), Wilhelm Fricke (D), Wilhelm Fricke (D), Wilhelm Simon (D) and Gerard Linsen (NL) took the initiative for the organisation of this cactus and succulent event. The aim was to bring together each year hobbyists from these three countries in a large organisation with lectures, discussion groups and a exchange mart. The Dutch Succulenta branch "Noord Limburg" had close contacts with Belgian and German hobbyists. It was obvious that this branch would suit the action to the letter. The plan was discussed and worked out in collaboration with the Belgian cactus society "Dodonaeus Lier" and branches of the Deutsche Kakteen Gesellschaft. The national committee of Succulenta agreed. Thus started an annual recurring cactus fest, which it was hoped would stand for a number of years. The event got the name "Drei Länder Konferenz / Drie Landen Conferentie", abbreviated 3LK, and took place in one of the founding countries in turn. The Netherlands acted as the first guest country.

The first years

The first 3LK was organised on 17-18 September 1966 in Castle Well close to Venlo in the Netherlands. The conference was opened by the representatives of the three organizing countries and introduced by president W. Ewals (NL). On the programme were six lectures and on Sunday afternoon an exchange mart followed by a plant sale took place. On Saturday 160 visitors were counted, a good 200 on Sunday morning, increasing to nearly 300 during the plant sale. In 1967 the Federal Republic of Germany took its turn. This second 3LK took place on 24-25 June in the youth hostel Hargart in Monschau.

Wilhelm Simon (D) welcomed participants from Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands and even Czechoslovakia. Walter Rausch (D), Albert Buining (NL) and Willy De Cocker (B) presented the lectures. The Sunday afternoon finished with the plant exchange. The third 3LK took place in Domain Hengelhof in Houthalen in Belgium and was officially opened by Raymond Blomme (B). On Saturday evening lectures were given by W. De Cocker and W. Simon, and on Sunday morning one by Albert Blanc from Lausanne (CH) and one by W. Sterk (D). In the afternoon there was an “overwhelming” plant exchange and sale. There were more than 200 overnight stays in the marvellous bungalows. The next 3LKs were successively organised in the Netherlands in Caste Well on 6-7 September 1969, in Germany on 12-13 September 1970 in Monschau and on 18-19 September 1971 in Domain Hengelhof in Houthalen, Belgium. The 3LK took place for the last time in the Netherlands in Valkenburg on 2-3 September 1972 and a last time in Germany on 6-7 October 1973 in Duisburg.

Period Hengelhof, Houthalen (1974-1988)

On 5 and 6 October 1974 the Belgian representatives organized the conference once again in Domain Hengelhof in Houthalen. It was then decided to hold all 3LKs in Houthalen, alternatively organized by one of the three countries. There is, however, one exception. In 1976 the 3LK – according to some already the 5LK – took place in Monaco on 16-18 October, at the invitation of Marcel Kroenlein (MC), at the time director of the Jardin Botanique. About 500 participants arrived by plane at the airport of Nice. As a result of a substantial increase of the accommodation costs, the last ELK on Domain Hengelhof took place on 17-18 September 1988. This Domain was nevertheless an excellent location, visited with pleasure by all participants. The nice spacious bungalows guaranteed an agreeable stay, the meeting rooms were up to expectations and there were good parking facilities. The plant exchange and sale took place in and around the so-called pyramid building. This location was excellent for the neighbours from the Netherlands and Germany.

Period Duinse Polders, Blankenberge (1989-)

On 30 September and 1 October 1989, the ELK was organized for the first time in holiday centre “Duinse Polders” in Blankenberge, Belgium. This was quite a way further for the Dutch and German hobbyists, but much closer to home for the British and French. In comparison with Hengelhof all transfers to the bedrooms, restaurant, cafeteria, plant sales and conference room take place under one roof. Up till 2006 the place for the plant sale was limited to about 300 linear metres. From 2007 onwards, a large marquee was set up to meet the increasing demand for more plant space. Today the plant sale has grown to almost 600 metres. At first only the rooms needed were booked. However, now the whole building complex of Duinse Polders is at the disposal

of ELK. Consequently everyone you meet is a succulent plant enthusiast. In addition to the sales places in the large room and the marquee, the cafeteria, the terraces and the wide corridors are meeting places par excellence. Lecturers, professional and amateur growers and buyers come from all over Europe and even from other countries of which Japan, India, Argentina, the USA, Chile and South Africa are the most remarkable. The lectures are presented in the marvellous conference room. Smaller meeting rooms are also available. Throughout the years modernization works have been carried out. This year the restaurant has been rearranged to serve all meals in buffet style.

Moreover, the ELK has evolved from a two-day to a three-day event. This allows opening the plant sales on Friday afternoon with the official opening and a first lecture on Friday evening. The ELK closes on Sunday morning so that all can travel home in good time.

2015 is a celebration year!

On 11, 12 and 13 September 2015, the 3LK/ELK is organized for the 50th time. For this occasion the committee provides an appropriate programme. Besides a reception in the cafeteria, a banquet with musical accompaniment, an tombola of exceptional plants, the issue of a jubilee postage stamp and a exhibition on the hobby, a small present will be offered to the participants. Of course, special attention will be given to the lectures.

The organisation committee

After the starting years, an organisation committee was founded in 1979 with representatives from Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. The German Wilhelm Simon was the first president. Furthermore the committee existed of secretary Piet Froberg (B), treasurer Marcel De Munter (B) and committee members Grivel (NL), Dr Med. Paul Rosenberger (D) and Paul Bourdoux (B). In 1983 Gustaaf Cools (B) replaced P. Froberg as secretary. In the early eighties François Falco joined the committee on behalf of France. During a preparatory meeting for the 3LK 1984, on proposal of P. Rosenberger, the 3LK was renamed ELK: Europäische Länder Konferenz / Europese Landen Konferentie – Conventus Europaeus Amicorum ad Cactus Succulentaque Colenda. Rosenberger also

designed the new ELK logo. President P. Bourdoux passed away on 10 October 1985 and was succeeded by P. Rosenberger. Secretary G. Cools became also treasurer. In 1986 the married couple Ines and Werner Läbe (D) joined the committee. F. Falco and Etienne Lanssens (B) were appointed vice-presidents. The other members of the committee were Maria De Ridder (B), Paul Dekker (NL), Kamiel Neirinck (B) and Gilbert D'Eer (B).

Until 1988 the ELK was a “de facto association” according to Belgian law. In 1988 the regulations of the non-profit organisation “Conventus Europaeus

Amicorum ad Cactus Succulentaque Colenda”, abbreviated “E.L.K.- Europese Landen Konferentie” were published in the Belgian official journal under nr 11311/88. The administrators were P. Rosenberger, F. Falco, G. Cools, G. D’Eer and K. Neirinck. In this way the ELK acquired corporate rights in accordance with Belgian law. Also in 1988 Anny and Jan Linden (NL) and Daphe Pritchard (UK) joined the committee. F. Falco resigned in 1990 and was replaced by Jean Vigneron (F). K. Neirinck succeeded P. Rosenberger, who resigned in 1991. G. D’Eer passed away in 1995 and was replaced by François Beugnies (B). Rob van der Elst (NL) entered into the committee in 1997 in place of P. Dekker who resigned. W. Läbe died in 1998 and Wilfried Müller (D) replaced the Läbes. In 2005 Wim Alsemgeest (NL) took over from R. van der Elst, while Marc Bostoën (B) completed the committee as vice-secretary-treasurer. François Beugnies (B) replaced M. De Ridder as vice-president and Monique Vandervelpen (B) and Georgette Geets (B) became committee members. In 2006 M. Bostoën passed away, G. Cools resigned and Ronald Fonteyne (B) was appointed secretary-treasurer. In 2007 also the married couple Ludo Serneels and Danielle Vermant (B), Magda Verbeeren (B), Albert Pritchard (UK) and Ave Vigneron (F) joined the committee. Wolfgang Borgmann (D) became a committee member when W. Müller passed away in 2008. After the death of A. Pritchard, Doug Donaldson replaced the couple Pritchard. D. Donaldson passed away in 2010; his place was taken by David Rushforth (UK). Jean-Marie Callens (B) joined the committee in 2012.

Word of thanks

On behalf of the organisation committee, we wish to thank everyone who has contributed in one way or another to the success of this cactus and succulent happening, unique in Europe and maybe far out there. We think of all those who cannot be anymore with us, the pioneers who made this event possible, the administrators and members of the organising committee, the lecturers, sellers, stewards and collaborators. We also thank the former and present staffs of Corsendonk Duinse Polders for years of willing collaboration. Our gratitude and praise goes especially to all those who ever participated or who are now present at this jubilee edition.

Kamiel Neirinck, Chairman
François Beugnies, Vice-Chairman
Ronald Fonteyne, Secretary-Treasurer

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