

# Vénkert community garden in Debrecen.

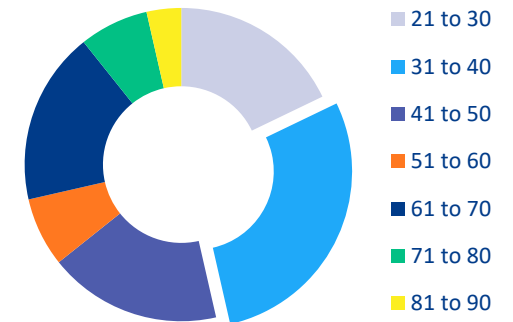
## Best practice case study

Debrecen's first **city community garden** was opened to garden users in 2020 in a park of the Vénkert residential area, in land previously unused and covered by asphalt. The idea was inspired by the implementation of the **University of Debrecen's own community gardens**. The city supported initiative was then established within a "**Green city**" programme, called **Revitalising the Vénkert**, implemented in the Territorial Development Operational Program 2014-2020.

In 2021, the Vénkert Community Garden won a **national award** in the community category of the "**Most Beautiful Kitchen Gardens**" programme. The success of the initiative is demonstrated by the opening of **two new gardens in 2022**. Debrecen had the opportunity to share this success story in Vénkert with the city of **Hermosillo (Mexico)**, as part of **IURC Latin America**.

- **Total/cultivated area:** 527/130 m<sup>2</sup>
- **N° of gardeners:** 28
- **Membership fee:** 10 EUR
- **N° of vegetables and fruits:** 32
- **N° herbs spices/medicinal:** 10/5
- **Special plant species:** Black tomato, ground cherry
- **Youngest/eldest Gardener:** 26/85 years old
- **Cost:** ~ 6,5 million HUF (17 000 EUR) + construction of water supply system.

### Age distribution



### Application and selection process:

For the use of the garden, applications are required, and successful applicants are entitled to use the plots with an annual membership fee of HUF 4,000 (10 EUR). There is a waiting list due to high demand and selected gardeners must re-apply each year with individual contracts signed after the evaluation process.



Ferenc Fülöp

Delegation of Hermosillo in Debrecen (IURC-LA)



## Organic production:

The garden consists of **14 raised beds** with a total of **28 plots**, giving **28 households** the opportunity to garden each year. Each gardener is allocated a space of **4.5 square metres** to grow plants. The members are allowed to grow **vegetables, fruits, herbs, and ornamental plants**.

The gardens help community members to **strengthen their social capital, sense of community, learn about nature and enjoy healthy organic food**. They offer a new approach to the use of urban space, **rethinking community spaces** while promoting sustainable education methods and putting know-how into practice.

In the spirit of organic farming, the gardeners **do not apply any chemicals or fertilisers**. They can only use **organic solutions** for plant protection and nutrient replenishment. Green waste can be reutilized thanks to **composting bins**.

## Technical assistance:

Assistance is provided by **students from the University of Debrecen**, who give advice about **soil types, planting techniques and disease control**. The city provides gardeners with raised beds and irrigation. Furthermore, every gardener receives a key along with a **packet of seeds** in the opening event.



Garden users pay particular attention to **irrigation**, considering the plant needs, the weather and soil conditions. **Soil improvement** is carried out with compost and other organic fertilisers. In addition to vegetables and herbs, flowering plants are planted in large numbers.

**Bird feeders** have also been installed in the community garden.

All of the required **gardening tools are available**, and there is a possibility to use a closed storage for them. Each garden has a designated **leader** who lives in the neighbourhood and oftentimes has **extensive gardening experience**.

The garden fulfils other social functions, hosting **outdoor barbecues, benches, community meetings and small events**.



- 1 Screening during application process.
- 2 Strong commitment is required and assessed constantly. The membership fees are symbolic but shows commitment. The waiting list also reflects the demand to take part of the garden.
- 3 The location of community gardens can be an element of success, as they must be in proximity to densely populated areas.
- 4 Be inclusive: encourage people of all ages.
- 5 Emphasize the importance of maintaining organic production.
- 6 Provide technical assistance, seeds, and materials to gardeners.