

Preface

Social responsibility emerges as one of the key elements in the contemporary practice of the conservation and preservation of historic gardens. These efforts may be pursued by the internal stakeholders (managers, staff) and the external stakeholders (residents, schools and universities, NGOs, the media and entrepreneurs). Whereas many new forms of collaboration and partnerships emerged in recent years, volunteer work and student traineeships remain among the most popular ones, the unfortunate consequence of this fact being that many entities mistakenly treat them as an opportunity to take advantage of free labour to carry out basic tasks. Meanwhile, engaging volunteers and trainees should serve as an opportunity for introducing staff skill-improvement projects, as staff members are often tasked with managing and overseeing the volunteers, and also as an opportunity to invest in the training of future employees and ensuring professional care for the gardens. Trainees and volunteers can support the preservation of material heritage, as well as ensure that expert knowledge and practical skills live on, as they are passed on to future generations.¹

A properly designed and effectively implemented community outreach scheme can be a source of numerous benefits to both its participants and beneficiaries. The former are able to take advantage of the opportunities to work with seasoned professionals who have extensive hands-on experience with the conservation of historic greenery, as well as buildings, sculptures, technical installations and water reservoirs. Volunteers can thus learn about all the aspects of working in a historic garden. This can inspire young people to foster their passion for nature, as well as give them an incentive to plan a career in horticulture and monument preservation. These schemes can also have a positive impact on the institution's community by fostering connections and ties, as well as being conducive to active engagement with natural and cultural heritage. This is particularly important in the context of improving the situation of groups at risk of social exclusion, including the elderly, the disabled, migrants, persons struggling with addictions, and the unemployed.² The beneficiaries of such programmes, in turn, can take advantage of direct support with maintaining the garden, as well as achieve financial

COMMUNICATION

CARING FOR THE FUTURE OF HISTORIC GARDENS. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VOLUNTEER WORK AND YOUTH TRAINEESHIPS AS PRACTISED AT THE WILANÓW PALACE

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1 *The management & maintenance of historic parks, gardens & landscapes. The English Heritage handbook*, eds J. Watkins, T. Wright (London 2007), pp. 48–50; J. Kuśmierski, 'Zawód: konserwator zabytkowej zieleni', *Zieleń Miejska*, 2019, no. 4(141), pp. 18–20.

2 K. Konopacka, 'Idea włączania seniorów w opiekę nad historycznymi założeniami ogrodowymi', *Teka Komisji Urbanistyki i Architektury Oddziału Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Krakowie*, vol. 42, 2014, pp. 185–205.

savings that can then be earmarked for other needs, such as conservation works or purchase of materials needed in the garden. These schemes also offer an opportunity to provide initial training to a prospective cadre of gardeners and landscape designers.³

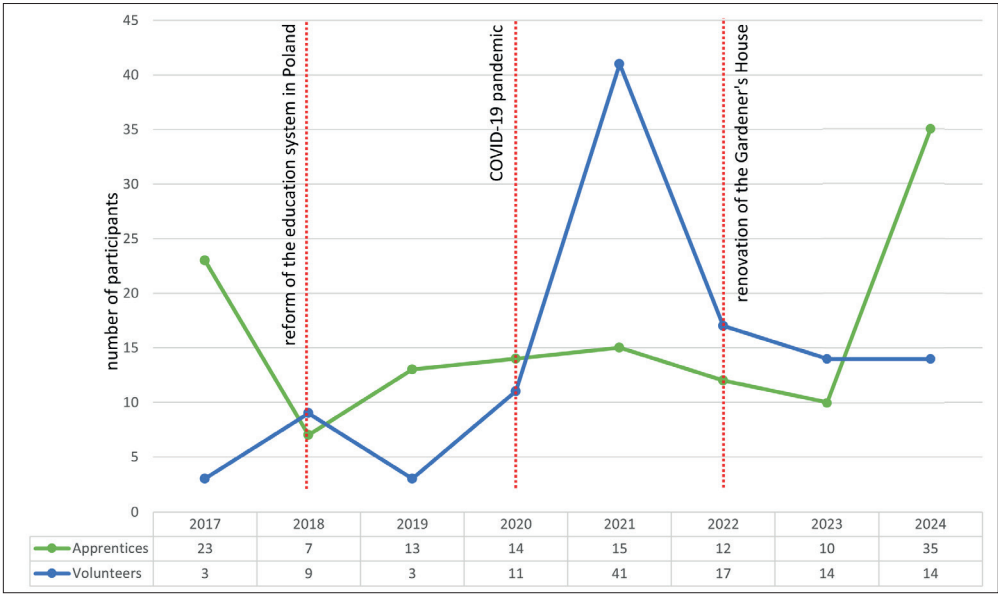
The objective of this paper is to outline the achievements of the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów in the area of organising volunteer work and youth traineeships in its historic gardens. The examples described cover the period from 2017 to 2024.

Volunteer work and traineeship organisation in the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów

The Museum is actively pursuing its social outreach programme spanning many areas, some of which concern the historic gardens. The activities are hosted at the palace and garden complex in Wilanów and in the Morysin nature reserve, which has a total area of 92.2 hectares, including land and reservoirs. The natural resources encompass more than 18,000 trees and shrubs, including 43 natural monuments. The walls of bosquets and espaliers, which require regular pruning, cover some 15,000 m², while the lawns cover an additional 145,000 m². The gardens surrounding the palace are home to 340 topiary sculptures, as well as over 10 kilometres of boxwood borders, which also require regular shaping. Each year, more than 100,000 annual plants – 250 species in total – are planted in the borders, changed twice a year. In addition, 128 exotic plants are brought outside in the summer. The maintenance tasks are entrusted to the staff of the Gardening Department, numbering 15 employees; this covers approximately a quarter of the staffing needs required to maintain excellent conservation standards. Due to this challenge, the Museum enlists the help of volunteers and trainees, whose support is sorely needed during the busy spring and summer seasons.⁴ The outreach scheme has always been a source of great help to the Museum, even though the number of participants varied over the years, and many challenges emerged recently, including the 2018 education system reform and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (Fig. 1).

3 D. A. Rakow, S. A. Lee, *Public Garden Management. A Complete Guide to the Planning and Administration of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta* (Hoboken, 2011), pp. 95–105; R. Mattock, 'Plants are fashioned by cultivation, man by education', in: *Gardens & Landscapes in Historic Building Conservation*, ed. M. Harney (Hoboken, 2014), pp. 227–237; K. Töpfer, 'Historic gardens and society', in: *Historic gardens and society. Culture – nature – responsibility*, eds M. Rohde, F. Schmidt (Potsdam, Regensburg, 2020), pp. 21–22.

4 Ł. Przybylak, 'Modele działań realizacyjnych i pielęgnacyjnych wdrażanych w ogrodzie wilanowskim w odpowiedzi na współczesne wyzwania rewitalizacyjne ogrodów historycznych', *Ochrona Zabytków*, no. 2, 2019, pp. 93–119.



The organisation and the formal aspects of the scheme are currently based on two documents. The first is the *the Act of 24 April 2003 on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work* (Journal of Laws 2020, item 1057), which provides regulations for volunteer work provided by non-governmental organisations, legal persons, associations of local government bodies, as well as social cooperatives. The second document is the *Regulation no. 21 of 24 September 2020 of the Director of the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów concerning the organisation of volunteer work, internships, study visits, scholarships, pupil and student trainee-ships and other similar programmes*. The document outlines how the institution creates conditions for procuring charity work aligned with its mission, heritage and assets that constitute public property, as well as supports other entities in achieving similar goals. Detailed regulations are outlined in the Terms and Conditions for Volunteer Work and Terms and Conditions of Traineeships, Internships and Scholarships, which constitute appendices to the aforementioned Regulation and which form the basis for agreements and contracts concluded with prospective partners.

The Museum provides flexible working hours in order to accommodate the volunteers' requirements and needs; it also ensures the availability of all necessary gardening equipment and personal protective equipment, as well as social rooms in the Gardener's House. The partnership is based on the 'work and study' formula. As a token of appreciation, the Museum offers its volunteers a selection of benefits, which encompass free admission tickets to the park and the Palace, introductory instruction sessions, a welcome package with gadgets, free admission to events organised at the Museum, as well as discounts on publications and plants purchased

Fig. 1

Number of volunteers and trainees working in the Museum gardens in 2017–2024



Fig. 2

Volunteers from the Special Education School Complex No. 89 in Warsaw working in the Museum's gardens

from the Museum's greenhouse. At the end of the contract, each volunteer receives a certificate and a letter of recommendation.⁵

Volunteer work in the gardens

The Museum's garden volunteer scheme, which has been running for several years, offers two kinds of programmes – one geared towards individual volunteers, and the other focused on groups. The former is designed for people who wish to work with the Museum for a long time, one year at a minimum, and who are interested in flexible working hours. The typical volunteer is a young person with extra free time between classes, as well as during holidays and school breaks. The group programme, which is also referred to as Active Volunteering, is offered mainly to institutions and companies carrying out activities within the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) framework. In many cases, the activities are one day long and the participants carry out specific tasks in a part of the garden. Companies often purchase their own basic gardening equipment, which is then donated to the palace gardens. To date, the Museum has partnered with several companies and various institutions, including the Polish Scouting Association, the Wilanów District Youth Council, as well as the Special Education School Complex No. 89 (Fig. 2).

⁵ Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, *Wolontariat w Muzeum Pałacu w Wilanowie*, wilanow-palac.pl/wolontariat_w_muzeum.html (accessed 31 Jan. 2024).

Volunteers carry out various tasks in all seasons, including cleaning work (raking leaves, picking up broken branches and trash), maintaining roads and paths (raking and levelling mineral surfaces, cleaning floors), street furniture upkeep (cleaning benches, rubbish bins and plaques, weeding around monuments or buildings) and taking care of greenery (weeding flowerbeds and removing unwanted plants, watering, covering shrubs for winter, cleaning seeds). Most of the work is carried out in the gardens or, during inclement weather, in the greenhouse and storage areas. The scope of work is tailored to the needs and capabilities of volunteers, which is why it can be carried out by everyone regardless of their age and fitness level. Volunteers can also become garden storytellers, whose job is to interact with visitors and provide them with information about the history, vegetation and purpose of the garden. This allows visitors to better understand the historical context and the significance of these sites. In addition to the above, volunteers perform other gardening tasks as needed. One of the volunteers, who was a student at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences, assisted in compiling studies for the educational activities organised as part of the 17th International Turkish Art Congress, which resulted in the writing of a popular-science paper published in the Museum's *Passage to Knowledge*.⁶

Internships and work placements for school pupils and university students

The tasks carried out by trainees from secondary schools are aligned with the core curriculum concerning the profession of a gardener, horticultural technician and landscape architecture technician.⁷ In the case of university students, the scope of work is aligned with the landscape architecture curriculum at their respective universities. Depending on the formal requirements, the course can run from two weeks to two years. Participants carry out tasks themselves, under the supervision of their teachers and the Garden Department staff. In addition to the tasks carried out by volunteers, trainees are also responsible for more advanced tasks, including pruning trees, shrubs and vines for shaping and sanitary purposes, restoring and mowing lawns, preparing the soil, and planting. In the greenhouses, they take part in plant reproduction and care; they also help with the upkeep of the exotic plant collection. The scheme also provides opportunities for design

6 P. Gniadek, 'Rośliny tureckie w ogrodach europejskich', Pasaż Wiedzy Muzeum Pałacu Króla Jana III w Wilanowie, wilanow-palac.pl/rosliny_tureckie_w_ogrodach_europejskich.html (accessed 31 Jan. 2024).

7 Gardener (611303), Horticultural technician (314205), Landscape architecture technician (314202), in: *Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 16 maja 2019 r. w sprawie podstaw programowych kształcenia w zawodach szkolnictwa branżowego oraz dodatkowych umiejętności zawodowych w zakresie wybranych zawodów szkolnictwa branżowego* (Journal of Laws 2019, no. 991).



Fig. 3

Trainees from the Warsaw University of Life Sciences in Warsaw after planting vegetation around the Gerard Ciołek and Jan Morawiński commemorative stone in the Wilanów Park

work, including updating the inventories of trees and flower beds. All trainees participate in compulsory training sessions (job on-boarding, occupational health and safety, first aid, use of hand tools) as well as additional training sessions on selected topics, including the history of the Wilanów gardens, documentation of landscape architecture objects, protection and conservation of historic gardens, or standards and recommendations for green areas. As a result, the traineeship provides expert knowledge as well as fosters other competencies, like teamwork, communication, planning and time management, as well as analytical thinking.

To date, the Museum has organised traineeships for students from vocational and secondary schools located in Warsaw and in its vicinity, including the Gardening Technical School at the Edmund Jankowski Vocational School Complex No. 39 and the Mszczonów School Complex. The Museum had the longest-running and the most fruitful cooperation with the Kazimierz Kirejczyk Special Education School Complex No. 105. In June 2021, as a token of gratitude for the help, kindness and support shown by the Museum, the management, teaching staff and students awarded it the title of 'A Friend of the School'. The Wilanów gardens also hosted traineeships for landscape architecture students from the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (Fig. 3), as well as from the University of Wrocław, the Poznań University of Life Sciences and the West Pomeranian University of Technology in Szczecin. The Museum also organised educational visits for landscape architecture students from the Tadeusz Kościuszko University of Technology in Cracow, the University of Warmia and Masuria in Olsztyn and the University of Life Sciences in Wrocław.

Summary

The outcomes of the programmes carried out by the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów between 2017 and 2024 prove that volunteer work and traineeships addressed to young people contribute to the comprehensive development of their participants, concurrently bolstering the protection and conservation of the historic gardens. The dynamic changes in the Museum's environment that have occurred in recent years show that the key to success is a high degree of flexibility while building long-term, committed and personal relationships with partners. Some of the most important challenges for the future include the ongoing development of an attractive offer for new volunteers and partners, especially those hailing from among the young people and groups at risk of social exclusion. As a long-standing institution, the Museum can actively care for the future of historic gardens.

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