

Von Gimborn Arboretum and the arboreta in Wageningen, the Netherlands

MARJA MULDER TEN KATE reports on the destiny of two important arboreta in Holland.

In the Netherlands and maybe elsewhere universities and schools say they hardly use their gardens and arboreta anymore for scientific research and education.

They therefore consider the gardens as not belonging to their core business and they want to get rid of them as the upkeep is too labour intensive and time consuming. They prefer to spend there money on something, they say, is more relevant.

In the case of the two arboreta in Wageningen, the Wageningen University and Research Centre will keep the grounds but have handed over the management to a private party with the restriction that the important rose collection should remain intact; in order to achieve this grafting material will be taken and a new location found.

The Von Gimborn Arboretum, holder of the IDS plaque and belonging to the Utrecht University, was about to be sold and turned into a recreational park.

Alarmed dendrologists started brainstorming sessions involving the neighbours of the arboretum. The result is that a private foundation has been formed. University, Municipality and Province are cooperating but half of the 4 million Euro needed to guarantee a healthy start is still to be raised. The awarded plaque will certainly help convince people their money will go to a good cause.

The foundation hopes that by making the arboretum more accessible and public friendly, enough money will be generated to keep the collection in good shape and even develop it to such an extent that it is kept for science, trusting that "science" one day will knock on the door wishing to refer to living collections again.

As arboreta also hold rare and endangered species biodiversity is another incentive for keeping the collections. Whether the money is there or not, the University will hand over the grounds and the management of the Von Gimborn Arboretum to the Foundation Von Gimborn Arboretum on the first of January 2010.

