

A BLEAK WORLD TURNED INTO A LIVING KINGDOM



In a land far, far away, not far from the Polish border, there is our little kingdom where a good king rules. While exploring the surroundings of our castle, we discovered a place where life was absent, and shade ruled over the sun. If you know the Czech fairy tale Lotrando and Zubejda, maybe you remember what the lumberjack Drnec, mistaken for a doctor, said: where the sun doesn't reach, a doctor must. We thought about how we could heal the bleak place and turn it into a living kingdom that would attract every living creature, be it from the air or from under the ground.

Come and see our story

The year was 2018 when we started our garden makeover. And what kind of a kingdom would we be if we didn't have a royal advisor. And so we invited an "experienced advisor" Ing. Michal Plundra, a landscape artist dedicated to natural gardens and permaculture, who gave us a kick in the pants. Oh, how we needed it 😊.

The beginning was a bit iffy because Michal looks a bit like the devil, and we were afraid of him a little bit. But only until we explored our kingdom together for the first time. The devil turned into our patient guide and helper who spoke as if in a foreign language at first 😊. Our eyes popped when we heard the word biodiversity. We didn't understand what to do with the garden. Demolish it? Defend it from insect raiders?

Michal explained that we would not be demolishing the garden but would try to increase its natural diversity. When we put our heads together (together with Michal), we figured out that our kingdom could be teeming with animals (insects, birds, amphibians, invertebrates) and plants.

Then, when our fingers were freezing, we discovered which types of plants are best for our garden and might attract the first inhabitants. Thanks to Michal, we realized that an apple tree will not bear fruit without insects, that birds will enjoy the caterpillars that are harmful to our garden, that even hedgehogs, who only need a pile of leaves, like insects as well. We understood that if we try to help the garden, it will reward us, perhaps with a basket full of fruit or just with its beautiful colours.

We understood that Michal draws his energy and joy of life from nature. Everything was decided.

The first task was for our painters, who created a plan for our future kingdom, which we had to justify to our king. The king was delighted, and we could finally get to work.

Thanks to the strength of the boys and to the patience and stubbornness of the girls, the garden was gradually changing beyond recognition. All ideas and advice are greatly appreciated.

We agreed to start the change on the 1st of May. "What if no one comes?", we thought, when we planned the start of the work for the holidays. At 8 AM, there were only 4 volunteers and 2 teachers ready to start working. "Oops", we thought. No one likes working for free 😊. But our friends didn't let us down and within half an hour, the garden was filled with mostly older schoolmates.

We picked up shovels, hoes, wheelbarrows, spades, hammers, and other tools (some of them could not withstand our strength 😊).

When we were building our new brick garden beds, there was swearing. "Girls, I don't want to interfere," said our teacher, "but it's all askew, you know?". "Oh sh*t, are you kidding?", said the girls, "Now we have to do it all over again, damn." The garden bed had to be built anew. Just like Pat and Mat (two clumsy handyman from a Czech animated series). But we did it. The flower beds are done, two of them.

The second group picked up planes, nails, and saws. "Come help me sand the wood so we can finish the bench," yelled Tomáš as the pallet fell on his foot. Fortunately, there was no injury, just a bruise on his leg. During the day, we made about 5 benches.

The task of the third group was to try to create a flower bed and a rock garden. So we carted and unloaded the piles of dirt that were delivered to us. "Coming through!" shouted Markét at Naty, who was zigzagging toward the pile of dirt. The good volunteers we are, we managed not only to create a flower bed, but also to plant a butterfly bush, for example, which has already attracted a bunch of butterflies.

After the first day's work, we were tired but mostly satisfied with our result.



We continued working in the following days and months and we gradually dug beds (we didn't strike gold, unfortunately), painted (sometimes we were covered in more paint than the benches themselves), carted more piles of dirt, planted flowers and bushes, built houses for animals, researched our project, competed with each other, and had a great time...

Through our work, we were able to create a relaxing and restful place not only for humans, but also for animals. A place where learning is fun. And we must not forget about farming, like planting potatoes and corn, which our wonderful cooks turn into delicious food. In the summer, we even made jam for the first time. "Yummy!"

To make our garden come alive, we must think about water and its retention in the garden. But that is a topic for another article 😊. Further exploration of the garden showed us that we are heading in the right direction.

"Hey, there's a lizard, come take a look, Kája!" "Wow, she's so pretty, I'd take her home with me right now," said Kája. But when the lizard suddenly bit her finger, she cried out: "Ow, that's no pet, that's a little monster!"

"There must at least one earthworm here," said Míša as she dug up piles of dirt. "Ha!" she yelled, and it was clear to everyone that Míša had finally discovered a living creature. Was it an earthworm? Who knows...

In the space of two years, the bleak kingdom has become a magical natural garden with a hedgehog, a pond, butterflies, lizards, and even solitary bees... It's nice to see that the whole school and other adults are involved in the transformation.

We hope you like our kingdom. You can come visit us.

Elen Žídková (13 years old) and Karolína Schikorov (12 years old), Píšť primary school and kindergarten, contributory organisation