



Les Jardins du Loup, Environmental Association, France

Corinne and France, respectively president and coordinator of the association Les Jardins du Loup, kindly accepted to answer our questions and present the association's main projects.

Bonjour Corinne et France!

Can you please introduce yourself and let us know what you do for the association?

- Corinne, 53 years-old, infographist and "Composting Master". I am the association's president, I am in charge of the garden and its composting units. I also animate workshops and trainings;
- France, 55 years-old, I am the association's coordinator; I also animate workshop and I take care of the earthworms ;-)

Tell us more about the association, Les Jardins du Loup, its structure and its main activities.

Les Jardins du Loup is a French environmental association which aims at sharing agroecological and permaculture principles and techniques to the greatest number.

We experiment on permaculture and its various applications (home, garden, human relationships, economics...) on the association's site, a little nature paradise next to a river in a regional natural park in a NATURA 2000 zone. We created there a little participatory garden where unpaid members come to learn through gardening each week. We

consider it a place to experiment and share the concept of "happy simplicity".

We organize also workshops and trainings onsite or in the cities and villages of the Alpes Maritimes for various audiences. We develop also specific one-off projects that are more ambitious as they aim at supporting individuals and local authorities towards more sustainable practices.

How does the Tonton Lombri network work?

Composting with earthworms is awesome but starting can be little hard and it is better to be accompanied. It is the purpose of Tonton Lombri (*Uncle Earthworm!*), our sponsorship network: an experienced "godparent" supports a new participant to start a composting project.

Apart from gifting a swarm of earthworms as "starter kit" (value of 30€), the godparent provides his/her best advice to start and succeed. In exchange, the apprentice worm farmer commits to do the same when a new family is ready to sign up as well.



We regularly organize « earthworm parties », fun events during which beginners and experienced worm farmers meet and exchange their worms as well as feedback and advice. These exchanges are free of course, and they help promote stronger social bonds and conviviality.

Tell us a little more about vermicomposting (i.e. using earthworms to compost): How does it work? Is it difficult/expensive to install, and what are the benefits of such a system compared to other individual methods to manage waste?

The system works with 4 boxes on top of each other: on the “ground floor”, the box is waterproof but has a little tap to collect the percolate; above, three other boxes are stacked, with little holes pierced in their bottoms: earthworms can circulate from one floor to the other through these little holes; they eat waste and turn it into compost. It’s like a little house, with a pool on the ground floor!

Fresh waste is always placed in the top box. When this box is full, it is time to harvest the compost that has been produced on the lowest floor (the one above the “pool”), where the vermicompost is now mature. When emptied, this one is put back on top of the house to welcome new waste, while the other floors go down one level.

A vermicomposting structure can be bought online (count around 80€ for one made in France in recycled plastic), or you can build one yourself with some rules to be followed.

Benefit nr. 1: you can install your structure indoors in case you do not have a garden. If you manage it well, it won’t smell and it can therefore be placed in the kitchen, in the garage or on your terrace in case you follow important maintenance rules.

Benefit nr. 2: apart from the vermicompost itself, which looks like regular compost (but which is a lot more nourishing), you can also collect the percolate, which is a liquid fertilizer.

Benefit nr. 3: the entire process of transformation, from the original waste until compost is ready, is quick when the system is in its cruising mode.

Benefit nr. 4: you can meet new people when you give your worms away to new participants: Eisenia, the ideal Epigée species to start vermicomposting, breeds a lot and very fast, so it is easy to give some regularly!

Benefit nr. 5 at last: a vermicomposter is a great educational tool for kids.



What has been the hardest to implement your project?

In general, people are quite supportive when we present our work in our park or during events; they smile when they pass by in front of our « adopt earthworms!» posters, even if only a few will actually do the jump and join the project.

However it took us long time to find a financial support to develop this action that we consider of public utility. We prepared 9 files for grant applications, all got rejected until we found the support of a public institution for intercommunal cooperation and the Crédicoop Foundation.

What is your most rewarding moment?

I love when people we trained and sponsored years ago tell us how they managed to “convert” many other families since then! Swarming is the main purpose of the Tonton Lombri network.

Another great time was when our bank called to say they wanted to nominate the Tonton Lombri network in a competition organized by its foundation, and we won! Apart from the cash prize that surely helped us a lot, it was also an institutional recognition of our work.

How do you define long-term sustainable development, and how does this concept impact your way of thinking, deciding, consuming....?

Instead of talking of “durability” I would mainly focus on sustainability (*n.b.: both words in French are translated by “sustainability” in English*): we now need to find viable solutions for our planet. This means reducing our negative impact, which means questioning our lifestyles, our consumption choices, our economic development, our relationships to each other. Permaculture offers answers to all these questions.

This awareness impacts our daily life on many levels: we try to “do our share”, for example through the ecological renovation of our homes; the installation of a phyto-purification system; the quest for the greatest food self-sufficiency through

gardening techniques that respect nature (instead of going against it)...Shopping the other items we need should take place within local network or bio cooperatives. Becoming vegetarian. Reconsidering your needs, you waste! Human relationships, indoor ecology...Recycling, reusing, second-shopping as a priority...Placing our money in a more ethical bank...multiple events throughout the year to share our ecological principles and practices around us...I feel that our life evolves around sustainability already!

What are your « sustainable resolutions » for 2018 ?

Increasing our food self-sufficiency and trying to further reduce the quantity of packaging and plastic waste. And of course, always “do our share” !



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