

# Creation of “Showcase gardens” demonstrating the region’s vegetable heritage at “Gîtes de France” tourist accommodations.

## Contact name

Richard Boucherie

## Institution name

Espaces Naturels Régionaux (ENRx)/ Regional Centre of Genetic Resources

## Region & country

Hauts-de-France region



## Summary

The preservation of local vegetable diversity and the protection of older varieties requires expertise and publicity directed at both residents and tourists in search of authentic regional products. This taste for quality and for older vegetables is returning within a population that is seeking a more nourishing diet, with products that are both local and traceable. That’s why the “Regional Centre of Genetic Resources”, affiliated with ENRx, approached the “Gîtes de France” network about creating showcase gardens near tourist accommodations, that is, gardens showcasing our regional vegetable heritage by planting seeds from older vegetable varieties.



*Showcase garden. Photo by Olivier Delvaux.*

### **Background of the project**

Tourists and local residents were not informed about products cultivated or originating in the region. Technicians from the “Regional Centre of Genetic Resources” collect seeds from gardeners and farmers to conserve them, to assist production networks in obtaining a quality label, and in some cases, to re-introduce them to the market.

This new “Showcase Garden” operation helps to introduce tourists and locals to the richness and quality of our regional vegetable heritage and the possibility to preserve and promote awareness of older vegetable varieties, sometimes entirely absent.

The research goal was also to link local economic actors with tourism in order to amplify and spread the word on these older vegetables by cooking them for tourists. Ultimately, the operation helped to consolidate links with local professionals through knowledge-sharing on the cultivation of regional vegetables saved from oblivion. This initiative contributes to the preservation of domestic biodiversity.

### **Solution and actions taken**

To meet these needs, the “Regional Centre of Genetic Resources”, affiliated with ENRx, approached “Gîtes de France” operators to develop the cultivation of these older vegetable varieties in their gardens and to bring them to the attention of the public.

To reach this solution, with the cooperation of their regional federation, informational meetings were organised with volunteer owners. This initiative was also facilitated by the partnership agreement concluded between ENRx and the Federation of the “Gîtes de France” and by the consistent quality of the relations between the partners.

### **Other institutions or parties involved**

- The “Regional Centre of Genetic Resources”, affiliated with ENRx
- The Federation of the “Gîtes de France”
- The owner/operators of the accommodations.

### **Results**

In 2017, 20 Gîtes de France operators are engaged in the initiative. The first harvest of traditional and/or former regional products was presented and served to tourists in September of 2017.

### **Challenges**

Organising bi-annual meetings in the field with the owners to evaluate the evolution of their Showcase Gardens and provide advice and expertise.

### **Lessons learned**

We have succeeded in making a convincing argument for reviving the cultivation of our local vegetable varieties by explaining the approach and the many successes of the “Regional Centre of Genetic Resources”. We have also listened to the propositions of amateur gardeners to involve this partnership over time.

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### **Website(s)**

<http://www.enrx.fr/Ressources-genetiques/Le-patrimoine-legumier>