

Green offices and corporate gardening

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Google does it, PepsiCo, too, and Yahoo, of course. What? Corporate gardening, very trendy in the USA, which has started to bear fruit in Europe, too. From the leased company field to the green office – nature is finding its way into everyday office life. And this has a lot of positive effects.

225 employees, 58 lots, 25 vegetables, and 30 herbs - that's how the first corporate garden began at PepsiCo in Purchase, N.Y. The field is only five minutes' walking distance away from the headquarters, and the employees drop by in the morning, at noon, or at night to cultivate their plants. And to reap the fruits, of course. The hobby gardeners either enjoy their crops themselves, or they donate it to one of the meal tables in the region.

Bad atmosphere in the office

For some years, similar projects have been going on in many places throughout the USA. The advantages are obvious: in times of scarce budgets, corporate gardens are an inexpensive way to

enhance the creativity, health, and motivation of the employees. One hour in the garden works wonders, so those involved report. Moreover, corporate gardens break up professional hierarchies, since everyone is on the same level.

The human factor

The half-life of corporate gardens varies. Similar to the phenomenon of rotting food in office fridges, a certain measure of discipline is necessary in this field too, after the initial elation subsides. While, according to the New York Times, the PepsiCo garden vegetated just so-so in its second year (also because of extremely bad weather), there are other gardens that thrive and prosper.

But, it need not be a field all the time ...

Because of the location, environmental conditions, and other factors it is not possible for many enterprises to cultivate a field within walking distance. Therefore, the Viennese company Green Rabbit (greerabbit.co) has made a point of bringing the garden to the office. It offers various forms of plant services: from green concepts in general to all-inclusive care with weekly watering service. Most of the plant care can be performed by the office employees, though. To this end Green Rabbit prepares specific watering schedules as well as care instructions, and it trains the employees.

Green office increases efficiency

Plants in the office have many positive effects. They enhance well-being and regulate air moisture – 97% of the irrigation water is re-emitted to the room air. Plants reduce the dust content in the air, they have a noise-absorbing effect and reduce harmful substances such as carbon dioxide. In return, they emit oxygen. Three to five larger plants are sufficient to improve the working climate in an office of 30 m². Scientifically confirmed: in a green office, the sickness absence rates per year and employee are reduced by more than three days on average.

Positive effect on health

A scientific study carried out in Norway has revealed that a green office significantly reduces numerous health problems of the employees:

- Tiredness by 30 %**
- Dry throat by 30 %**
- Cough by 37 %**
- Dry, irritated skin by 23 %**

(Source: Prof. Dr. Tove Fjeld, Grüne Nachrichten)