



Harvesting at Geitmyra. Geitmyra School Garden

Oslo, 1910-1920.

## Biodiversity

Biodiversity is variety of life on our planet, and essential to our future existence. The continued loss of biodiversity, just as climate change, represent an acute threat to the overall habitability on Earth. According to a recent study, 40 percent of the insect species on our planet may cease to exist. In fact, three out of four of the most important agricultural plants depend on pollinating insects to produce good crops. Much of our diet is the product of plants, like bread, tomatoes, apples and nuts, and all need pollination. In Norway, one in four of our pollinating insects are listed as endangered. The Norwegian Institute for Bieconomy, NIBIO, have expressed concern regarding two continuing tendencies.

1. The landscape is changed because of large scale agriculture, with focus on greater efficency. Patches of agricultural land becomes bigger and more uniform. In between spaces and pockets are often neglected, for example field, stream and road edges. There are in such spaces our pollinating insects often

2. Secondly, a decrease in flower species in meadow, pasture and grass is evident. They are vital, because they offer nutrients to pollinating insects.

Homogenous landscapes dominated by ether productive forest, arable landscape or buildings makes it more difficult for insects and plants to thrive. Loss of plant diversity affect insects, who in turn are important nourishment for birds, bats and other animals.



Unknown photographer. Geitmyra School Garden

Oslo, 1910-1920.

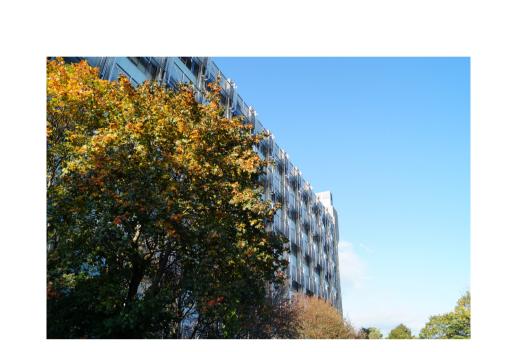
## The good dirt

Recently The Washington Post published an article written by allergist Cosby Stone. She suggests that our increasingly sterile environments may cause health problems. According to her, exposure to natural areas such as farms and forest is important early on in life. In some circumstances, exposing children to more bacteria may prevent allergies. She explains that our modern view on dirt comes from something called the "hygiene hypothesis":

As society progressed from one that was chronically burdened with infectious diseases caused by poor sanitation, we reduced our exposure to the things that gave our immune system an appropriate training and tolerance...Growing up in a rural area exposed to farm animals appears to confer decreased risk of allergies and asthma for your lifetime, even among genetically similar populations.

As well as potentially preventing development of allergies, soil may also contain a small microbe, M.Vaccae, that has shown to boost levels of serotonin and norepinephrine, working similarly to anti-depressives once inside the human body. The effect of this soil bacteria was discovered by accident a decade ago. In order to help the immune systems of her lungcancer patients, Mary O Brien, injected a serum made from the bacteria. To her surprise, she discovered an unexpected effect. The receiving patients reported feeling happier and in less pain that than those not treated with the serum.







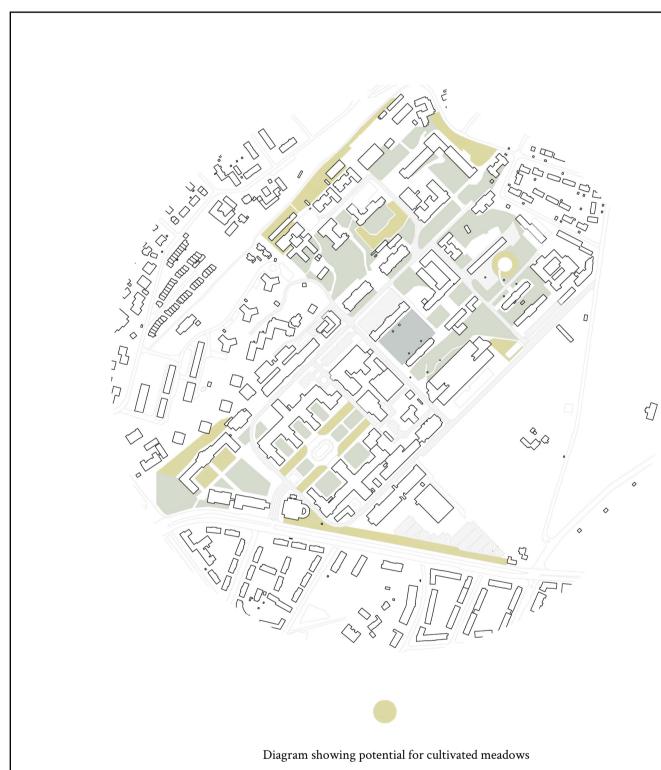
Vegetation at Ullevål Sykehus

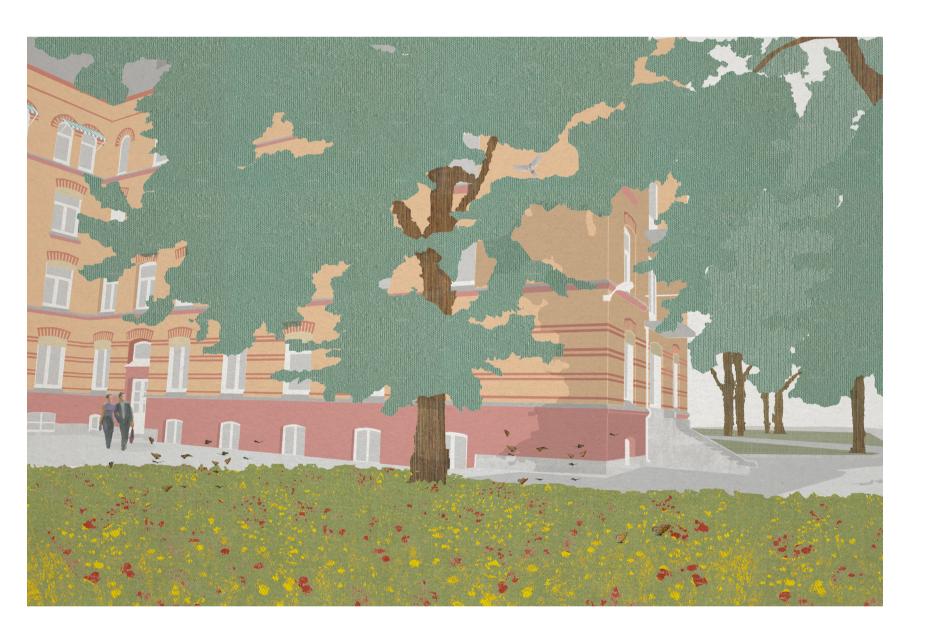
Recent scientific studies have shown that urban green spaces can have important health benefits. Already in 1984, a researcher named Roger Ulrich discovered a curious pattern. Patients given rooms overlooking trees were discharged on average a day sooner than the other patients. Why? In 2015 a study was published in the journal Scientific Reports, with researchers from the United States, Canada and Australia. They studied the city of Toronto, comparing two sets of data, with 95 000 respondents. The first measures the distribution of green space, while the second measures health. According to the researchers, an increase of ten trees on a block created a one percent increase in the mental and physical health of nearby residents.

Furthermore, a study made in the U.S. between 1990 and 2007 found that cardiovascular illnesses rose in placed were trees yielded to the emerald ash borer plague, contributing to 20 000 more deaths. The data from the Toronto-study also suggests an increase of trees can help people suffering from cardio metabolic conditions. According to Marc Berman, the leader of the study, just looking at a tree could have positive benefit:

The environment has to have some kind of stimulation to activate your involuntary attention - your fascination...Your eye is captured by the shape of the branch, a ripple in the water; your mind follows.

According to a study conducted at the University of Michigan, exposure to green surroundings can help us perform better in cognitive assessments. Volunteers were sent on two different fifty-minute walks, through either an arboretum or city streets. Those who had taken the walk through the arboretum performed twenty percent better when tested on memory and attention, as well as being in a better mood.





A meadow field in front of one of the buildings



Diagram showing location of pollinator gardens



Maintaining one of the pollinator gardens

