



Dolf van Eendenburg is now called 'garden coordinator'.

Many people visit and work in the Peace Palace every day, but there is only one person who has lived there, for over thirty years now: the gardener.

LIVING AND GARDENING IN THE PEACE PALACE



Text **Herman Jansen** Photography **Frank Jansen**

How on earth do you become the gardener of the Peace Palace? You really need to have the right connections, you'd think. But mighty oaks from little acorns grow, as in 1987 when Dolf van Eendenburg (1955, Poeldijk) applied for the vacancy 'Garden Manager wanted for an estate in The Hague'. The young Dolf had simply completed the right training and courses. "I worked at a large, old cemetery in Vlaardingen, but a real estate was always going to be my ideal workplace," says our still-fit protagonist.

That estate turned out to be the Peace Palace (1913) of the Carnegie Foundation, named after its founder Andrew Carnegie. "At first it looked magical, of course. You came to work in a palace, but it was all new to me and my wife Tineke, who was pregnant at the time. This was when security and night shifts were part and parcel of the job. We lived on the property with three other families." The Van Eendenburg couple is still there. They're the only one. Frightening? Anything but. "After 9/11, security and monitoring were, of course, intensified."

Seat

The Peace Palace is the seat of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the International Court of Justice of the United Nations, the Hague Academy of International Law, the Library of the Peace Palace and the Carnegie Foundation, owner and manager of the building. There may be hundreds of legal experts there, but there's only one garden manager. This title of garden manager was recently changed

to 'garden coordinator'; he works together with four colleagues and volunteers. Half of the garden is still in its original state. Van Eendenburg talks enthusiastically about the English designer. "Thomas Mawson based the garden on the English style of arts and crafts: back to handicraft and art, as a countermovement to industrialisation. We still feel the effects of that, because

'The pathways and avenues bring peace into the world'

there still remains a lot of work we have to do by hand, as there are a lot of small steps and other small features in the garden. You can't use a big mower or a leaf blower here."

The garden team regularly does guided tours. "Precisely because we have such a nice story. That garden wasn't designed just anyone. Mawson's given it a lot of thought; lots of water, not too much shadow. As well as who the users are, who come here. In his gardener's words: these countries must first agree that they disagree, and then they can work here with arbitrators, judges, legal experts and interpreters. In that difficult atmosphere, those people

will sometimes go out to get some air, Mawson thought. In summer, it's a paradise here, you can let it all settle down. Everything in the Peace Palace is symmetrical. There's equality between left and right, and then you feel that you can tell your story here. Unnoticed, all those things are also interwoven in the garden. The pathways and avenues bring peace into the world."

What celebrities have walked the garden? "You couldn't make it up. The royal family, Bono, Anouk, the Pope, the Daila Lama, Arafat. Gorbachev as well, I almost ran into him with the tractor once."

Flora and fauna

Enough about peace, what grows and lives here? Van Eendenburg: "The rosary was planted in the garden as a core feature. There is a large pond with water lilies and golden carp; across the road, you have the area that transitions into the forest, marked by the perennial border. There are a lot of foxes, and a roe deer can be spotted at least once a year. We have the whole plethora of birds, from peregrine falcons and owls to the kingfisher. The Haagse Beek runs through the garden and also provides for European polecats and such. Regular cats are also often thrown over the wall. On top of all that, I have two pigs."

Finally: does the garden manager himself have a garden? "No, the house actually forms part of the big garden, and the Peace Palace is our garden shed."

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