



NÁRODNÍ PEDAGOGICKÉ
MUZEUM A KNIHOVNA
J. A. KOMENSKÉHO

Národní pedagogické muzeum
a knihovna J. A. Komenského
Valdštejnská 161/20, 118 00 Praha 1
tel.: 257 533 455, <https://www.npmk.gov.cz>
e-mail: pedagog@npmk.cz, epodatelna@npmk.cz

Call for Papers

NATURE AS A TEACHER

International conference on the historical and contemporary use of the natural environment and school gardens for education

Date: 19. 6. – 20. 6. 2025

Venue: The National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius,
Valdštejnská 20, Praha 1

Organizers: The National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius,
Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences – Centre for the History of
Education

Length of presentation: 25 minutes

Conference languages: English, Czech





Environmental education became popular in schools only in recent decades, but nature as such has played a role in the educational process in the past, from its beginnings in pre-school education (J. A. Comenius) to universities. Logically, there was a connection between theory and practice: not only botany and other subjects were gradually promoted, but also organised school trips to the countryside, which was not only for relaxation, but also for teaching. The gradual construction of school and university gardens in the early modern period also played a crucial role. Of course, these could be used not only as an essential supplement to teaching, but also to serve the material needs of schools (one of the sources of food for teachers and students). Botanical gardens were also gradually established at schools of a higher type (gymnasia illustre, academies and universities).

Although the origins were therefore much older, the Enlightenment and then the 19th century were a major turning point in the role of nature in school theory and practice and in the spread of the study of flora, fauna and mineralogy. In the environment of the Austrian monarchy, and later the Austro-Hungarian Empire, these tendencies were increasingly reflected in legislation. From the last third of the 19th century onwards, the establishment of school gardens was ordered directly by the school authorities.

The approach to gardens was predominantly utilitarian, but this gradually changed and the interwar period was characterised by the conception of the school garden as a kind of didactic education tool. After the Second World War and the establishment of the communist regime after 1948, gardens continued to develop in the Czech school system, but their approach was again reduced to a cultivation approach. Nowadays, school gardens are no longer an integral part of schools, but in recent years there has been a renaissance in teachers' interest in using gardens and the natural environment for teaching.

The aim of the conference, which will take place from **19 June to 20 June 2025 at the National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius**, is to provide a space for the presentation of contributions from the following thematic areas:

- 1) The role of nature in the theoretical part of education and training from pre-school education through pre-university to higher education** - the approach of contemporary pedagogy from the Renaissance with the heritage of antiquity to the present, local and central school orders, ordines lectionum, nature in individual subjects and in compulsory school reading, in university theses, in examinations of various kinds, etc.
- 2) The school garden as a space complementary to the school building** – the garden as a place for growing plants and trees - what was grown in the gardens and why; the



establishment and maintenance of gardens (official regulations on school gardens and their real form; the process of approving the form of school gardens); the use of school gardens for teaching and harvesting; the school garden and work in the garden in the memories of teachers and pupils; the school garden as a model garden for the wider environment; university and botanical gardens as a distinctive type of school garden.

3) The school as a place for bee and silkworm keeping - bee and silkworm keeping, teachers as promoters of beekeeping and silkworm keeping, beekeeping clubs, linking beekeeping associations and schools.

4) Nature and the school garden in pedagogical thinking - the school garden as a didactic education tool; the school garden in the thinking of reformist educators; the school garden as a place for experiential pedagogy.

5) Natural environment and school gardens in contemporary education (in schools of all types and levels) - case studies of the current use of school gardens for teaching; issues and problems related to the establishment and maintenance of the garden and its financing.

Chronologically the contributions are not limited in any way (one of the sections should show the use of the natural environment and school gardens in the present day).

The conference follows the current exhibition *The Buzz of School Gardens. Environmental Education in the Changes of Time*, which is at the National Pedagogical Museum and Library of J. A. Comenius from 29 November 2024 to 2 November 2025.

Please send your draft presentation including an abstract (max 400 words) by **15 April 2025** to: historik@npmk.cz

We will contact you no later than **30 April 2025** with the result of the assessment of your abstract and additional information about the conference. The conference organizing committee reserves the right to select presentations.

