

Arboretum Arcadië

Peace, balance and harmony

ANNEKE VAN RHIJN-VAN DER VEER, Netherlands



PHOTOGRAPHS © WIECHER HUISMAN

Entrance to Arboretum Arcadië, with *Cedrus libani* 'Wiecher Huisman'.

Gardens that make you silent...silent in awe, but also from a sense of calm. That's what a garden should do. You must be captivated in every season. Above all, it should be a place where you can relax, enveloped in your own atmosphere, without a need for arduous garden work. (Wiecher Huisman)

The creator of Arboretum Arcadië, Wiecher Huisman, learned about handling plants from early childhood. In his younger years he was given the opportunity to work on a farm in the high mountains in Austria for two years. Those years in an alpine landscape had a great influence on him, informing his eye for the landscape and the atmosphere within it. He was so inspired that he chose to 'make trees his field of expertise and thus create atmospheres in gardens and landscapes'.

He decided to go to Boskoop, the centre for training in the tree trade, where he focused on the use of plants in gardens and landscapes. Wiecher was fully supported in his choice by one of his teachers, who taught him to see the beauty and language of trees and combinations thereof. Reading Hugh Johnson's *International Book of Trees* confirmed he had chosen the right direction.



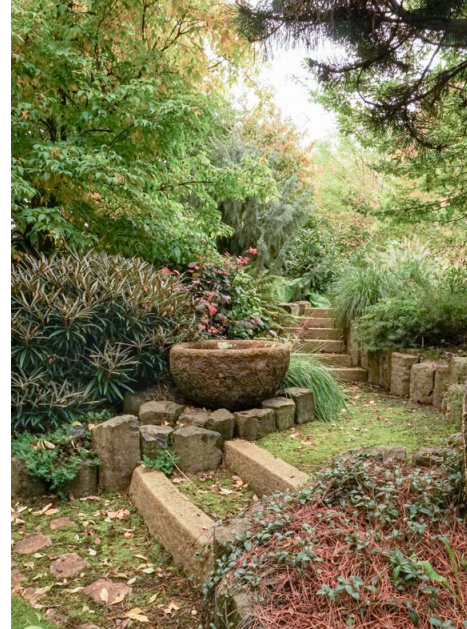
Feng Shui, a balance in plant combinations

Wiecher specialises in the design and construction of collection gardens, arboreta and pineta, as well as providing advice. He considers the membership and tours of the Dutch Dendrological Society, the IDS and the International Oak Society as very valuable, especially because a lot of knowledge is available and 'as a result, you are further trained by fellow members after your training'. This also gave him an expanded view of plants.

He participated in the IDS tour 'In the Footsteps of Forrest' to Western Yunnan, China, which provided much inspiration and knowledge of natural plant combinations. The temple gardens they visited were also a source of inspiration. His self-organised trip through the Chilean Andes was another great highlight. In the early years he was fascinated by heather gardens, then came the rock gardens, the atmospheric trees, grasses and ferns, and finally the combining of those fascinations.

Wandering through nurseries to find plants for a client and/or for his own arboretum has become a passion; those plants come into his nursery and then they gradually go into the arboretum or to a client's garden. The choice of plants is partly determined by soil type, acidity and the moisture requirements of the plant. Many plant combinations have been tried out in his own nursery, experimental garden, or both. New varieties are first allowed to prove themselves before they are used in a garden design.

At the entrance to the arboretum there is a large boulder, on which a text is chiselled in Chinese characters: *Hun yuan ling tong*, translated as 'The thought has manifested itself'. Wiecher's vision became a thought, a concrete plan, and then reality. He has been working on his dream garden, Arboretum Arcadië, since 2007. The result is a 1.5-hectare garden and a plant collector's



Rhododendron makinoi 'Fuju-kaku-no-matsu'



Berberis jamesiana

paradise. Different levels were created on the former agricultural land, along with naturally meandering paths, steps and peat borders. Then he started composing the interpretation of the design. The construction and planting were guided by the principles of Feng Shui, a 3,000-year-old Chinese system of spiritual energy that represents the natural properties of landscapes. Peace and harmony predominate, with organic shapes and flowing lines. Achieving balance between light and shadow, cold and warm colours, living and dead materials is considered. Other elements Wiecher incorporates are reflecting ponds with playful bank planting, and a wide variety of species, growth habit, leaf shape, flowers or autumn leaf colour, all combined into a harmonious natural-looking whole that is fascinating through the seasons.

The first tree planted in 2007 was a *Quercus serrata*. After that, many more oaks were added, including *Q. laurifolia*, *Q. salicina*, *Q. × schochiana* and a *Q. rysophylla* hybrid. The oak grows large, but then also determines the atmosphere. Together with a maple, a balanced picture is created. Trees have to fit together – after all, they also live together in the soil with roots and fungi.

In the conifer wood, the trees have a strong outline and form the skeleton of the garden. Balance is achieved with trees that give structure and underplanting that creates an impression of enclosure and intimacy. In winter, niches of evergreen plants provide this experience. By working with separate groups of plants, more atmosphere is created in the garden, with different functions fulfilled by smaller trees, both evergreen and deciduous, and, for example, ferns. Walking through the garden should feel like being part of a spectacle. An interplay of shrubs, trees, grasses and ferns; the incidence of light on a leaf. You get to know the plants better if you observe the different

aspects over and over again. You can find peace in yourself and in the garden through the experience.

Meanwhile, the arboretum is almost fully grown and contains many unusual trees and shrubs, including conifers, rhododendrons and azaleas. There are several collections: an oak collection with more than 50 varieties, and also *Lindera*, *Carpinus*, *Viburnum*, Hamamelidaceae, Ericaceae, *Betula* and conifers, including *Tsuga*. Though he stresses that all his trees are valued and important to the cohesion of the arboretum, Wiecher names a few favourites: *Carya cordiformis*, *Euonymus carnosus* 'Red Wine', *Lindera erythrocarpa*, *Maackia amurensis*, *Nyssa sinensis* and *Stewartia monodelpha*. Highlights among the conifers are *Picea alcoquiana*, *Tsuga mertensiana* and *T. caroliniana* 'LaBar Weeping'. *Rhododendron* treasures include *R. augustinei*, *R. camtschaticum* and *R. prinophyllum*.



Tsuga caroliniana 'LaBar Weeping'

The route through the arboretum leads along surprising paths with stone steps, here and there a garden object, a beautiful vase, a pond or a water course, and of course with exciting plant combinations of shade plants, grasses and ferns and beautiful vistas.

A garden is never finished and Wiecher Huisman will still be busy with the perfection of his dream garden in the coming years. In 2020 the Arboretum was awarded a five-star status by the Dutch Dendrological Society, which celebrated its centenary in 2024. Arboretum Arcadië is located at Gieterweg 11a, 9462 TC Gasselte, The Netherlands. www.wiecherhuisman.nl