



RESPONSIVE PUBLIC SERVICES

INTERACTIVE GARDENS

ELONKIERTO 

Interactive Gardens - project pilots in summer 2025 at Elonkierto

During the summer of 2025, more than twenty feel-good trips were organised at Elonkierto for various communities, organisations, workplace wellbeing days, and a couple of school classes. Together with a group facilitator, a trip programme tailored to the specific group was designed in advance, based on selected themes.

The following themes were available:

- **Restorative nature walk:** peace of mind and wellbeing
- **Poetry moment:** relaxation in nature, for example in hammocks, and shared reading of selected poems
- **Meeting animals** and learning to understand their body language
- **Environmental art activities** using natural materials
- **Delight of the senses:** sensory awareness exercises in nature
- **Wild herb walk:** discovering and tasting edible herbs
- **Alongside the researcher:** food knowledge and ideas for sustainable food consumption
- **Light-hearted traditional games** with a modern twist
- **Building nature knowledge** in meadows, wooded pastures and/or forest pastures
- **Forest excursion** ending at a lean-to shelter

The most popular trip packages combined a wild herb walk, and a restorative nature walk through an edible forest garden, together with meeting animals at Elonkierto. Environmental art activities using natural materials also generated interest, although they were often left out of the programme due to scheduling constraints. Each trip developed its own unique character.

The trips emphasised enjoying nature through walking while engaging different senses, observing species-typical animal behaviour, tasting wild herbs, and—most importantly—shared discussions and experiences of togetherness and community. Feedback questionnaires were sent to the trip organisers after the visits and forwarded by email to the participants.

The following section presents an individual reflection for each trip, addressing the trip theme, participants, activities (briefly), successes, challenges, personal observations and learning, impacts, and areas for development.

Feel-Good trip, coffee moment, and gathering for members of the Heart Association

- **Participants:** Older adults, 7 people, elderly men and women (recreation)
- **Time and Place:** Tuesday, May 6, from 1 PM to 3 PM, at Elonkierto Makasiini
- **Activities:** We spent half an hour outdoors near the Makasiini (barn). We toured the Martha Association's vegetable garden, the pollinator path, and visited the gazebo. A brief introduction to Elonkierto's' activities was given. We watched a demonstration of a shepherd dog herding chickens and had coffee at the Makasiini (barn). The Heart Association meets about every two weeks for coffee gatherings and chose Elonkierto as their meeting place despite the chilly spring weather.
- **Successes:** Relaxed chatting and coffee time and marvelling at the border collie's chicken herding demonstration.
- **Challenges:** May 6 was still a cold time for coffee and outdoor activities at the Makasiini (barn). Not all members had enough warm clothing despite prior instructions. We moved to the Makasiini barn's kitchen, where additional heating was arranged. There was not much vegetation in the park yet, and no animals were grazing.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** Due to the cold and damp weather, the Heart Association members were a bit chilly at first. Additional heating and warm blankets would be helpful.
- **Impacts:** The shepherd dog demonstration brought wonder and joy to the club members. Photos were taken. The border collie dog herding demonstration, where chickens were guided to the desired location.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 80 / 20



Border Collies herding chickens to a designated area during a demonstration.

Spring trip of the Parish Family Club at Elonkierto

- **Participants:** Families with young children I, 28 people – 10 mothers and their 1-5-year-old children (recreation)
- **Time and place:** May 20, 2025, from 10 AM to 1 PM, Elonkierto's Makasiini, the area around the smoke sauna, and the lean-to
- **Activities:** An experiential programme in a natural setting. The trip offered a wide range of activities and experiences for participants of all ages:
 - *Animal Moment:* Outi Vesakoski introduced heritage chickens and 10-day-old chicks. The children could pet the chickens and, if they wanted, hold them under Outi's gentle guidance.
 - *Herding Demonstration:* Border collie Ben, under Outi's guidance, demonstrated chicken herding at the Makasiini.
 - *Lean-to Trip:* We walked about 400 meters to the lean-to, where we roasted sausages, drank coffee and juice, and enjoyed buns.
 - *Games around the Smoke Sauna:*
 - *Colour Circle Game:* The children ran to the circles indicated by the colour wheel and slapped the balloon pictures in the colour circles with a fly swatter as instructed. The children took turns spinning the colour wheel.
 - *Accuracy Throwing Game:* Beanbag chickens and grain sacks were thrown into cylinders.
 - *Kim Card Game:* Spring-themed pairs of pictures were missing one picture on the other side of the tree – the game developed attention and memory.
- **Successes and Joyful Moments:** All participants eagerly joined in the activities and games. The weather favoured the trip – the sun and spring warmth created ideal conditions. For many children, petting the chickens and chicks was their first close experience with chickens, and some dared to hold a chicken. Community spirit was emphasized – children and parents had active shared time, and parents received peer support through conversations in their busy parenting lives.
- **Challenges and Solutions:** There were no animals grazing at Elonkierto yet, which is often desired. The situation was saved by an active member of Elonkierto's' friends, who brought chickens, chicks, and a shepherd dog to the site – thus, the animal moment was conducted as desired.
- **Observations and Learning:** For trips with small children, small breaks offered to mothers are significant. One mother thanked for the opportunity to drink her coffee in peace while her one-and-a-half-year-old daughter received a moment of attention from the instructor.

- **Impacts:** The guided games around the smoke sauna provided mothers with the opportunity to talk with other mothers at the lean-to, peer support is essential in busy parenting lives. Animals brought joy and good spirits to both children and adults. The trip offered brisk exercise, outdoor activities, and community spirit – children also experienced joy from being together and exploring an unfamiliar environment.
- **Areas for Improvement:** Clearly delineating and instructing play areas immediately upon arrival at the lean-to. Estimating play times in advance to ensure the program proceeds smoothly and the rhythm remains suitable for small children. Parents might also benefit from small group discussions or relaxation exercises during the trip day.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 80 / 20



Children and adults from a family club getting acquainted with chickens and ten-day-old chicks. Around the smoke sauna, they played games such as target throwing with beanbag chickens and grain sacks. (Photos: Pirjo Mutkala)

Revitalizing sensory walk in the forest and wild herbs in the forest garden

- **Participants:** Social and healthcare professionals, 20 people (education)
- **Time and Place:** June 6, 2025, from 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM at the forest garden in Elonkierto and the Jokioinen manor park forest path
- **Description of Activities:** Introduction to wild herbs in the forest garden
 - *Awakening the senses*
 - *Smelling* blackcurrant leaves
 - *Tasting* Louhisaari beverage made from blackcurrant leaves at the outdoor table by the smoke sauna.
 - *Feeling* the velvety leaves and stems of red campion, the sticky stems of ragged robin, and the angular stems of cuckoo flower – three similar plants blooming at the same time.
 - *Scent guessing game:* five scents in glass jars (marsh tea, meadowsweet leaf, coffee bean, lemon, blackcurrant leaf)
 - *Short stretching and breathing exercise* by the river (5 minutes)
 - *Sensory path* in small groups (2-3 people), with each sense having its own exercise. Emphasis was placed on experiential learning and avoiding a performance mindset.
- **Successes:** Joyful and relaxed atmosphere, many participants had just started their summer vacation. The recipe for Louhisaari beverage sparked great interest. Lively discussions and active participation. The weather favoured the event.
- **Challenges:** Initial concern about the setup where an experiential expert guides a topic well-known to psychologists. Openly discussing this "upside-down" setup helped to ease the atmosphere.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** The best results come from an authentic and open approach. There is no need to pretend to know more than you do.
- **Impacts:** *Participants were receptive to the sensory experiences in nature. Sharing experiences and discussions strengthened the sense of community.*
- **Areas for Improvement:** Clarifying time management could be beneficial. However, a too strict schedule might reduce the relaxing effect.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 70 / 30



Getting to know animals and photo orienteering

- **Participants:** Families with young children II, 15 people in total, mothers with children aged 4-7 years (recreation)
- **Time and Place:** June 10, 2025, at Elonkierto from 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM
- **Description of Activities:** Getting to know animals and walking the basic path
 - *Photo orienteering* using the fan orienteering principle, where a new photo orienteering card was picked up from the same starting point (Elonkierto's flagpole)
 - *12 laminated photos* from the area between the Makasiini (barn) and the gazebo, with the photos focused on identifiable details of the terrain or buildings, which were found in random order.
 - At each found checkpoint, there was a *task*. This used the monthly pictures from Mauri Kunnas' wall calendar (12 pieces), where a character was found or the task was otherwise solvable from the picture.
- **Successes:** Active and cheerful participation. A physically active afternoon for both children and adults. The weather favoured the event.
- **Challenges:** Ensuring the orienteering was challenging enough for children of different ages and fitness levels, but still doable for everyone. This was pre-solved by having six checkpoints for younger children and up to 12 for older ones; surprisingly, even the younger children managed to find the checkpoints well.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** Photos need to be checked each time, as changes are made in the park and vegetation looks vastly different in different seasons.
- **Impacts:** The task after the animal tour was very physical.
- **Areas for Improvement:** Allocating sufficient time for the trip and a proper snack break between activities
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 80 / 20



Getting to know animals, introduction to the edible forest garden, and revitalizing sensory walk in the forest

- **Participants:** Work communities and staff groups I, 25 people (recreation)
- **Time and Place:** June 17, 2025, from 2:30 PM to 4:00 PM
- **Description of Activities:** Getting to know animals. Introduction to wild herbs and edible perennial plants in the forest garden.
 - *Awakening the senses:*
 - *Smelling* blackcurrant leaves
 - *Tasting* Louhisaari beverage made from blackcurrant leaves at the outdoor table by the smoke sauna.
 - *Feeling* the velvety leaves and stems of red campion, the sticky stems of ragged robin, and the angular stems of cuckoo flower – three similar plants blooming at the same time, identifiable by touch.
 - *Scent guessing game:* five scents in glass jars (marsh tea, meadowsweet leaf, coffee bean, lemon, blackcurrant leaf)
- **Successes:** Lively discussions about the development and significance of Elonkierto. Interest in sensory tasks. Active and cheerful participation. The weather favoured the event.
- **Challenges:** Organizing activities for a large group.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** It was great to see participants pondering the development of the park, such as the location of a bridge that would enable a walking/cycling route connecting Jokioinen centre and Elonkierto. Trips create opportunities to initiate or continue collaboration.
- **Impacts:** Participants were receptive to sensory experiences in nature. Sharing experiences and discussions strengthened the sense of community. Clarifying time management.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 70 / 30



Getting to know animals and introduction to the edible forest garden

- **Participants:** Young people and young adults I, 13 people (education)
- **Time and Place:** June 19, 2025, from 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM
- **Description of Activities:** Getting to know animals and learning about their natural behaviour. Introduction to wild herbs and edible perennial plants in the forest garden.
 - *Awakening the senses:*
 - *Smelling* blackcurrant leaves
 - *Tasting* Louhisaari beverage made from blackcurrant leaves at the outdoor table by the smoke sauna.
- **Successes/Challenges:** The guide forgot about the visit from the group on this day. The situation was saved by their group leader, who started the tour independently and took the group to the goat enclosure. The guide arrived from collecting birch branches to continue the tour. A sincere apology was accepted, and the guide promised to offer coffee and buns to the group.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** The flexibility of the youth regarding the forgetfulness and lateness was touching. It is always worth honestly admitting one's mistakes and apologizing.
- **Impacts:** The encounters with the animals were visibly touching for the youth and evoked genuine emotions.
- **Areas for Improvement:** The guide should always carefully check calendar times and scheduled meetings.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 70 / 30



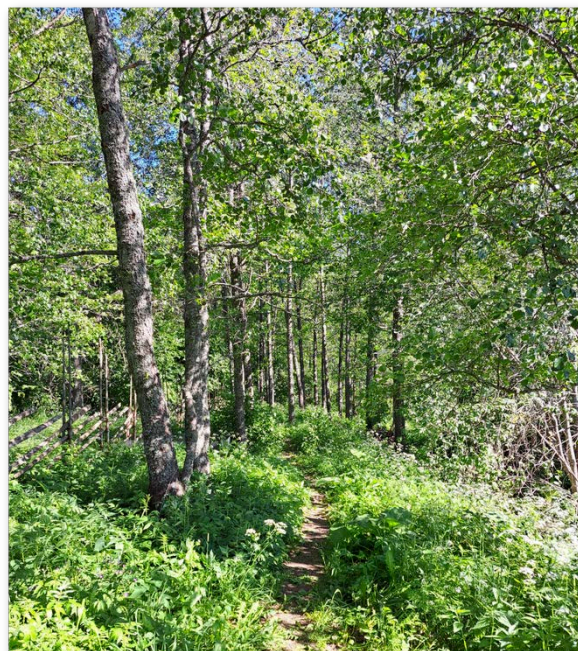
Getting to know animals, introduction to the edible forest garden, and wild herbs

- **Participants:** Work communities and staff groups II, 8 people (recreation)
- **Time and Place:** June 19, 2025, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM
- **Description of Activities:** Getting to know animals and learning about their natural behaviour. Introduction to wild herbs and edible perennial plants in the forest garden.
 - *Awakening the senses:*
 - *Smelling* blackcurrant leaves
 - *Tasting* Louhisaari beverage made from blackcurrant leaves at the outdoor table by the smoke sauna.
 - *Scent guessing game:* five scents in glass jars (marsh tea, meadowsweet leaf, coffee bean, lemon, blackcurrant leaf)
 - *Binding a birch whisk or a midsummer bouquet* at the end of the coffee break
 - There was a flower and birch branch station in front of the Makasiini (barn) where participants could bind a birch whisk or a midsummer bouquet to take home.
- **Successes:** Cheerful participation and a relaxed midsummer atmosphere, sensing the greenery of nature. The weather favoured the event.
- **Challenges:** No particular challenges
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** It is important to consider the timing and expectations of the trip, for example, after this trip, the participants moved on to celebrate midsummer, so a relaxed atmosphere and flexible end time were important.
- **Impacts:** Participants tuned into the midsummer celebration atmosphere and enjoyed the lush nature of midsummer. Joyful conversations strengthened the sense of community.
- **Areas for Improvement:** Some participants expected more focus on wild herbs. Expectations and wishes should be clarified more precisely before the trip, and the program should be communicated more clearly to the group.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 80 / 20



Introduction to the edible forest garden and wild herbs

- **Participants:** Members of civic and hobby organisations I, 7 people (recreation)
- **Time and Place:** June 24, 2025, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM
- **Description of Activities:** The plan was to start in the forest garden and walk part of the paths along the animal pastures, but it was pouring rain. Fortunately, this was predicted in the weather forecast, so the forest garden's offerings were brought to the Makasiini (barn). A salad was prepared from collected leaves of giant knotweed, young ground elder, wood sorrel, violet flowers, strawberry leaves, and dandelion leaves, with added tomatoes, cucumbers, and feta cheese. Louhisaari beverage made from blackcurrant leaves was served as a beverage. During the meal, we discussed the edible forest garden and wild herbs. After the rain stopped, we took a short animal tour.
- **Successes:** The Martha association adapted well to the weather-induced changes in the program. The discussion was lively and cheerful. The warm and friendly atmosphere enhanced the sense of community. Knowledge about the forest garden and its health benefits increased.
- **Challenges:** Heavy rain. Bringing the forest garden "indoors" to the Makasiini.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** The success of the trip does not depend on the strict adherence to the pre-arranged program but on people's attitudes towards unexpected changes.
- **Impact:** Joyful conversation strengthened the sense of community.
- **Areas for Improvement:** Preparing for the implementation of a "Plan B" or backup plan
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 80 / 20



Getting to Know Elonkierto and its animals

- **Participants:** Adults requiring additional support I / Diaconal work of the Parish, 12 people (wellbeing/therapy)
- **Time and Place:** June 25, 2025, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM at Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** We got to know the animals at Elonkierto and walked the basic path of the park. We observed the animals grazing in the pasture and their species-typical behaviour. We fed the goats at the goat enclosure.
- **Successes:** The participants admired each animal/animal group. The experience was engaging, enthusiastic, and emotions were openly displayed. Open discussions and acceptance of opinions
- **Challenges:** Mobility limitations for some participants. Mobility limitations may have prevented some from joining the trip.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** When working with special groups, it is important to be particularly sensitive and empathetic, putting oneself in the other person's position. Respecting others' thoughts and opinions, even when there is repetition.
- **Impacts:** For the participants, the opportunity was unique in the summer. Without private transportation funding, the trip to Elonkierto would not have been possible.
- **Areas for Improvement:** Enabling and funding trips for special groups
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 90 / 10



Getting to know Elonkierto and its animals

- **Participants:** Adults requiring additional support II / mental health and substance abuse rehabilitation, 8 people (wellbeing/therapy)
- **Time and Place:** July 1, 2025, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM at Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** We got to know the animals at Elonkierto and walked the basic path of the park. We explored the forest garden and drank Louhisaari beverage at the smoke sauna cottage. We observed the animals grazing in the pasture and their species-typical behaviour. We fed the goats at the goat enclosure. We had coffee at the Makasiini (barn).
- **Successes:** The participants had a lot of knowledge and experiences about animals and their care, as well as memories of the animals at Elonkierto from decades ago. Sharing all these among the participants created a sense of community and increased awareness about animals. Sharing animal experiences clearly improved the mood.
- **Challenges:** No particular challenges
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** When working with special groups, it is important to be particularly sensitive and empathetic, putting oneself in the other person's position. Respecting others' thoughts and opinions, even when there is repetition.
- **Impacts:** For the participants, the opportunity was unique in the summer. Without private transportation funding, the trip to Elonkierto would not have been possible.
- **Areas for Improvement:** Enabling and funding trips for special groups
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 70 / 30



Getting to know Elonkierto and its animals

- **Participants:** Adults requiring additional support III / Diaconal work of the Parish, 10 people (wellbeing/therapy)
- **Time and Place:** July 2, 2025, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM at Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** We got to know the animals at Elonkierto and walked the basic path of the park. We explored the forest garden and drank Louhisaari beverage the smoke sauna cottage. We observed the animals grazing in the pasture and their species-typical behaviour. We fed the goats at the goat enclosure. We had coffee at the Makasiini (barn).
- **Successes:** The participants found boundless joy in getting to know the animals and exploring the park. There were lively and cheerful discussions about what they saw and felt.
- **Challenges:** No particular challenges, but partial mobility limitations should be considered in the walking pace.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** Time management should be considered differently when working with special groups. There should be no rush to ensure the success of the trip.
- **Impacts:** For the participants, the opportunity was unique in the summer. Without private transportation funding, the trip to Elonkierto would not have been possible.
- **Areas for Improvement:** Enabling and funding trips for special groups
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 90 / 10



Elonkierto Nature trips

- **Participants:** Young people and young adults, 14 people, youth aged 10-15 years (education)
- **Time and Place:** July 7 and 8, 2025, from 12:00 PM to 4:00 PM at Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** We got to know the animals at Elonkierto. On the first day, we covered ponies, chickens, pigs, and cows, and on the next day, horses, sheep, and goats. We explored the forest garden and tasted edible flowers from the forest garden and drank Louhisaari beverage at the smoke sauna cottage.
 - The nature theme for the first day was "*Deadwood as an Enabler of Biodiverse Species*". We compiled the species of an aspen tree on a 150-year timeline using ready-made species cards. The conclusion was that the ecosystem needs trees of all ages, especially deadwood.
 - The nature theme for the second day was "*Observing Nature*". We observed the pond's ecosystem, including the incomplete metamorphosis of dragonflies, examining the skin shed from the larval stage to adulthood. We also studied newts in the pond and examined the structure of bird feathers with magnifying glasses, investigating how the structure of owl feathers affects their silent flight. At the end of the day, we had a communal problem-solving task and a snack at the lean-to.
- **Successes:** Active participation and lively discussions among the youth on the themes covered. Community spirit and teamwork.
- **Challenges:** No particular challenges.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** The youth are truly knowledgeable and curious about nature-related topics. Hands-on activities are particularly engaging. My preconceived notions about the youth's attitude towards nature themes proved to be unfounded.
- **Impacts:** Increased interactions with nature and among the youth
- **Areas for Improvement:** Nature trips are rarely targeted at youth. This is an area for development.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 50 / 50



Young people sorting aspen species cards along a 150-year timeline. Old and decaying aspens host the highest diversity of species.



End-of-day problem-solving task: How can you free yourselves from the rope restraints without removing the loops from your wrists?



Studying pond life. The image on the left shows a dragonfly larval exuvia in a glass jar, and the image on the right shows a salamander collected from the pond with a net and released back into the pond immediately after the examination.

Elonkierto animal tour

- **Participants:** Members of civic and hobby organisations II, 11 participants (education)
- **Date and Location:** 10 July 2025, 1:00–3:00 pm, Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** The group familiarised themselves with the animals at Elonkierto. The animals' natural behavioural needs were discussed, along with how these needs are met in Elonkierto's pastures and traditional rural landscapes. The participants observed interactions between the animals as well as their social relationships. Experiences related to animals were shared and discussed among the group. The participants fed the goats and petted the pigs in their pen. The programme also included a brief introduction to the forest garden and refreshments (Louhisaari beverage) at the smoke sauna.
- **Successes:** Active participation and lively discussion about animals. Strong sense of community.
- **Challenges:** No particular challenges.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** Discussion related to the theme of the trip increased knowledge for all participants. It is important to allocate sufficient time for discussion, actively encourage participation, and allow conversations to flow without unnecessary interruptions. At the same time, attention should be paid to ensuring that speaking turns are shared fairly among enthusiastic participants.
- **Impacts:** Strengthened sense of community. Increased knowledge and awareness.
- **Areas for Development:** Animal interactions are desired not only by children, but also by young people, adults, and older adults.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 60 / 40



Pigs enjoy cooling off in mud baths and curiously come to greet visitors.

Presentation of Elonkierto pilot activities

- **Participants:** Elonkierto members, 10 participants (educaton)
- **Date and Location:** 16 July 2025, 5:00–6:00 pm, Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** The pilot activities conducted during the summer were presented in the pavilion. Participants were introduced to wild herbs in the forest garden and enjoyed herbal tea (meadowsweet, raspberry, red clover, mint), tasted meadowsweet jelly served with crackers, and sampled Louhisaari beverage. The programme also included sugar-coating red clover blossoms and learning about the use of wild herbs as herbal teas, supported by hands-on examination of plant samples.
- **Successes:** Despite the limited one-hour presentation time, there was still an opportunity to try sugar-coating red clover blossoms.
- **Challenges:** The one-hour timeframe was short, and the session took place after participant's workday and a board meeting.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** A one-hour pilot session requires careful advance planning.
- **Impacts:** Strengthened sense of community. Increased awareness and knowledge of wild herbs.
- **Areas for Development:** The timing and duration of pilot sessions.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 80 / 20



Introduction to the Elonkierto forest garden and crafting with natural materials

- **Participants:** Young people and young adults III, 15 participants, second visit (education)
- **Date and Location:** 29 July 2025, 9:30 am–12:00 pm, Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** The session began with an introduction to the forest garden, followed by tasting Louhisaari beverage and meadowsweet jelly at the smoke sauna. Participants were introduced to the use of wild herbs as herbal teas and examined plant samples. Animals were observed along the trail.
 - *Creative activities using natural materials* were organised near the pavilion. Natural materials such as flowers, leaves, cones, stones, and branches had been collected in advance. Participants explored how natural materials can be used in crafts, how they can be bound together, and how they can be used as a means of creative expression. Participants were encouraged to simply choose materials they found appealing and to experiment freely with what could be created from them.
- **Successes:** The young people engaged with the materials; some did so very confidently, while others needed a short period to warm up. The natural materials developed into impressive artworks, which were photographed in the natural environment using frames. One participant shared that it was their first time ever making a floral wreath, and after a small amount of guidance experienced a strong sense of success.
- **Challenges:** Some participants may have strong self-criticism regarding their own abilities. In such cases, it is important to provide gentle and supportive guidance to help them get started.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** Young people do participate enthusiastically in crafting with natural materials when materials are prepared in advance and displayed in an inviting way, and when a few example works are shown—not as models to be copied, but as sources of inspiration. Personal preconceptions about young people’s willingness to participate were challenged and dispelled.
- **Impacts:** Strengthened sense of community. Experiences of success and achievement. Areas for Development. To create more frequent and more open-minded opportunities for engaging young people in activities and creative expression.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 80 / 20



Young people creating art from natural materials and the finished artworks.

Introduction to Elonkierto, basic trail with animals

- **Participants:** Members of civic and hobby organisations III, 20 participants (education)
- **Date and Location:** 29 July 2025, 3:00–4:30 pm, Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** A brief introduction to Elonkierto's operating principles was provided, followed by a guided walk along the basic trail with its animals.
- **Successes:** Elonkierto was a new destination for the participants, who were pleasantly surprised by its diversity and activities. A great deal of cheerful and engaging discussion took place during the visit.
- **Challenges:** The available time was limited.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** New visitors are particularly interested in the operating principles and funding model of Elonkierto, which is maintained by an association.
- **Impacts:** The visit appeared to be a refreshing and uplifting experience for the participants.
- **Areas for Development:** For first-time visitors, such as tour leaders, it would be beneficial to recommend familiarising themselves with Elonkierto's website in advance. For example, the tour leader could briefly introduce Elonkierto's operating principles and general background information during the bus journey, allowing more time on site for the guided tour itself.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 70 / 30



Introduction to Elonkierto, basic trail with animals

- **Participants:** Work communities and staff groups, 22 participants (education)
- **Date and Location:** 5 August 2025, 1:00–4:00 pm, Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** The programme included a guided walk along Elonkierto's basic trail, with introductions to the animals and the forest garden. Participants were introduced to wild herbs, and refreshments were served at the smoke sauna, including meadowsweet jelly, fireweed flower juice, and Louhisaari beverage. The session also featured a presentation on student internships carried out at Elonkierto by HAMK students.
- **Successes:** Interesting and lively discussion throughout the visit
- **Challenges:** An unexpected rain shower
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** There is strong potential for developing fruitful cooperation between educational institutions and the Elonkierto park.
- **Impacts:** In addition to providing a refreshing experience, the visit contributed to deepening cooperation.
- **Areas for Development:** Engaging and involving larger groups in hands-on activities can be challenging.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 70 / 30



Hikers were served tastings made from wild herbs of the forest garden in the smoke sauna. Meadowsweet flowers were used to prepare meadowsweet jelly, and fireweed blossoms were used to make "princess drink."



Introduction to wild herbs, the forest garden, and the park

- **Participants:** Members of civic and hobby organisations IV, 7 participants (education)
- **Date and Location:** 7 August 2025, 2:00–5:00 pm, Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** The programme included an introduction to the forest garden with a special focus on wild herbs. Refreshments were served at the smoke sauna, including meadowsweet jelly, fireweed flower juice, wild herb tea, and Louhisaari beverage.
 - Participants were introduced to the most common wild herbs found along the path, as well as methods for drying and preparing them. The group discussed food security in exceptional circumstances and the potential role of the forest garden in food supply during emergencies. The visit concluded with a guided walk along the basic trail, including introductions to the grazing animals.
- **Successes:** Interesting and lively discussions. New perspectives on food security in exceptional circumstances, such as planting potatoes in a forest garden setting.
- **Challenges:** No particular challenges; preparation was required due to the specific theme.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** Participants shared specialised skills and knowledge related to food security in exceptional circumstances and the potential of the forest garden. Everyone had something new and valuable to contribute.
- **Impacts:** Knowledge sharing and learning of new perspectives. Participants felt refreshed and energised. A blog article about the visit was published on the Elonkierto website (Interactive Gardens – Elonkierto): [“Defence Women Enthralled by Wild Herbs”](#), 12 August 2025.
- **Areas for Development:** Further background research and preparation for specialised thematic visits.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 60 / 40



Agricultural introduction tour for 4th grade pupils

- **Participants:** Children in an educational context I, 20 pupils (education)
- **Date and Location:** 27 August 2025, 9:15–11:30 am, Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** During the animal tour, pupils observed species-typical animal behaviour both in the pasture and in the animal enclosures. The group walked along the basic trail with introductions to grazing animals and discussed their natural behaviour.
 - At the edge of the field, pupils learned to identify the main cereal crops—wheat, rye, oats, and barley. They threshed grain heads by rubbing them between their hands and tasted the grains.
 - The learning was reviewed at the pavilion using grain samples, along with a brief explanation of the stages of fieldwork supported by images. The visit concluded with jumping on the straw bouncer and running through the sunflower maze.
- **Successes:** Pupils remained highly engaged, observing animal behaviour in the pasture and enclosures. The hands-on grain threshing and tasting generated great enthusiasm. Active discussion emerged about both animals and fieldwork stages.
- **Challenges:** For small-group activities and better participation, a group of twenty pupils would ideally be divided into two groups.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** Pupils would happily spend much more time observing animals and exploring the area. However, school schedules, including meal times, limit the possibility of longer visits.
- **Impacts:** An experiential lesson in a natural environment is always a welcome addition to school education.
- **Areas for Development:** Further development of organised school trips and outdoor learning sessions in the park.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 50 / 50



Agricultural introduction tour for 4th grade pupils

- **Participants:** Children in an educational context I, 20 pupils (education)
- **Date and Location:** 28 August 2025, 9:15–11:30 am, Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** During the animal tour, pupils observed species-typical animal behaviour in the pasture areas. The group walked along the basic trail with introductions to grazing animals and discussed their natural behaviour.
 - At the edge of the field, pupils learned to identify the main cereal crops—wheat, rye, oats, and barley. They threshed grain heads by rubbing them between their hands and tasted the grains.
 - The learning was reviewed at the pavilion using grain samples, along with a brief explanation of the stages of fieldwork supported by images. The visit concluded with exploring and running through the sunflower maze.
- **Successes:** Pupils showed strong interest in observing animal behaviour in the pasture. Hands-on grain threshing and tasting was met with great enthusiasm. Discussion emerged around animals.
- **Challenges:** To enable small-group activities and active participation, the pupils would ideally be divided into two groups. One pupil participated using crutches, and the group progressed at a pace appropriate for them.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** Pupils would happily spend much more time observing animals and exploring the area. However, school schedules, including meal times, limit the possibility of longer visits.
- **Impacts:** An experiential lesson in a natural environment is always a welcome addition to school education.
- **Areas for Development:** Further development of organised school trips and outdoor learning sessions in the park.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 50 / 50



Introduction to the Elonkierto forest garden, wild herbs, small-scale crafting with natural materials, and an animal tour

- **Participants:** Work communities and staff groups IV, autumn season kick-off for the work community, 7 participants (education)
- **Date and Location:** 2 September 2025, 1:00–4:00 pm, Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** The visit began with an introduction to the forest garden. Wild herbs were presented and tasted at the smoke sauna, including wild herb tea, “Princess Drink,” and eadowsweet jelly served on crackers.
 - Participants observed species-typical animal behaviour and walked along the basic trail. Coffee was enjoyed at the Granary.
 - The visit concluded with tying small bouquets to take home, using sunflowers, grasses, Bergenia leaves, and other natural materials.
- **Successes:**
- **Challenges:** As Elonkierto was very familiar to most participants, finding a genuinely new angle was both a goal and a challenge.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** Each group of participants is always unique, and their expectations for the visit should be considered in advance. Careful discussion with the organiser about the goals of the visit is essential. Thorough planning and advance preparation are key to a successful experience.
- **Impacts:** Strengthened sense of community and a gentle reconnection of the work community after the summer break.
- **Areas for Development:** More clearly articulating and documenting the phases and emotional experiences of the visits, including positive feelings and impressions.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 60 / 40



Introduction to the Wooded Traditional Biotopes of Elonkierto

- **Participants:** Researchers and experts, 24 participants (education)
- **Date and Location:** 10 September 2025, 11:00 am–12:30 pm, Elonkierto
- **Description of Activities:** A brief introduction to Elonkierto was followed by a guided walk through its wooded traditional biotopes, focusing on the local biodiversity of forest pastures and wooded meadows.
- **Successes:** Participants were highly engaged, and extensive discussion emerged on topics related to biodiversity. For example, lung lichen (*Lobaria pulmonaria*) found on goat willow was enthusiastically photographed, and participants shared previous rare observations of the species. The diverse fungal communities, abundance of deadwood, and presence of noble broadleaved trees were also of particular interest.
- **Challenges:** The one-hour time allocation was insufficient, and participants would have gladly stayed longer.
- **Personal Observations and Learning:** People who study biodiversity have a great deal of knowledge to share with one another. Interactions between species have been relatively understudied, as many researchers focus on individual species. Nature-based excursions such as this readily stimulate discussion and may lead to valuable new insights.
- **Impacts:** For this research group, the biodiversity of Elonkierto's wooded traditional biotopes made a strong and lasting impression.
- **Areas for Development:** Elonkierto is a highly inspiring park for illustrating and experiencing biodiversity. Thematic excursions focusing on biodiversity should be further developed and widely promoted.
- **Estimated recreation / educational value of the pilot:** 40 / 60



Halloween path

- **Participants:** Open to everyone interested
- **Time and place:** October 30, 2025, from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, Elonkierto
- **Description of the activity:** The event started at the Elonkierto gate and continued to the forest garden. From there, the route led past the smoke sauna and back to the path, continuing along the gravel trail. At the nitrogen circle, the route turned via the gazebo island and ended at the makasiini.
 - The path was marked with illuminated pumpkins, candles and outdoor lanterns.
 - A photo wall made of hay bales was set up, where a photographer took pictures of all the costumes.
 - There were Halloween-themed quizzes and short information sessions along the route.
 - Pumpkin purée soup was served to the first 100 participants.
 - Hot juice was available for everyone.
 - A Halloween witch was present at the event.
 - The gazebo, makasiini and the path were decorated in Halloween style.
- **Impact:** A pleasant recreational and experiential event for the whole family during the darkest time of autumn.
- **Visitor Feedback:** Visitors considered the event successful (avg. 4.6). They expressed interest in including more about the history of Jokioinen Manor, together with the Grey Lady, as an additional feature. Attention to the target audience and the level of the spooky atmosphere were also well balanced (avg. 4.5). Visitors would gladly return and recommend the trail to their friends.
- **Estimated impact of the pilot in supporting well-being and learning:** 90/10



Elonkierto Christmas Event

- **Participants:** Open to everyone interested
- **Time and place:** December 14, 2025 – January 6, 2026, Elonkierto
- **Description of the activity:** The Christmas Yard was set up in the area surrounding the Elonkierto makasiini building.
 - The opening event took place on December 14, 2025, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM. After the opening, the Christmas Yard remained open until Epiphany (January 6).
 - At the opening event, Santa Claus and Hesse-pony were present. Hot mulled wine (glögi) and gingerbread cookies were served.
 - The area around the makasiini was decorated in a festive Christmas style with Christmas lights. The gazebo featured a Christmas display (an “elf yard” scene).
 - The Christmas Yard remained open throughout the above-mentioned period and visitors were welcome to explore and admire it independently.
- **Impact:** The Elonkierto Christmas Path/Yard has already become a local tradition and attracts hundreds of visitors each year.
- **Visitor Feedback:** The previously Christmas Trail had been changed into a Christmas Courtyard, and this change had not clearly reached all visitors. Only a small number of responses were received (n=6). Visitors came to the Christmas Courtyard to experience the holiday atmosphere, see the displays, and spend time with their children. Two visitors felt the visit was a waste of time and somewhat depressing, while the other respondents felt it reflected the Christmas spirit, offered pleasant time together, and sparked discussion. Two-thirds would return and would also recommend the Christmas Courtyard to others. All respondents agreed that a longer Christmas Trail is preferable to a more compact Christmas Courtyard.
- **Estimated impact of the pilot in supporting well-being and learning:** 100/0

