

Bühlertann, April 2021

Green space maintenance - Ecologically and economically sensible

When you enter the premises in Ludwig-Erhard-Straße, it quickly becomes clear that the construction depot of the city of Crailsheim in southern Germany can certainly be compared to a classic company. There is order here, the halls are clean and tidy, the machinery is well sorted and signs at the entrance show the way. Among others, directly to the boss: Johannes Köder. Three things have priority in his work: sustainability, economic efficiency and his employees. And so it is not surprising that the fleet includes several machines from AS-Motor.

Support in the citizenry

"Since 2002, our construction depot has been located in Ludwig-Erhard-Straße, on the site of a former aircraft hangar. When we moved in here a good 20 years ago, the technology was getting on in years and the buildings were not quite finished. At that time, there were considerations to downsize the construction depot. Köder proudly tells us that they have managed to turn this around: "We have clearly polished up our image. This has been helped, for example, by uniform uniforms with the name of the respective employee on them and thus more personal reference to the construction depot. In addition, we have succeeded over the years in showing that the things we do make absolute sense from an economic and sustainability point of view. This has not only helped us in the municipal council, but has also ultimately earned us the support of the citizens."

Specialists who enjoy their work

And so the building depot has by no means shrunk. On the contrary, with currently 91 employees and the departments of structural engineering, civil engineering and green spaces, Crailsheim's building maintenance depot is a real public enterprise with its own administration and accounting. The main tasks are the maintenance and safeguarding of the municipal infrastructure. Of course, green maintenance plays a major role in this. After all, in the town of 35 thousand inhabitants in the district of Schwäbisch Hall, Baden-Württemberg, 20 hectares of roadside greenery, well over ten hectares of park areas, 105 playgrounds, 27 sports fields and seven cemeteries have to be maintained. "Here we are real specialists. We have a total of 19 gardeners working as a team. And, it is not easy to find good employees. Because we can't offer our public sector employees the big money. But we do offer a great and secure job, the opportunity for further training, independent work, a varied range of tasks and enjoyment at work. Last but not least, this includes equipment with modern technology."

Modern technology that pays off

"When it comes to technical equipment, we conduct intensive market research to find the right machine for us. This also includes tests in real practical use. Only those machines are purchased that absolutely convince us," explains the head of the green department, Gerhard Glump. "The acquisition of every single machine and every piece of equipment must also make sense from an economic point of view," adds Köder and explains: "The public works depot must be self-supporting, we may not make a profit, but we must be profitable. There are profitability analyses for all machines. These are recalculated annually and if the free market is more favourable for a service, then we let the free market do it."

AS-Motor - Nothing comparable on the market

Mowers from the tall grass specialist from Bühlertann have long been an integral part of the fleet. Currently, two AS Sherpa, an AS YAK, a caterpillar mower from AS-Motor, an AS WeedHex 50 and several AS mulching lawn mowers help with the daily work. "We have been using mowers from AS-Motor for a long time," knows Gerhard Glump, who has now been a permanent member of the Public Works Department team for over three decades. "We started with the small hand-held mowers. Then the ride-on mowers came along. Of course, they are particularly popular with my boys from the green department," says the trained gardener with a smile and adds: "It is clear why we use AS mowers, they are powerful and powerful. There is simply nothing comparable on the market."

Crailsheim - An insect-friendly city

The tallgrass mowers gained a whole new importance and became even more important when the city started its urban bee project in 2015 to create more insect-friendly habitats. "Especially since we manage our green spaces extensively and only mow once or twice a year, the high grass mowers are irreplaceable. High grass and, thanks to the all-wheel drive, slopes don't bother our AS 940 Sherpas. And when we have to deal with scrub on areas that are only mown every two to three years, we use our AS 1040 YAK. It's also powerful when you're no longer dealing with just grass."

"The project was initiated by Herbert Holl, the mayor of the city at the time," Köder recounts in retrospect. "At the beginning, he had to fight against real resistance. At first, he didn't find any supporters in me either. Although I am very close to nature, I initially only looked at the whole thing from an economic point of view in my function as construction depot manager. I asked myself how this could be implemented. Previously, the areas were mown and vacuumed and then everything was clean. For the new concept, additional technology such as a rake and a loader wagon was suddenly required, not to mention the additional manual labour."

The result is ingenious

A good five years later, almost the entire roadside greenery in Crailsheim is only mown twice a year, so most areas are covered with tall grass. In addition, real, regional Hohenlohe herbs are sown in new areas to create the typical biodiversity. Low-flowering lawns have been replaced by species-rich flower meadows, as has all the planting in the urban area with annual seed mixtures and perennial plants to increase the flower supply. And initial scepticism has given way to enthusiasm. "The result is ingenious," enthuses Köder. "In Crailsheim it blooms all year round, from spring to autumn, simply wonderful. And green

space maintenance plays a big role when it comes to the acceptance of the public works department among the population. The citizen sees that when he drives to work in the morning or goes for a walk in the evening."

A few things to bear in mind

"We mow the large areas with a disc mower on the tractor and remove the grass with the loader wagon. On all other areas, our AS motor mowers are used," Glump explains the procedure. "In the meantime, the effort is no longer greater, but simply different. Over the years, we have gained a lot of experience. So we know exactly when it is best to mow which area, what is ideally sown at which location and which areas, such as sight triangles, still need to be mown classically and regularly. "

The trained gardener and his team know very well that there are many more things to consider than just mowing once or twice a year if you want to maintain green spaces in a sensible way from an ecological point of view and gives examples: "We don't mow when the sun is shining, because that's when most insects are out. We try to do the mowing in the morning hours. It is also very important to pay attention to the mowing direction and, for example, to mow from the inside to the outside so that the animals have a chance to escape. "

Positive result is measurable

As part of the city bee project, there are numerous other activities in Crailsheim. For example, the most beautiful front garden has already been awarded, school classes have counted wild bees, seed bags with Crailsheim flower mix have been distributed to citizens, nesting aids have been built and orchards have been planted. And the results from a research project with NABU prove that this project is not only beautiful, but that biodiversity has increased as a result. "Since 2017, the city bee has been accompanied by wild bee experts. The result is great, we have a measurable improvement in Crailsheim in terms of biodiversity. The number of wild bees has increased, for example, and highly endangered wild bee species such as the wrinkled-cheeked narrow bee or the cuckoo bee have also been detected," says Köder, adding proudly in conclusion: "Our project also convinced the jury of the state competition 'Baden-Württemberg blooms'. We received the winner's certificate last year.

(Preamble & body text: 8672 characters, with spaces)



Youtube
<https://www.youtube.com/user/ASMotorGermany>

channel:

About AS-Motor GmbH:

AS-Motor GmbH, based in Bühlertann, has been developing and producing motorised special equipment for garden and landscape maintenance since 1959 and has coined the term all-mower. AS-Motor's machines are made for extreme requirements, such as slopes or high vegetation. The Swabian family-owned company employs over 130 people and manufactures most of the components itself. For more information, visit www.as-motor.de.

Visuals:

Photo 1: "The result is ingenious," enthuses Johannes Köder (left), Head of the Crailsheim Public Works Department, when talking about the ecological approach to green space maintenance in his city. Also in the picture is Gerhard Glump, Head of the Parks Department.



Photo 2: The fact that the working atmosphere is good at the Crailsheim depot is not only evident from this sign.



Image 3: On areas that are only mown once or twice a year, the high grass mowers from AS-Motor are in their element. The picture shows Christian Böttlinger, an employee in the green department.



Image 4: "The all-wheel drive was one of the decisive arguments for the AS Sherpa. We also tested mowers from competitors, but they simply slid away on the slope." The picture shows Christian Böttinger, employee in the green department.



Photo 5: When an area starts to become overgrown, the AS 1040 YAK 4WD comes into play. The picture shows Steffen Bullinger from the team of the green department.



Figure 6: The employees of the green department enjoy working with the machines from AS-Motor. The picture shows (from left) Christian Böttinger, Michael Brunner, Steffen Bullinger (all employees of the green department) and Gerhard Glump (head of the department).



Picture credits: Picture 1: Baubetriebshof Crailsheim, Picture 2-5: AS-Motor GmbH

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