

bellaflo: a green oasis for sustainability

bellaflo
DIE WELT DER GRÜNEN NUMMER 1

"Around two thirds of our turnover comes from selling plants. Therefore, we experience hands-on how climate change is affecting us and feel particularly responsible for environment and climate protection."

Mag. Franz Koll, Managing Director



bellaflo is an Austrian garden centre chain with 27 locations. It primarily offers plants for hobby gardens, balconies and indoor living spaces as well as a wide range of gardening products. As the "green number 1" (the company slogan), bellaflo is strongly committed to sustainability, actively avoids environmentally and climate damaging products and sets itself clear goals to reduce its own ecological footprint.

What was achieved?

Use of solar energy

- 15 of the 27 locations equipped with PV systems
- around 400 kWp PV generated more than 300 MWh of solar electricity in 2019
- 10 % of the total energy consumption covered by self-generated solar power

E-Mobility

- 14 of the 27 locations equipped with charging stations
- supplied with 100 % renewable electricity
- Goal: charging stations at all stores

Lighting

- new buildings: dimmable LED lighting at all new locations
- refurbishments: replacing fluorescent tubes with LEDs and efficient control technology (indoors and outdoors)

Gardening products

- 100 % natural ingredients in pesticides and fertilisers
- sustainability standards for suppliers
- pesticide reduction programme for plant propagation (verified by testing of plants in accredited laboratories)
- banning of particularly critical pesticides
- maximum 50 % peat in substrates, peat-free for organic products
- 100 % organic plant protection and strengthening agents in all stores



The "green number 1" offers green products

bellaflo, Austria's largest garden centre retailer, was founded more than 40 years ago, in 1978, when Hilde Umdasch opened a small, regional plant nursery. In 2004, the addition of organic herbs to the product range marked the start of bellaflo's green transition. By 2009, organic fruit and vegetable plants, perennials, pesticides, substrates and fertilisers had found their way onto the shelves. A year later, the company started a project to preserve and sell heirloom varieties. In 2013, it removed chemical-synthetic pesticides from its stores. Since 2014, only natural fertilisers are sold. Threshold limit values for the use of pesticides for suppliers and a programme to reduce the amount of peat in bellaflo products were introduced. Conventional substrates contain a maximum of 50 % peat, organic products are peat-free. The company also focuses on regional sourcing – more than 40 % of its products come from Austrian suppliers and two thirds of the plant suppliers are regional gardeners.

Sustainable commitment as competitive advantage

One of the company's main goals is to deepen customer, employee, and supplier knowledge on the importance of sustainability and to spur enthusiasm for natural gardening. bellaflo is convinced that increasing people's environmental awareness in everyday life and their interest in hobby gardening positively effects the economic development of the company. Therefore, it offers its employees an extensive training programme on sustainability and eco-friendly products. The company is also constantly cooperating with suppliers to further increase the environmental quality of its product range.

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"For us, it is normal that we implement every measure possible to optimise the environmental and energy aspects of our company. In new buildings, we strive to use the most modern technologies."

Elisabeth Schipflinger, Sustainable Development

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Renewable electricity, e-mobility and moving away from gas

The company uses 100 % renewable electricity at all its locations. 15 bellaflo stores are already using solar power from on-site PV systems. The systems are optimised for self-consumption and, together, cover more than 10 % of the company's total electricity demand. bellaflo joined the age of e-mobility already in 2010 with the installation of its first e-charging station. Today, customers and employees can charge their electric vehicles for free at 14 locations – and soon at all its stores. Heating the garden centres is particularly energy-intensive due to the greenhouses and represents the company's main source of CO₂ emissions. Improving insulation and switching from gas to more climate-friendly heating technologies are particularly important. Four locations are now heated with heat pumps and seven are connected to district heating.

LED and water recycling for a better environment balance

bellaflo also focusses on using energy-efficient and climate-friendly technologies in all its stores. Dimmable LED lighting offers enhanced product presentation as well as energy savings. To reduce water consumption, so-called "ebb and flow" systems with water circulation are standardly used at new bellaflo centres instead of inefficient sprinkler systems. In addition to being more water-efficient, this technology offers higher flexibility in irrigation times and a gentler irrigation overall. From 2015 to 2019, the company reduced its water consumption by around 30 % despite increased dry spells.

What is still to come: clear goals have been set!

bellaflo has set ambitious targets for the next 3 years. The heating demand of indoor areas will be decreased by 10 % through the optimisation of heating and ventilation and smart building management systems. PV will be installed wherever suitable building structures allow. An additional 200 kW are planned by 2023. CO₂ emissions will also be reduced by 10 % with a mix of measures including increased energy efficiency, replacing fossil fuels with renewables and fewer business trips. Optimised technologies and employee training will enable 5 % savings in water consumption.

The company – key facts & figures

bellaflo Gartencenter GmbH

Products and services

- plants, fertilisers, substrates, pesticides
- indoor and outdoor home decor items
- pet supplies
- wool

Founding year: 1978

Locations in Austria:

- 27 stores throughout Austria
- company headquarters in Leonding/Upper Austria

Employees: around 500

Annual turnover: 86 million Euro (2019)

legal structure: Family owned and managed business

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