



*Pioneer in  
Natural Health  
- since 1923*

*A. Vogel*



# *We would like to invite you on a short journey of discovery*

on the Häschen in Teufen, following in the footsteps of Alfred Vogel, his most important medicinal plants, his life and work as a Pioneer in Natural Health. We hope, dear visitors, to give you an impression of the effect that Alfred Vogel's passionate thirst for knowledge and incessant energy for work had on naturopathy and human health.

If Alfred Vogel were still alive and came across you here in the garden he would give you a very warm welcome. He would engage you in conversation in his affable and compassionate way and take you on an explanatory tour of his medicinal plants. It would also be typical of him to present you with a box of Herbamare as you were leaving, together with a paid subscription to the magazine Gesundheits-Nachrichten (A.Vogel Health News).

You are here in the garden in which, for decades, Alfred Vogel grew organic vegetables, fruit and medicinal herbs. Its success was due to hard, back-breaking work. 'When I settled in Teufen in 1937 I had to lay out my garden at a height of more than 900 metres.' In his magazine, Gesundheits-Nachrichten, he wrote: 'the loamy soil was so heavy and oily that it was more suited to a brickyard'. However it wasn't just the soil that was tough, so too was its owner. Over the years he managed to produce, amongst other things, magnificent

specimens of Chinese medicinal rhubarb and whole fields of purple coneflowers.

The garden in Teufen was one of approximately eight small plots of land which Alfred Vogel laid out during his lifetime – always with the same energy and enthusiasm and always with the intention of growing organically cultivated quality plants for his fresh plant preparations.



*A. Vogel*



# Content

- 6 A brief look back into history
- 7 The early years
- 8 The first years in the canton of Appenzell
- 9 Fresh plants
- 9 Pioneer of phytotherapy
- 10 Years of hard work in Teufen
- 10 The years of construction
- 12 The most important native plants
- 12 St John's Wort brings the sun into nature
- 13 Hawthorn – berries for the heart
- 14 Arnica – taming the wild
- 15 Sweet fir buds for coughs
- 16 Inquisitive explorer
- 16 The most important journeys
- 16 North America
- 17 Alfred Vogel, the Sioux Medicine Man and Echinacea
- 18 Saw Palmetto for the prostate
- 19 South America
- 21 Asia
- 21 Ginkgo biloba – power plant for cerebral circulation
- 22 As happy as a sandboy thanks to Durian
- 23 Africa
- 23 Kalahari – searching for the plant for rheumatism
- 24 Australia
- 25 Nutrition – an important requirement for health
- 27 Molkosan – the herbal freshness of the Alps
- 27 Bambu – more than a coffee substitute
- 28 Herbamare – the healthy seasoning
- 29 The role of nutrition in health and illness
- 29 Spreading the knowledge of naturopathy
- 29 'The Nature Doctor' grows in popularity
- 30 An example of constancy
- 30 Lectures
- 31 The later years
- 33 Tradition and passion today
- 35 More information, contacts

A large, light-colored, handwritten signature of Alfred Vogel is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

## *A brief look back into history*

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was the Life Reform Movement, a social protest movement, comprising of very diverse goals and attitudes but not associated with any political parties. Fundamental to its emergence was the fear that modern society would lead to the 'destruction of civilisation' through ill health. These diseases of civilisation could be avoided and cured by returning to a more natural lifestyle.

Supporters of Life Reform set store by, amongst other things, a lifestyle as close to nature as possible, organic cultivation, vegetarianism and natural remedies. Healthfood stores emerged on the initiative of life reformers.

Amongst the most prominent members of the Life Reform Movement in Switzerland were the Catholic priest Johann Künzle (1857-1945) who came from St Gallen and Dr Maximilian Oskar Bircher-Benner (1867-1939).

Künzle, a supporter of herbal medicine, dealt in herbal mixtures, delivered lectures and wrote successful books such as *Chrut und Uchrut* (Herbs & Weeds) which has sold millions of copies and been translated into many languages. He was also the publisher of *Salvia* (a monthly magazine for non poisonous herbal medicines).

Dr Bircher-Benner was a doctor, a nutritionist and a strict advocate of raw and wholefoods. He set up a clinic in Zürich where he healed the sick, by means of 'sunlight food' propagated by himself, and physical training. Modelled on the diet of the Alpine herdsmen, he developed the 'apple diet dish', which later became known as Bircher muesli.

Bircher-Benner travelled around the country, delivering lectures and he also established his own magazine in 1923 entitled 'Der Wendepunkt im Leben und im Leiden' (The Turning Point in Life and in Suffering).

The pioneer, Alfred Vogel, was also part of this historic milieu and became friends with Bircher-Benner. Like Künzle, Bircher-Benner and other predecessors and contemporaries, Alfred Vogel's opinions were praised – but also treated with hostility, to which he reacted with a fighting spirit and an almost missionary zeal to explain, defend and gain acceptance of his views. You are about to discover in detail how he succeeded.

## The early years

Alfred Vogel was a lively, inquisitive person with high ambitions that eventually led to his success. Very different from his start in life. His forbears were farmers and millers, his father a hairdresser. He grew up in Aesch near Basle alongside his siblings, a modest but free existence. An inquisitive, bright child, he loved animals and enjoyed nature walks with his father.

As a young man he grew rebellious, swimming against the tide. To his parent's horror he became a vegetarian at 17 years of age and not only that, for years he fed himself exclusively on raw food. Being opposed to war and weapons, the experience of the First World War put him in an extremely difficult position in Switzerland at the time.

As a young man of 21 he took on the role of a health store owner in Basle. Although he was very successful in business, the first years proved difficult. In 1927 he married Sophie Sommer, a teacher and, in the following two years, two girls were brought into the world. Sophie Vogel wrote to a friend at the time: 'Money is tight and we have large outstanding debts and expenses....'

No wonder then that the husband was unstoppable. He brought in wholefood foodstuffs and imported more health products, travelled and took part in conventions for the purpose

of self improvement. Study periods at scientific institutions and with experts provided him with a deeper knowledge of organic chemistry and about the science of vitamins (still in its infancy then). In the 1930s he opened affiliated health stores in Zürich, Solothurn and Berne.

He set up a publishing house and published shorter papers such as *Gift in der Nahrung* (Poison in Food) (1925), producing some 25,000 copies, *Kleiner Wegweiser für Lebensreform* (A Small Guide to Life Reform) (1929) and not least his own magazine *Das neue Leben* (A Fresh Start) (1929), the forerunner of *A.Vogel Gesundheits-Nachrichten* (A.Vogel Health News) which is published to this day.

The Vogel family with  
Alfred Vogel (3rd from right)



# *The first years in the canton of Appenzell*

Alfred Vogel's interest in more intensive therapeutic work persuaded him to move to the canton of Appenzell in 1933. In the canton there was a liberal policy in relation to the acceptance of naturopaths and remedies, and here he could achieve recognition as a naturopath and open a practice. In 1935 he founded the Bioforce laboratory, which specialised in fresh plant extracts.

Once the family had obtained a plot of land with a house here on the Hätschen in 1937, Alfred Vogel set about opening a small sanatorium and children's home (also a diet centre). In his clinic he advised patients on how to reclaim their health by adopting a natural diet and lifestyle and he offered his remedies from fresh plants, vegetarian food, with vegetables that he himself had organically grown, and modified fasting cures. He was so successful that he – quite modestly – formulated the following text in an advert for the clinic: 'If your doctor is unable to help you, if your illness is declared incurable, try phytotherapy!'

His wife Sophie, or Müetti (Mummy) as she was known to everyone, was of course also very busy with the nursing and care of patients.

The whole family was regularly involved in the gathering of fresh herbs: for many years by public transport and – there were

still no public railways – mostly on foot. The arrival of the first motor car in 1945 made the process of gathering and transporting medicinal herbs so much easier.

He was happy to report: 'I look for most of the herbs myself along with my wife and children ... the time spent gathering herbs which takes me both into the mountains in the cantons of Graubünden and Appenzell is the best part of my job ... in the midst of my beloved plants I think up the best remedies and recipes.'

However this time was far from easy. Alfred Vogel had a hard time trying to gain the trust of the established residents of Teufen who reproached the 'offerer of health' for producing lucrative products from plants that were to be found in abundance in nature, in order to make money.



The 'Hätschen' in 1945



## *Fresh plants*

Alfred Vogel came to the conclusion early on that extracts from freshly harvested plants had a better, 'wider and deeper' effect than the standard extracts of that time from dried plants. This discovery proved to be an enormously important motivation for his entire life, for his work as a naturopath, for his research into medicinal plants, for his recipes and for the best possible methods of production.

The fresh plants had to be organically cultivated, harvested or gathered at the optimum time and above all, prepared with great speed. Alfred Vogel and his co-workers carried out numerous tests to find out which plant best developed the entire spectrum of active ingredients. They found out, amongst other things, what if any were the differences in quality between plants grown in the lowlands and those grown on high ground. The aim was always to offer the best quality fresh plant preparations possible.

Alfred Vogel imposed standards with these demands for quality that are nowadays consistently implemented at Bioforce AG in Roggwil. And what's more, with an ever-increasing knowledge about the environment as well as questions about climate change and the importance of sustainability, A.Vogel has succeeded today, with modern methods, in lending even stronger support to Alfred Vogel's philosophy.

## *Pioneer of phytotherapy*

Around the middle of the last century the mood of the wider population towards phytotherapy was unfavourable. The militancy of a trailblazer was brought into question. 'Nature is much richer than the poison cabinet of chemotherapy and we should put our complete trust in it', was his urgent warning against the fixation of many doctors and some patients on chemical and synthetically produced medicines.

That Alfred Vogel succeeded, through his magazine and his books, to make phytotherapy so hugely popular in Switzerland in spite of all opposition is justification alone for the title, pioneer of phytotherapy.

It is a fact that even today his observations on the effectiveness of fresh plants continue to be confirmed through modern analysis and measuring techniques.

Another pioneering activity of Alfred Vogel was his insistence on the use of the whole plant where possible. The discovery that secondary plant substances contribute to the value and action of the healing plant is now accepted by scientists. If only certain parts of the plant are used, e.g. the above ground parts or only the roots, it is important to choose a process which will extract as many of the ingredients as possible.

Freshly harvested, organically grown plants from natural, carefully selected seeds form the foundation of A.Vogel natural remedies. From the plant to the extract and tablet a philosophy is consistently implemented, at the centre of which is nature. A.Vogel fresh plant preparations must contain the purest and broadest possible spectrum of actives from the fresh plant.

## *Years of hard work in Teufen*

During the first 15 to 20 years in Teufen the life of Alfred Vogel and his family went something like this: rise with the lark and go to bed early. The hours in between were packed with the



care of patients, consultations in the practice, responding to an ever increasing number of telephone and written patient enquiries, reading text books, attending training courses, tending two gardens in Teufen and in the canton of Graubünden, the use of garden produce, keeping East Friesland sheep for milking, gathering herbs, berries and fir shoots, the production and dispatch of medicinal

remedies and his lectures. Also the magazine that now bears the name Gesundheits-Nachrichten (A.Vogel Health News) was making a regular appearance and each month required eight large newspaper pages to be written.



Alfred Vogel in his 'office' in Teufen

## *The years of construction*

In the years following the Second World War the Vogel family fared better. They were able to afford assistants in the practice, in the secretarial office, in the production of medicines, in the household and in the herb gardens.

Alfred Vogel found time to write the manual, *Der kleine Doktor* (The Nature Doctor), a book with the same aim as *Gesundheits-Nachrichten* (A.Vogel Health News), namely self-help. In doing so he never anticipated that the huge success of the book would mean that even more work would land on his writing desk. Now enquiries from all over the world were beginning to pile up.

During these years numerous companies were developed overseas, from Finland to South Africa and Canada to Australia. In Montreal (Canada) and Cape Town (South Africa) he opened up the first healthfood stores.

These years saw a great enthusiasm for lectures in Switzerland, Germany, Holland and indeed the whole of Europe. Naturally, foreign countries wanted to profit from the charismatic orator and, as a result, more and more invitations arrived in Teufen from abroad.

This was the time of travels to all five continents and experiences that mellowed Alfred Vogel in some respects. For example, in 1960 he noted: 'I myself have been a vegetarian for more than 40 years. In my youth I was almost fanatical about it ... on my travels I had to alter many of my preconceived views and opinions. When faced with this question today I have become more neutral than in my younger days.'

These were the years in which Alfred Vogel continued to work tirelessly on his magazine, Gesundheits-Nachrichten (A.Vogel Health News). He wrote about his journeys while he was travelling in aeroplanes, 'but also in the wilderness, on the seashore in a secluded bay or on an island in the huts of indigenous people'.

Whenever he discovered a new culture, a beautiful country, an unknown plant, he told his readers about it straight away, full of enthusiasm. These were also the years in which a large, modern company with its own fields was built in Roggwil/TG. Bioforce AG was launched in 1963 and was a new, enormous challenge for Alfred Vogel who was by then 60 years of age. It was not his custom to delegate tasks and it did not come easy

to him no longer to have control of all the reins. But Alfred Vogel would not have been Alfred Vogel if he had not kept an eagle eye to ensure that his guidelines on plant cultivation, production and quality of the remedies were being adhered to within the large business venture.

Sophie Vogel, his loyal wife and supporter, died at the end of 1982. She once said: 'Alfred was the engine and I have tried all my life to jump on to the back of the train.' She also knew: 'He had the ideas and I had to put them into practice in everyday life.' Who can say if he would have produced all his many books and magazine articles without her?

Luckily Alfred Vogel found an understanding partner in his second wife, Denise, who shared his beliefs and supported him with great strength and care. Denise Vogel, well-versed in the ways of the world and proficient in languages, was an indispensable help with work that was waiting to be dealt with, with countless foreign schedules and with the compilation of the book, Krebs – Schicksal oder Zivilisationskrankheit? (Cancer - Fate or the Disease of Civilisation).

Today Denise Vogel is not only the valued publisher of Gesundheits-Nachrichten (A.Vogel Health News) but also an important voice on the governing board of Bioforce AG. In addition she is president of the A.Vogel Foundation whose aim is to carry on the company and the philosophy of its founder.

## *The most important native plants*

Now we return to base, to the beautiful, vital, fresh medicinal plants that Alfred Vogel said had never disappointed him.

### **St John's Wort brings the sun into nature**

There are approximately 370 types of St John's Wort worldwide but only one is used for medicinal purposes: *Hypericum perforatum*. The bronzed flowers appear on St John's Day on 24th June. If the sun has reached its highest point then *Hypericum perforatum* will have the highest content of healing active ingredients. Before the flowers appear the characteristic translucent dots appear on the leaves. These have earned the plant its name *perforatum* (perforated). If you take a closer look you will discover black glands on the edge and in some cases on the surface of the leaves. They contain derivatives of hyperin that give the well known St John's Wort oil, which has always been used in the treatment of wounds, its red colour.

New research data has pointed to St John's Wort as an antidepressant. To date the efficacy of no other herbal preparation has been similarly substantiated by solid scientific research. It is becoming more common for doctors to promote the plant for mild to moderate depression and emotional problems. It is even used in in-patient psychiatry – with good results.



St John's Wort – *Hypericum perforatum*



Hawthorn berries – *Crataegus monogyna*

Several contract farmers grow a special variety for A.Vogel that, on the one hand is suitable for organic cultivation and, on the other, provides an optimum spectrum of active ingredients. The flowering tips are harvested at the best possible time and freshly prepared on the day of harvest.

### **Hawthorn – berries for the heart**

‘Hawthorn always reminds me of the time when great-grandfathers and grandfathers were good at recognising plants. As a child I used to help with crushing the berries and putting them into white wine.’ In his work as a naturopath, Alfred Vogel could of course not do without the remedy from the fresh, red berries, which are good for invigorating weak or tired hearts.

Many patients value the tincture from hawthorn berries because of its effectiveness. They love the heart tonic, which not only calms an agitated heart but also eases heart sorrow. Alfred Vogel very cleverly substituted sweet Malaga wine for his grandfather’s tart white.

Firmly convinced of the effect of hawthorn, the naturopath was not slow to praise the preventative and healing properties of the red berries. In *Der kleine Doktor* (The Nature Doctor) he recommended hawthorn as a reliable remedy for arteriosclerosis, raised blood pressure and angina pectoris, as well as for hardening and narrowing of the arteries in the heart.

## Arnica – taming the wild

Mountain arnica is the classic ‘first-aid’ plant for back pain, sprains, bruises, haematoma, musculature and lumbago. Arnica flowers were much sought after by many ointment manufacturers. Only conservation could save the plant from extinction. It was then proved, thanks to modern research, in which A.Vogel was greatly involved, that the Arnica montana plant was likewise effective in joint pain. It can put a stop to inflammation and acute pain. What was to be done now? Where could Arnica be taken from without stealing it? At that point the shy mountain plant had defied all attempts at cultivation.

For the plant loving Alfred Vogel only strictly controlled organic field cultivation was possible, which caused heads to shake in expert circles. However, the persistent campaigner found an equally tenacious comrade. Professor Ulrich Bomme from the Bavarian State Institute for Agriculture accepted the challenge. It took 15 years for the cultivation of mountain Arnica to be carried out efficiently and sustainably.

In the summer, when the Arnica fields are in full bloom, the yellow-gold flowers are picked by hand and, in the space of 24 hours at most, are processed to produce a highly concentrated Arnica preparation. It fights inflammation at the root of the problem and alleviates the agonising pain of arthritis and other forms of rheumatism. It is logical that classic treatment areas



Arnica – Arnica montana



Sweet fir buds – Picea abies

such as back pain, musculature, muscle tenseness, haematoma, sciatic pain and sport injuries might also benefit from treatment with mountain Arnica.

### **Sweet fir buds for coughs**

‘Fir trees do not cough,’ said Alfred Vogel with a smile during one of his lectures. He was alluding to the active ingredients of the bright green, delicate buds which can ease the throat during coughs and hoarseness and loosen tough mucous. He had planted 500 fir trees in Aesch on his plantations and in the springtime harvested the new young shoots for his cough medicine. The soft juicy shoots of spruce firs formed the basis of the active ingredients for the beloved fir cough syrup and tasty cough lozenges. Today the fir shoots come from both organic cultivation and authorised collection in the wild. According to the demands of A.Vogel only shoots from the bottom third of the young trees or fir hedges should be picked so as to interfere as little as possible with growth. Harvesting takes place in the last two weeks of May and in the first two weeks of June and is done by hand. As always with fresh plants, the time factor is of vital importance and the shoot tips should arrive in Roggwil in a fresh condition.

## *Inquisitive explorer*

Alfred Vogel was never content with second hand information. If he wanted to know something he looked for the relevant information at source – whether he was visiting a bakery or a manufacturer of medicinal remedies ('in order to obtain sound information from experts').

This also gave him a deeper motivation to travel amongst indigenous people. He wanted to know about the plant worlds in foreign continents, the lifestyle and the healing methods of indigenous people in situ. He investigated whether these simple living people would cope with the so-called diseases of civilisation. He said, 'I wanted to learn about their healthcare, what they ate and how they spent their days.'

## *The most important journeys*

In 1920, at 18 years of age, Alfred Vogel sat alone without a coin to his name in a cheap Italian hotel, unable to pay for his return ticket in the fourth class rail compartment. There was no response from any of the friends who owed him money. There was nothing left for him to do but ask his parents for a loan. Of this episode he reported: 'I wrote, giving the reason that I needed money to buy something as a souvenir and, instead of money, I received a reply from my sister telling me

to come home without buying any souvenir.'

Curiosity and wanderlust remained. At least when he did travel at a later date he did so in more comfort, by ship to the USA and South Africa and by air round the globe.



Alfred Vogel with Gibraltar in the background

### **North America**

The new world held more of a fascination for Alfred Vogel than it did for his wife, Sophie. Following his very first visit he noted: 'Things were a bit difficult with our limited school English ... we could talk but understanding was a completely different matter. We managed to muddle through ...' It must be added that Alfred Vogel spoke very good English in subsequent years, delivering lectures in Canada, Great Britain, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand and on TV programmes as well as being a sought-after interviewee on radio.

The initial fascination disappeared and gave way to a certain degree of disappointment. Several journeys took him from east to west and from north to south in the USA by car, train and trailer. Despite thousands of kilometres 'in pure Indian territory' he was disillusioned by his study journeys to the Native





Echinacea - Echinacea purpurea

Americans as they lived on reservations and had nothing in common with the original natives. His search for unknown plants did not achieve tangible results - with one great and astonishing exception.

### **Alfred Vogel, the Sioux Medicine Man and Echinacea**

In 1953, in South Dakota, on the Pine Ridge Reservation he got to know Ben Black Elk and talked to him about God and the world, life on the reservation, the disappearance of the many Native American customs and about plant medicines. In this way he gained the trust of the medicine man who passed on to him his knowledge about the effect of Echinacea, the medicinal plant that was to be so important to Alfred Vogel. Black Elk also presented Vogel with Echinacea purpurea seeds. The Sioux had known of this plant for generations and frequently used it as a remedy - chewed leaves used externally for snake bites and festering wounds and internally to strengthen the immune system in feverish diseases and infections.

Only later did it become clear to Alfred Vogel just how extraordinary was this friendly gesture. On his travels through South America he frequently found that the Indians guarded 'the secrets of their medicines' very closely and were in no way prepared to share them with any passing stranger.



Alfred Vogel and  
Ben Black Elk

Alfred Vogel proved himself worthy of the generous gift. He planted the seeds in Teufen and also in the Engadin where he nurtured and tended his Echinacea cultivations. Years later, he summed up: 'I have grown and slowly acclimatised Echinacea in the Engadin (at a height of more than 1600 metres). However I had to ...have patience for 15 years until the well tended Echinacea plant from the Sioux had adapted completely to the change in climate.'

Echinacea drops and tablets are the best known of the A.Vogel fresh plant remedies.

For more than 50 years, millions of consumers in over 30 countries have trusted the antiviral power of Alfred Vogel's beautiful beloved plant to strengthen the immune system, ward off colds and reduce inflammation.

## **Saw Palmetto for the prostate**

We are still in the USA, looking at the southernmost corner of the mainland, towards Florida, which Alfred Vogel visited with his family and where he got to know the native Seminole who live there. Florida is home to the American saw palm (*Serenoa repens*). It grows north of the Everglades, on sandy dunes and in pinewoods. The palms are mostly no more than one metre high but do occasionally grow into complete bushes, reaching several metres in height. An inconspicuous plant were it not for the nutritional fruits beneath the light green leaves. The Native Americans in the sunshine state had used the fruit of the saw palm for bladder infections and digestive problems. In particular, problems due to the start of prostate enlargement including frequent urination, problems with passing water and trips to the loo at night. The Seminole had yet another interesting use for the fruit of the dwarf palm. They used it for improving erectile problems.

The fruit used in the production of the Saw palmetto preparations today rates as one of the best known and, more important, best researched medicinal plants for the treatment of symptoms at the onset of prostate problems.

A.Vogel obtains Saw Palmetto berries from Florida where the saw palms are grown in bio-certified half wild cultures. Colleagues at the cultivation company ensure that the palms have enough



Saw Palmetto – *Serenoa repens*

space to grow in the fenced-off fields and are not overrun by the forest or other competitor plants.

### South America

His search for countries where you didn't need to go to reservations to find Indians, brought Alfred Vogel to Central and South America in 1958. Indeed he got to know many indigenous people, from the Mayas in Guatemala to the Shuar in Ecuador and the Quechua (Inca) in Peru, Bolivia and Chile. There was no country in this huge continent that he had not visited. He got to know many new plants, for example the tropical papaya (at that time not yet in every supermarket), the barbasco root, a natural insecticide, the rocoto chilli which is good for problems with the spleen, the planta niña which has an antibiotic effect, condurango bark which contains bitter substances and which promotes healing in stomach and duodenal ulcers, or the chanca piedra from the Peruvian rainforest which the Indians used for gall bladder problems. In Uruguay he learned about the very rare Indian remedy, lapacho-pichini bark. Of *Luffa operculata*, a tropical type of gourd, he wrote: 'I have often watched how the Indians beat them on flat stones in the river until the green flesh is completely gone. The hard fibres are used as a remedy.' This type of gourd described as Sponge cucumber is valued in homoeopathy for sniffles, hayfever and chronic dry nose, as well as sinus problems, and is characterised as being

particularly suitable for long-term use. It is an ingredient in homoeopathic complex remedies for sinus and nasal problems such as hayfever.

At some of his destinations he met Swiss people who had made that country their home. He had particularly good connections in Peru and so came about the daring idea of acquiring a 72 hectare farm in the middle of the virgin forest near the town of Tarapoto. The intention was to plant certain medicinal herbs there. He created a clearing and alongside the medicinal plants he planted bananas, maize, cassava (manioc), carrots, all types of spices, grapes, breadfruit, papaya, chiramoya, avocado, acerola cherries, raw cane sugar, coffee and yucca. At the start of this new project Alfred Vogel toiled in the fields and enjoyed the simple things in life. 'During the day when I was breaking sweat due to hard labour in my fields in the Cordillera, it was wonderful, ... to be able to dive into the light brown water of the nearby river. I have never found such a wonderful natural bath anywhere else.'

Later he could no longer look after the farm due to his many responsibilities and, after eleven years, he had to give up. He commented: 'Despite all my hard work nothing has come out of it since the production of medicinal herbs is still at the experimental stage.' The campaigner had lost the fight.

At the end of 1958/59 Alfred Vogel undertook an adventurous 600 km river journey from Yurimaguas to Iquitos through the

deepest Amazonian jungle to learn about the way of life of the Indians who lived there. With an acquaintance and a native he travelled the route in a dug-out canoe and in the evening asked for accommodation near the river in small Indian settlements. In *Gesundheits-Nachrichten* (A.Vogel Health News) he wrote: 'I lived exactly like the Indians, I ate with them and slept in their huts.' His indispensable companion on this and other journeys was his 'small case with (his own) remedies, which proved to be of invaluable assistance'. The most important preparation in it was Echinacea drops which Vogel took every day. That he hardly ever was seriously ill on these dangerous journeys through wasteland and grass-covered plains is testament to the fact that the plant protected him daily against infections, inflammations and other illnesses.



Japanischer Tempelbaum – Ginkgo biloba

## Asia

Alfred Vogel went there many times, some of his destinations being Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia.

He made contacts to enable him to import the best ginseng roots from Korea or dried organic fruit from Thailand into Switzerland.

Once, on his return from the Far East, he made 'an attempt at planting soya beans. Various soya dishes that I learnt about in China and Japan impressed me so much ... that I planned to plant this type of bean in Switzerland but my attempts were at that time not crowned with success'. (Around 1974 he tried again with a new variety of soya – and was successful).

## Ginkgo biloba – power plant for cerebral circulation

In Japan Alfred Vogel learned about the Japanese Ginkgo biloba tree. It was astonishing to discover that the seeds survived the atom bomb dropped in Nagasaki and had sprouted in the contaminated earth. In its homeland, China, the oldest Ginkgo biloba trees were apparently 4,000 years old. There they reached a height of over 40 metres and a trunk diameter of 4 metres. The healing effect of Ginkgo biloba leaves on circulatory problems in the brain and on poor concentration is

astounding. Alfred Vogel was so enthusiastic that he planted one of these fascinating trees in his garden. In 1986 Vogel wrote that he wanted to harvest the leaves of his ginkgo trees to enable him to prepare a fresh plant tincture since they were 'better and more active than those produced from dried plants'. This was the beginning of the development of an effective and very reliable A.Vogel fresh plant preparation.

Modern day science has extensively examined the effects of Ginkgo biloba and confirms its circulation-promoting effect. Ginkgo promotes bloodflow, raises the speed of flow in the capillaries, stabilises the cell membranes and optimises the oxygen supply. It stimulates the brain metabolism, improves cognitive performance, concentration skills and reaction speeds as well as memory and learning skills. The action of Ginkgo to increase the ability to concentrate and for improvement of short-term memory is particularly recognised.

### **As happy as a sandboy thanks to Durian**

When Alfred travelled to Indonesia, he learned about the Durian plant for the first time and discovered that many researchers and travellers described the fruit as the best in the world. And actually Durian (*Durio zibenthinus*) with its prickly shell is aromatic and delicious fresh from the tree. Alfred Vogel found that, several days after harvesting, the shell developed an

unpleasant smell, like garlic, onions and ripe cream cheese. Others maintained the smell reminded them of rotten eggs or turpentine. No wonder Durian is banned in most public buildings in southeast Asia and in the underground in Singapore. 'Yet, if someone who can't stand the smell were just once to taste the heavy tropical fruit that looks like a massive head, they would be amazed. What smells so awful is quite excellent to taste,' wrote Alfred Vogel in his classic book *Der kleine Doktor* (The Nature Doctor). When travelling in the 1960s with his wife and daughter from the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur towards Singapore he carried a Durian in his trunk. A strong smell spread through the car and the women complained about the stench. The thrifty plant researcher did not want to throw the fruit away. He asked the driver to stop. Both sat at the edge of the road and ate the whole stinking fruit. With impressive consequences. To his astonishment, Alfred Vogel was wide awake well into the night, which was unusual for him, and as he said himself, he was as happy as a sandboy.

The Durian fruit, rich in minerals and vitamins, which incidentally is completely odourless, has found its way into A.Vogel muesli, and is known in Asia and Australia for its stimulating and power giving effect – some say it has an aphrodisiac effect.

## Africa

Alfred Vogel travelled through this continent many times. Amongst others his destinations were Morocco, Liberia, Monrovia, Eritrea, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Namibia and South Africa. In the run up to these journeys he regularly sent copies of Gesundheits-Nachrichten (A.Vogel Health News) to Swiss ambassadors and consulates so that he was 'not a complete stranger' when he visited 'as our country's representative in somebody else's country'. He had contacts and friends everywhere who brought different African medicinal plants to his attention.

He discovered the African hypoxis root, which has a positive effect on certain chemical processes in the prostate, as well as the haronga tree whose essential oil from bark and leaves has 'an excellent effect on the pancreas'. He also learned about *Spilanthes oleracea* (paracress), which is found in East Africa. He promptly planted the delicate plant, which needs warm air, in his Swiss herb garden and rejoiced when it regerminated in spring following a cold winter. The anti-inflammatory and refreshing effect of paracress still has a role today in herbal mouthwash and mouth spray.

## Kalahari – searching for the plant for rheumatism

In the mid 1960s Alfred Vogel travelled for the first time into the Kalahari, the dry savanna or semi desert of the border region between South Africa, Namibia and Botswana. In the dry and sandy earth grows a medicinal plant for rheumatism – Devil's Claw (*Harpagophytum procumbens*). The plant can only be seen when the fresh shoots and pink to crimson flowers appear during the rainy season. For the greater part of the year the above ground plant parts, which lie flat on the ground, are dry and brown and can barely be spotted between the wasteland grasses and brambles. The native bushmen, the San, used the root tubers which lie deep in the ground as a tea for the healing of wounds, for the relief of digestive problems and for liver and kidney problems, as well as pain, but kept their knowledge very secret.

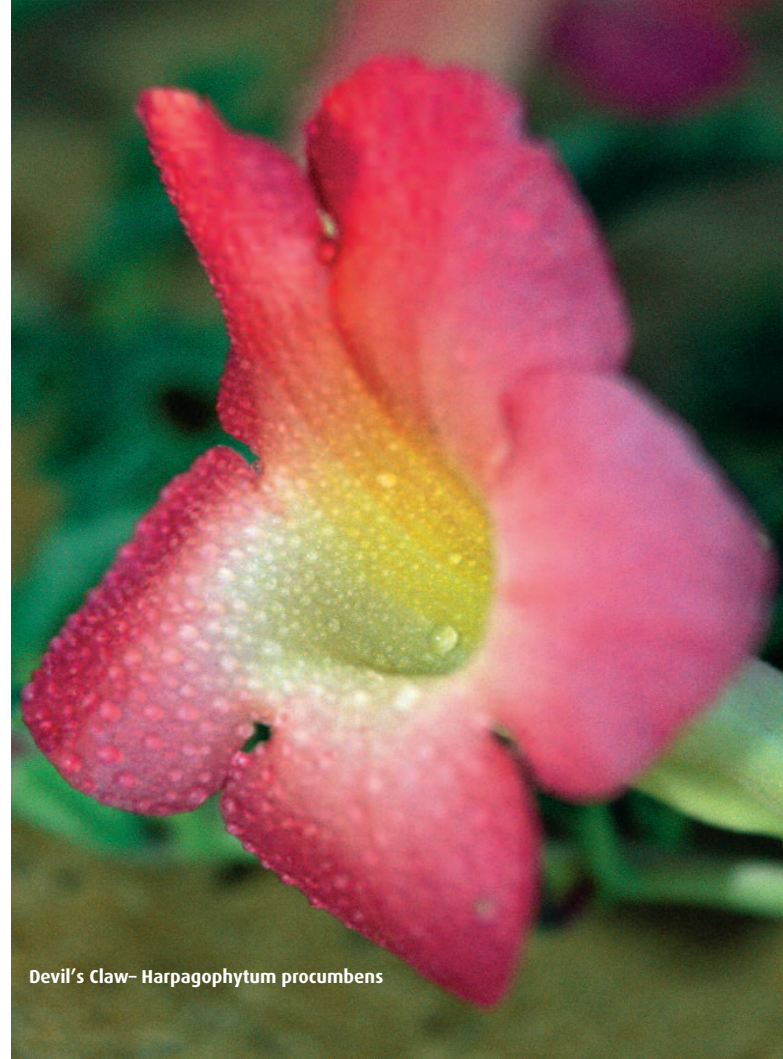
That is until a German who had settled in Namibia as a farmer found the plant and in 1920 sent the roots to Jena in Germany for analysis. Following the discovery of the anti-inflammatory active ingredients the plant was introduced to Germany in the 1950s as a medicine. Naturally, this aroused Alfred Vogel's interest in Devil's Claw. In Namibia he travelled with native friends along with a 'pick and shovel into the grass covered plain and since it had rained extensively several days before, came across the plant in full bloom'. They dug down to the

roots, which can be up to two metres deep. As the plant can only regenerate from the main tuber it is only the tubers of the secondary roots that are used for medicinal purposes. The anti-inflammatory and anti-arthritis effects of Devil's Claw are very distinct and it can be taken long term.

At the time Alfred Vogel warned of the risk of exploitation but the roots were in demand by the whole of the western world. 'The plant must be cultivated', he insisted. This was not quite so easy because ultimately Devil's Claw thrives only in the Kalahari. Today A.Vogel obtains the raw material from a cultivation project in South Africa. The ecological and sustainable project does not require any artificial irrigation thanks to innovative cultivation methods. It respects the conservation of the plant, provides consistently good quality raw materials and in addition, offers native families an important source of income.

## Australia

Destinations at the end of 1969 were Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania. It was surprising to learn that Alfred Vogel was well known here for the wholemeal bread he had developed and which could be bought in numerous bakeries in Australia and New Zealand (and in 1979 achieved a turnover of 15 million loaves per year). Incidentally Vogel bread is still available 'Down Under'.



Devil's Claw- *Harpagophytum procumbens*



During his six week stay Alfred Vogel delivered 50 lectures on 'natural nutrition and a healthy lifestyle', arousing great interest amongst the population and, as he proudly mentioned, amongst doctors as well. In Gesundheits-Nachrichten (A.Vogel Health News) he reported by return of post: 'Despite a full and strenuous programme in which I must cope with flights, talks on radio and television, occasionally address between 15 to 20 reporters at a time on a daily basis, I have succeeded in avoiding severe fatigue.'

In the magazine he also described this amusing episode: 'In the hotel everyone looked at me strangely when I put my packet of wholefood muesli on the table and asked for sour milk, buttermilk, yogurt or fruit juice in order to prepare my muesli. In Brisbane (Queensland) I was staying in a very good hotel. For breakfast I asked for a fruit salad made from the finest tropical fruits that were available there. But the staff just stood, looking perplexed ... so I fetched papayas, mangos and other fruits from a nearby store ... mixed with the muesli, this was for me, together with a Bambu coffee and Vogel bread, a wholesome breakfast. When a journalist called on me he had a great deal to say about the grand meal at the start of my day'.

## *Nutrition - an important requirement for health*

On his travels Alfred Vogel studied the diets of people who were still living a primitive way of life. He was looking for 'convincing ideas and arguments' to support his theory that these people rarely or never suffered from the so-called diseases of civilization such as rheumatism, gout, hyperacidity, cancer or heart attacks. He wrote: 'I consulted many indigenous people. I stayed with Indians in North, Central and South America; in Africa I visited those native tribes who still lived by the old customs and way of life. Likewise I was interested in those people who lived near the Himalayas of whom it is said their lifestyle is the most natural possible. I also investigated the lives of the Polynesians and Melanesians on various South Sea islands'.

And now we come to the subject of diet, a subject that preoccupied Alfred Vogel at all times. We have already informed you that as a young man he fed himself with raw food, for decades thereafter he was a vegetarian, and every once in a while in his later years he was not averse to fish or a piece of white chicken. For him a 'correct' diet meant, above all, moderation in eating. This small, able-bodied man was proud of the fact that he had maintained a weight of 60 kilos throughout his life.



As a young, talented gymnast he fed himself on raisins, dates, almonds, apples and dried bananas. In the meanwhile his gym colleagues continued to eat raw eggs and sustaining protein food to increase their physical prowess. In his magazine he stated:

‘I did not dare to confide my opinion to my colleagues as they would have laughed at me were it to be contrary to the prevailing views in sports circles at that time ... it was difficult having your own ideas as I often learned through bitter experience.’

In 1926, already the owner of a health store in Basle at 24, he proved himself as a nutritionist and ranted in his brochure *Kleiner Wegweiser für Lebensreform* (A Small Guide To Life Reform), against the ‘ghost of the modern food industry’ which, due to the supply of inferior foodstuffs, ‘strangled appetite for life’. In this booklet he explains substandard foodstuffs that have been robbed of ‘their vitamins and goodness’ by means of ‘chemical and mechanical preparation processes’. The young shop owner skilfully linked this information to his own range of goods, the healthy benefits of which he then described.

For Alfred Vogel ‘healthy nutrition’ was based on eating ‘natural products in their most unadulterated form’ (wholefood products, wholegrain rice, unrefined sugar). Equally important

for him was the rationing of animal fat and protein as well as the omission of harmful products such as alcohol, coffee and tobacco.

He wrote books and delivered numerous lectures on the subject of nutrition – *Nutrition as a Healing Factor*, *Poison in Food*, *Diseases of Civilisation as a Result of Poor Nutrition* or *The Question of Protein*.

All too often the naturopath had to enlighten his patients on the relationship between poor liver function and over-consumption of animal protein and fats. When a good friend died from a liver complaint he decided to write down his experiences and knowledge on the ‘basic principles of good health’ and ‘the most wonderful laboratory’ in the body. The book with the somewhat disturbing yet nevertheless accurate title ‘*Die Leber reguliert die Gesundheit*’ (The Liver as a Regulator of Health) appeared in 1960 and was produced three years later in four foreign languages. It deals comprehensively with nutrition and diet, medicinal plants and physical measures for care of the liver, gall bladder and pancreas.

In addition he kept himself very busy with ‘recipes’ for healthy foods. Especially close to his heart was wholemeal bread. In 1953 he proudly stated, ‘(I) have now launched a natural bread under the name of A.Vogel’s *Flockenbrot* that has the same content as that used by primitive people’. Nevertheless he strove for years to improve his recipe for good, light

wholemeal bread – and reported on this in detail in Gesundheits-Nachrichten (A.Vogel Health News).

### **Molkosan – the herbal freshness of the Alps**

The second foodstuff that Alfred Vogel busied himself with very early on was the sustainable version of healthy whey. In 1926 he developed with a doctor and a chemist ‘the first attempt at fermentation. The three of us worked for months. This often took me into the night ... until we (achieved) a fine tasting whey which only needed to be concentrated – which once again was a question of time, experience and skill as the vacuum concentration apparatus was at that time not so well developed. It took another year before the whey concentrate was available in the shops.’ The fermentation of lactic acids resulted in a concentrated form, the well-known Molkosan. It is particularly valuable that 95% of the lactic acid in Molkosan exists in the form of dextrorotatory L(+) lactic acid which can easily be utilised by the human body. It has a stimulating effect on peristalsis and thereby the digestion. In addition Molkosan promotes intestinal flora.



Molkosan, the cleansing elixir from the Swiss Alps, is not only a healthy thirst quencher but also a purifying drink for good digestion and to help keep you slim.

### **Bambu – more than a coffee substitute**

The oldest of Alfred Vogel’s range of coffee substitutes on offer in Basle was the ‘cereal, fruit and root coffee’, a light drink for the whole family with ‘a beautiful colour’ and ‘a good aroma’. The raw ingredients were at that time and are to this day, cereals (rye), tropical fruits (figs), forest fruits (acorns) and chicory roots. Vogel was, as he himself said, a fanatical opponent of coffee. However, he reported in *Der kleine Doktor* (The Nature Doctor) that he did indulge in this neurotoxin when he wanted to stimulate his nervous system on car journeys that took him through the night. This was ultimately better than the risk of falling asleep at the wheel. Later his opposition was appeased by the sight of the beautiful coffee trees on his Peruvian farm and his experience of coffee preparation with the Arabs (‘without milk, with coffee grounds and with quite a lot of added sugar, this Arabic method of preparation caused very few problems’). He adhered to the principle that for the sake of your health it was more sensible to replace bean coffee with a good cereal and fruit coffee.

A large, faint, handwritten signature in grey ink is visible in the background of the text, appearing to read 'Alfred Vogel'.



With the development of the instant version in 1960 Alfred Vogel invented the catchy name, Bambu. In Gesundheits-Nachrichten (A.Vogel Health News) he said 'he had chosen the name Bambu as a reminder of one of the most interesting coffee houses in Guatemala. It is full of Indian culture and cannot be quickly forgotten'.

### **Herbamare – the healthy seasoning**

Alfred Vogel maintained that adding seasoning to meals had three functions. First to contribute to the good taste, second to stimulate digestion and third the seasonings themselves should complement the healing effect of the foodstuff owing to their content of vitamins, minerals and trace elements. These he managed to achieve in his fresh herb sea salts by combining taste and health in an excellent way. For more than 50 years Herbamare, the sea salt with 12 fresh vegetables and herbs, has been a kitchen sensation and is one of the most loved and well known foodstuffs in Switzerland.

The pure, natural product, sea salt, the garden fresh ingredients and the complex production process guarantee the first class quality of A.Vogel fresh herb salts. They are manufactured in Alsace. The organically grown, freshly harvested herbs and vegetables are prepared in Colmar. The herbs and vegetables are individually chopped, mixed in a ratio of 1:2 with rough natural sea salt and stored in closed containers. From between 3 and 18 months the salt crystals have time to take on the aroma and colourings, the essential oils and enzymes as well as other active substances from the herbs. With this process, called maceration, Alfred Vogel had discovered a fascinating method of conserving the components of fresh ingredients. After being dried in a vacuum at a maximum of 40°C the salts are ground individually and mixed according to Alfred Vogel's original recipe.

In Herbamare there are 12 delicious and aromatic ingredients: celery (stalks and leaves), leek, cress, onions, chives, parsley, lovage, garlic, basil, marjoram, rosemary and thyme. It is also enriched with the iodine-containing sea alga, kelp, which Alfred Vogel learned about in California and which he valued a great deal due to its metabolism-stimulating effect.

## The role of nutrition in health and illness

As a naturopath and nutritionist Alfred Vogel was conscious of the close relationship between nutrition and health. He not infrequently sadly declared that 'people who have been successfully helped by medicinal plants often forfeit this encouraging benefit through poor nutrition'. He insisted on giving his patients, listeners and readers advice on self-help. He always stressed that each of us, to a certain degree, is responsible for our own health and that healthy nutrition using foodstuffs produced in the most natural way possible was a basic prerequisite.

In Gesundheits-Nachrichten (A.Vogel Health News) he asserts: 'I was convinced that natural healing methods using fresh plant preparations, water treatments and all the other physical forms of treatment should not come to a standstill. In order to achieve a satisfactory outcome nutritional therapy has to be the basis.' (1962)

## *Spreading the knowledge of naturopathy*

Alfred Vogel published many papers, several books and a magazine in his own publishing house. Other Swiss life reformers and naturopaths have done the same but no one has been as successful and as steadfast as he has.

### **'The Nature Doctor' grows in popularity**

'It was asked for 5,000 times within the space of a year,' exclaimed the author in surprise. And that was only through word of mouth and advertising in his magazine. With *Der kleine Doktor* (The Nature Doctor) Alfred Vogel had an overwhelming publishing success. Translated into a total of 12 languages, it became a bestseller and sold well over 2 million copies. (Circulation in the Netherlands alone amounted to more than 1 million books.)

Originally written for the inhabitants of remote areas in which the doctor did not live round the corner, the guide developed amazingly quickly into a worldwide reference book for self-help and naturopathy. First published in 1952 and 384 pages long, the book was constantly extended due to the naturopath's new experiences and knowledge and today is

available in a beautifully presented new German edition with more than 860 pages. It is also available in English.

### **An example of constancy**

His journal entitled *Das neue Leben* (A Fresh Start) appeared in Basel from 1929 to 1933. Following his move to Appenzell he attempted in the summer of 1941 to publish a magazine again. *A.Vogel Gesundheits-Nachrichten* (A.Vogel Health News) appeared in 1946 and was published regularly each month. Since 1960 it has appeared in the practical format we still have today. This long success story is thanks to Alfred Vogel personally for, in spite of an unbelievable workload and his many journeys, he always managed to put together the journal with his interesting experiences and knowledge. His numerous reports on his travels – whether typed on a small travel typewriter or jotted down in a notebook – always arrived on time in Teufen from wherever he was. In later years it was a cause for concern to him that his ‘lovechild’ should be kept alive.

Nowadays *Gesundheits-Nachrichten* (A.Vogel Health News) is a modern magazine with current topics on naturopathy, nutrition, environment, medicine, psychology, joie de vivre and advice on self-help. The editorial office and small but excellent subscription, advertisement and internet departments operate from the very house in which the Vogel family once lived.

### **Lectures**

His lectures were another medium for linking knowledge of naturopathy and medical information to advertising. They helped him to stay in contact with items of interest and with patients. Those who witnessed one of Alfred Vogel’s lectures were fascinated by his oratory, the forcefulness of his narration, his wit and his charisma. In the subsequent round of questions and answers he and his listeners often found it difficult to come to a halt.

Vogel delivered approximately 700 lectures in his lifetime. Even at 81 years of age he toured from Boston to Miami giving lectures at 26 radio and television stations.



## *The later years*

'To some extent as Vogel was fully occupied with naturopathy, his perception of himself also changed. From the 1970s he spoke more frequently of phytotherapy and no longer described himself as a nutritionist but as a phytotherapist.'

'Into his 90s Alfred Vogel remained involved with his company in the reformulation of fresh plant preparations to actual pharmaceutical and medical standards.'

(Jörg Melzer,/Reinhard Saller, Nature Doctor Alfred Vogel (1902-1996), Switzerland. Zeitschrift für GanzheitsMedizin 2003\*).

Alfred Vogel registered with satisfaction the opening of the first Swiss Bio shop in Zürich in 1971, the setting up of the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) in 1974 as well as the founding of Bio Suisse in 1981, an Association of Swiss Organic Agricultural Organisations.

With delight and satisfaction he also noticed the growing recognition of naturopathy in large sections of the population and in the medical profession – at last the campaigning pioneer had made his mark.

\* Dr. med. Jörg Melzer, Medical Practitioner for the Institute of Naturopathy, Department of Internal Medicine, University Hospital, Zürich/Prof. Reinhard Saller, Director of the Institute of Naturopathy, University Hospital, Zürich

If they live long enough, innovators and successful pioneers also receive official recognition. In 1982 Alfred Vogel was awarded the Priessnitz medal from the German Naturopathic Society and in 1984 he was made an honorary member of the Swiss Society for Empirical Medicine.

With courage and perseverance Alfred Vogel had come a long way. He held his convictions with passion and intensity. His knowledge and the wealth of his experience made him not only an extraordinary explorer but also a remarkable human being. His life achievement is a present to us all – on healthy and on sick days.

Cared for by his wife, Denise, Alfred Vogel died in 1996 at the age of 94.

Since 1997 Alfred Vogel's Foundation has awarded the Alfred Vogel prize for the support of work in traditional naturopathy and scientific phytotherapy. In the 21st century his name stands for what he was throughout his life – a Pioneer in Natural Health, a campaigner for phytotherapy.







## *Tradition and passion today*

The goal of all colleagues today is to respect Alfred Vogel's legacy and to continue his work. This does not mean holding on to the past but a responsible progression in accordance with his work as a pioneer.

The most important task in the future (as in the past) is to support people with health worries, i.e. to help them to understand and treat illnesses better. We see another important task as looking after the environment and maintaining the sustainability of natural resources – in short, a love of nature.

*A. Vogel*

**GARDEN HOUSE  
GARTENHAUS**





### **More information**

- Subscription and trial subscription to Gesundheits-Nachrichten
- Books
- E-mail newsletter

[www.gesundheits-nachrichten.ch](http://www.gesundheits-nachrichten.ch)  
[www.avogel.ch](http://www.avogel.ch)

### **Contact in Teufen**

Remo Vetter  
Tel: +41 (0)71 335 66 16  
E-mail: [r.vetter@avogel.ch](mailto:r.vetter@avogel.ch)

### **Contact Bioforce AG in Roggwil/Thurgau**

- Fields of medicinal plants
- A.Vogel Healthy Way
- Company tour
- Half day and day events

Marlene Weber  
Tel: +41 (0)71 454 62 42  
E-mail: [ma.weber@bioforce.ch](mailto:ma.weber@bioforce.ch)

### **Impressum**

Author: Ingrid Zehnder  
Translation: Irene Robbie, UK  
Layout: Alexandra Eggenberger  
Print: Kennedy Smith Print, UK



0861500/0410

[www.alfredvogel.com](http://www.alfredvogel.com)