

## Gardens for Children – Final Report of our Activities in 2016

### Introduction

Since its beginning in 2011, our garden project promotes nutrition and creates an awareness of the origin of our food and biological coherences to the youngest members of our community. Project location is the area of East Hamburg as it is a social hotspot within our community. The garden project addresses social disadvantaged children aged 6 to 10 years at elementary schools of Hamburg's east. In general, in their families exists nearly no knowledge about healthy food.

In the garden project, the children are instructed by gardeners to look after a garden/a patch on the terrain of their school. They learn how to cultivate vegetables, salads and herbs, and the project links age-appropriate physical exercise with basic knowledge on healthy nutrition. Additionally, the children use the school's kitchens to prepare healthy meals of the vegetables from their gardens.

The children gain practical gardening skills suitable for daily use and get to know the vegetative diversity of vegs and fruits and how this becomes their daily food. As a consequence, the children will get a new and healthy attitude towards food, nutrition and health in general as well as a lot of physical exercise - of all this they will profit during their whole future life.

Thanks to the generous donation of UWW/General Mills Foundation the garden team of Billenetz was able to provide five gardens for eight groups of children. From March to October 2016 we have planted and cultivated patches of garden in four elementary schools for five gardening groups, where these gardens were already in existence from our prior activities. Additionally, we have created a new garden for an open afternoon group at Wichern School.

The teachers at the schools participate actively in our gardening project with the aim to learn to maintain the patches on their own in the near future.

Our vision and goal for the next years: to maintain the existing gardens and even to create additional new gardens, while some of the existing gardens of the project are gradually turned over to the responsibility of teachers and children, to be maintained on their own without further help from the project. For the season 2016, the garden at school Fuchsbergredder was handed over to the teachers and children of the school, as we are sure that they have gained enough knowledge during the past years to handle the garden project on their own. This gave us the opportunity to start a new garden in spring 2016 at Wichern School, a regular primary school with an unused area that was turned into a new garden thanks to the enthusiastic volunteer-help of the General Mills team.

In March 2016 we started our new garden season, sowing and planting the new vegetables and herb plants in the existing gardens at Rebus, Brüder Grimm School, Hauskoppelstieg and Schleemer Park.

Thanks to the generous donation of UWW/General Mills Foundation the garden team of Billenetz was able to provide a new Garden for Children with 6 big patches for an open afternoon gardening group (10 to 20 children) at Wichern School.

Unfortunately it is quite impossible to take photographs of the children in our project. 99% of our garden children at



all schools are children with a migrant, Islamic background, which bans to take pictures of human beings. Therefore it will be absolutely impossible to get a permission of any of the parents for taking pictures (not to even think of publishing them) of their children.

## **General Mills Hamburg, Garden Team – Earth Day 22.04.2016**

### **New Garden at Wichern School**

2016 we started a new garden at Wichern School, a regular primary school with a big unused garden in a garden plot settlement two minutes walk away from the school.

The school planned to offer an open gardening course once a week for any student who is interested in spending their afternoon hours in that garden.

Only by the great assistance of the team of General Mills Hamburg this additional garden was possible. A new interesting activity can be offered to the children. The feedback of the children and teachers is more than positive. The children love their “garden hours”.



Patch with carrots at the new garden Wichern School

In the frame of the annual “Earth Day” on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 6 patches were built with the assistance of ca. 15 volunteers of General Mills in Hamburg. Their task was not only to install the new patches in a different design (most of the General Mills team were very familiar with our standard design of patches, this time it had to be a little different because of a lot of rabbits around) but also to clear the ground for the new patches.

Our gardening class started late April with only 5 students, but at the end of May up to 20 decided to spend their afternoon classes in our garden, who cultivated the patches with big enthusiasm. The patches were cultivated with vegetables, herbs and flowers.

After the summer holidays the children and our garden team were busy with harvesting the plants and the preparation of meals in the kitchen, as well as with preparing the patches for the season 2017.





New patches with rabbit-protection at Wichern School at the beginning of the season



Harvested pumpkins after the summer holidays

### **Brüder Grimm School**

At the Brüder Grimm School our project started in early April planting and sewing vegetable, herbs and some flowers.



The 10 patches have again been cultivated with big enthusiasm by three classes. After the summer holidays the children and our garden team were busy with harvesting the plants and the preparation of meals in the kitchen, as well as with preparing the patches for the season 2017.



## School Hauskoppelstieg



As the head of school asked us to be not only part of their “afternoon support service” but also become a part of their regular morning classes twice a week, we have taken care of two groups in the morning twice a week since late March until the middle of October.

From March till the middle of April we mostly spent our project time in the kitchen cooking meals with all the vegetable we wanted to plant and in the green house where we could start planting vegetables very early in the season. Since early May we also took care of the patches outside.

After the summer holidays the garden team did both: Arranging the greenhouse for the season 2017 and taking care of their patches, including harvesting the plants and the preparation of meals in the kitchen.

In the following pictures you see the activities and the results of our gardening project at Hauskoppelstieg.



Harvesting of radishes



Meal of self-grown salads and herb jam

## Garden at school Schleemer Park

The school Schleemer Park is a regular elementary school. The average class size is 20 students. All the teachers were absolutely enthusiastic about our offer to take care of their garden again.





During the summer months, a lot of strawberries were ripening and were harvested at School Schleemer Park. The children liked their strawberries best without further ingredients, but also prepared healthy desserts with other fruit.

We started our garden season in early April by cultivating vegetables and herbs in our three years ago built greenhouse. In early May the plants could move outside into the patches, were we also planted some flowers.



Zucchini growing in School Schleemer Park

The feedback of the children and teachers is more than positive. The children (a group aged 8 to 12 years) love their garden hours. During August and September the children and the garden team were arranging the greenhouse for the season 2017 and taking care of their patches, including harvesting the plants and the preparation of meals in the kitchen. The children and teachers as well are looking forward to their next gardening season hopefully starting in April 2017.



## Garden at Rebus Billstedt

Rebus Billstedt is an institution of the school authority in which students, absconding from normal school instruction or showing such extreme behavioral disorders that they cannot be instructed in regular school classes, are taken care of.

The aim of this institutional care is to reintegrate these children into regular schooling. In order to do so, numerous project activities are offered. In this spirit our „Garden for Children“ is a true enrichment for the concept of Rebus and everybody, teachers, instructors and the children are very enthusiastic about their sixth season of gardening.



Garden patches at Rebus Billstedt

The gardening started in early April cultivating the six patches and preparing the greenhouse for the season to come. As the tomatoes and other vegetables were growing very well inside the greenhouse, they could mostly be harvested before the summer holidays (due to the warmer climate inside the house). After the holidays the classes spent most time in the kitchen preparing tasty and healthy meals out of the harvested vegetables.

## A typical day in the Garden for Children

Each unit starts with an address of welcome by the gardener and the pedagogical assistant and the introduction of today's activities.

At the beginning the gardener explains in an age appropriate way the theoretical basics of the actual work, the development of the plants, etc. This theoretical introduction is best done directly in front of the patches, where everyone can see what is talked about.

Then joined practical work at the patch (to sow, to plant, to weed, to care, to water, to crop, etc.).

The children document the course by photos, drawings and short descriptions of the activities and work steps.

The unit ends with a feedback (what was done, what was learned) and the planning of the next unit.



At the end of the season the children prepare the cropped vegetables, herbs, and berries (soup, herb butter, jam, etc.) and celebrate a common meal of the prepared ingredients, and/or the children take the recipes and products home.



## Summary

Our gardening project was resoundingly successful and was carried out as planned. We saved some money from this years' grant for the start of the next gardening season in April 2017, because we plan to build another new garden and will need the rest of the grant in the first months of 2017 to buy the necessary material for the patches in this new garden.

All participants – children, teachers, pedagogical assistants and gardener – enjoyed the weekly garden sessions and the results of our gardening project. The installation of greenhouses at three schools proves to be very helpful because the plants are growing much faster inside the greenhouse and the children are protected when the weather is bad.

We are told that the children are looking forward to their gardening hours during the entire week and that the gardening-experience is also helpful for the children to be more concentrated and perceptive during their regular classes.



Blooming watercress in School Schleemer Park

Bettina Rosenbusch and Renate Arndt, January 2017