

Gardens for Children – Final Report of our Activities in 2017

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 Hamburgs 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 2017 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 School Sterntalerstraße..

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 2017, the garden at school Schlemer Park 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 2017 at School Sterntalerstraße, 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.



New garden in Sterntalerstraße after some months

In March 2017 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 Wichern School.

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 Sterntalerstraße 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 21.04.2017

New Garden at Sterntalerstraße School

2017 we started a new garden at Sterntaler School, a regular primary school with a big unused enclosed lawn.

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”.

In the frame of the annual “Earth Day” on April 21st, 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 (most of the Generals Mills team were very familiar with our standard design of patches) but also to clear the ground for the new patches and to lay sidewalk panels around the patches in order to protect the lawn.

Unfortunately it was raining heavily most of the time, so they could not finish their job. The task was finished by a professional paver at another day.

Our gardening class started late April with 15 students, 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 2018.



Brüder Grimm School



At the Brüder Grimm School our project started in early April planting and sowing 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 2018.

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 2018 and taking care of their patches, including harvesting the plants and the preparation of meals in the kitchen.

In the following pictures you see salads and herbs growing in the patches at Hauskoppelstieg.



Wichern School

The Wichern School is a regular primary school with a big garden in a garden plot settlement two minutes walk away from the school.

The gardening course took place once a week for any student who is interested in spending their afternoon hours in that garden. 10 to 15 students cultivated the patches with vegetables, herbs and flowers.

The feedback of the children and teachers is more than positive. The children love their "garden hours".



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 next season.

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.



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 2018, because we plan to build another new garden and will need the rest of the grant in the first months of 2018 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.



Bettina Rosenbusch and Renate Arndt, January 2018