

Gardens for Children – Final Report of our Activities in 2018

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.



Garden patches at school Sterntaler Straße

Thanks to the generous donation of the General Mills Foundation the garden team of Billenetz was able to provide four gardens for four groups of children.

From March to September 2018 we have planted and cultivated patches of garden in the three elementary schools at Hauskoppelstieg, Sterntaler Straße

and Wichern School for three gardening groups, where these gardens were already in existence from our prior activities. Additionally, we have created a new garden for pre-school kids at School Billbrookdeich.

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 2018, the garden at Hauskoppelstieg was reduced to one gardening group. This gave us the opportunity to start a new garden in spring 2018 at School Billbrookdeich, a regular primary and pre-school with an unused area that was turned into a new garden with 6 big patches for a morning gardening group (10 to 15 children) thanks to the enthusiastic volunteer-help of the General Mills team.

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 is absolutely impossible to get the permission of any of the parents for taking pictures (not to even think of publishing them) of their children.



Zucchini in the new garden at Billbrookdeich

General Mills Hamburg, Garden Team – Earth Day 20.04.2018

New Garden at Billbrookdeich School



Volunteers of General Mills Hamburg are creating the new garden at school Billbrookdeich on Earth Day 2018

2018 we started a new garden at Billbrookdeich, a regular primary and pre-school with a big unused enclosed garden.

The school planned to offer a gardening course once a week for pre-school -children.

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 20, 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 General Mills team were very familiar with our standard design of patches) but also to clear the ground for the new patches.

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 next season.

At the end of the gardening season we were very happy to learn that the school decided to take over the responsibilities for the gardening project and continue the garden on their own in 2019.



Garden patch with mangel in May ...



... and in September

School Sterntaler Straße

We started our gardening project at Sterntaler School in early April planting and sewing vegetables, herbs and some 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 2019.

Flowers and basil at school Sterntaler Straße



School Hauskoppelstieg

As the head of school asked us to become a part of their regular morning classes, we have taken care of one group in the morning since late March until late September.



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

Since late April we also took care of the patches outside.

After the summer holidays the garden team did both:

Arranging the greenhouse for the season 2019 and taking care of their patches, including harvesting the plants and the preparation of meals in the kitchen.

The school will continue the garden project on their own, beginning March 2019.



Young plants of mangel in school Hauskoppelstieg, spring 2018

Wichern School



Kohlrabi in 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.

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.



Bowl of salad at Sterntaler Straße



Harvest of strawberries at Wichern School

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.

All participants – children, teachers, pedagogical assistants and gardener – enjoyed the weekly garden sessions and the results of our gardening project.

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.

Patch of herbs in school Billbrookdeich



Garden at Wichern School

Bettina Rosenbusch and Renate Arndt,
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