

Gardens for Children – Final Report of our Activities in 2015

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 April till October 2015 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 three groups at Brüder Grimm School Steinadlerweg, thanks to the enthusiastic volunteer-help from the team of General Mills in Hamburg.



Team of General Mills Hamburg at work – Earth Day 2015, Brüder Grimm School Steinadlerweg

The teachers at the schools with our gardening project participate actively in the gardening project with the aim that they learn to maintain the patches on their own in the near future. In addition to our schools we supported the staff of a kindergarten to make good use of their already existing garden and how to teach these very young children aged three to six years about gardening and healthy nutrition.

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. As of this year, one group of our garden Rebus School is in the hands of 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.

For 2016 we plan a new garden at Wichern School, a regular primary school with a unused area that we will turn into a new garden. Starting 2016 the school Fuchsbergredder will take care of their garden on their own.

In April 2015 we started our new garden season, sowing and planting the new vegetables and herb plants in the existing gardens at Rebus, Fuchsbergredder, 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 four very big patches and 6 normal ones, all together the equivalent of 21 patches at the Brüder Grimm School for three groups (60 children).

General Mills Hamburg, Garden Team 24.04.2015

New garden at Brüder Grimm School Steinadlerweg

2015 we started a new garden at school Steinadlerweg, a regular primary school with a huge unused area that was turned into a new garden with patches for three groups (60 children) of the age of 8 to 10 years.

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 24th 4 huge patches and 6 regular ones (equivalent to 21 regular patches) should have been built with the assistance of ca.15 volunteers of General Mills in Hamburg.



Gardening area before the building of patches



Team of General Mills Hamburg after work with newly built patches

Their task was not only to install the new patches but also to clear the ground for them. Unfortunately there were several huge concrete slabs under a thin layer of grass, so we could not complete our task that day. It took two more afternoons to get rid of the concrete slabs and to install all patches.

During the three weeks before the patches were completed, we spent most time cooking vegetable meals with the children to decide what we will plant upon completion of our patches.



Patches at the beginning of the gardening season ...

... and some weeks later



The 10 patches have been cultivated with big enthusiasm by three classes. The patches were cultivated with vegetables and herbs.

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 2016.

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.

In early April we managed to install the water supply in the greenhouse so we could start planting vegetables very early in the season. Since early May we also took care of the patches.

After the summer holidays the garden team did both: Arranging the new greenhouse for the season 2016 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.

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.



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.

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



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 the August and September the children and the garden team were arranging the greenhouse for the season 2016 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 2016.

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 fifth season of gardening.

Different from last year we only took care of one group to have time for the new school garden at Steinadlerweg.

The gardening started in early April cultivating the four 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).



Patch at Rebus, spring 2015



Patch with corn shortly before harvesting

After the holidays the classes spent most time in the kitchen preparing tasty and healthy meals out of the harvested vegetables.

Elementary School Fuchsbergredder

The Fuchsbergredder School is a regular elementary full time school with several afternoon classes, attended by an average of 15 children.

The fourth gardening season started in April 2015 and most of last year's "Environment Study Group" of 16 children (aged 8 to 12 years) participated again. The children simply love their "garden hours".

The patches were planted with vegetables, herbs and flowers. After the summer break, we harvested the vegetable, prepared meals and planted flowers in the empty patches.



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 (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 carried out as planned and was resoundingly successful.



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, November 2015