**Herb project for school**

Exciting new project for the school and everybody can join in!

Young and not-so-young can become involved in this project, it means that parents and their children (learners from our school) and even smaller children can come and help whilst enjoying the open air experience. We also do not expect you to just buy something this time (at least not yet), but we want physical participation.

We have decided, after many hours of deliberation and meetings (almost like the G8 seminars on global warming and an environmentally responsible way of life), on a herb garden located on that small piece of land next to the netball fields at the back of the school.

This small piece of land will be ideal for this purpose as it is close to a water supply point that can be used for irrigation. It will however also be out of the way of busy feet and children playing during breaks. All the classrooms on the second floor will have a brilliant view on the spectacular end product!

A wonderful idea when we are reprimanded from all directions for our lifestyles which contributes to global warming due to the carbon footprint of ourselves and the food we consume. What can be better than to use fresh herbs, cultivated by our own community – here we are talking about bare foot prints and no petrol or diesel used.

If you are still reading at this point, chances are that we can change a bright idea into reality and discuss plans on how to reach our goal.

The first questions were obviously the following:

* Who will be our potential customers? We hope and rely on you to fulfil this role, as our community!
* How do we start a herb garden like this? This is certainly more than just a few plants stuck in the ground and this is why we grabbed a few of our neighbourhood nurseries to help us with their brilliant knowledge and advice. Any parent who can offer more of this please contact the school.

A few sponsors have already offered their help for the rental of machinery to do the initial ground work as well as the supply of the seedlings and seeds for the herbs. We want to thank the following plant suppliers: New Life Nurseries, Plants For Pleasure Nursery, Van Rensburg Kwekerye, Hodgen Plant Hire and Great Garden Compost Depot.

The varieties of herbs that we have decided on were selected because they are popular and will make sense from a marketing perspective, but also because they will grow easily.

The following herbs were selected for our wonder garden:

* Sweet Basil - in food, pastas, salads and grows into a beautiful green shrub with small white flowers. Also get a peach coloured variant that makes a nice contrast. Prefers full sun and soil rich in compost.
* Rosemary - in food, dark green shrub with small blue flowers. (Stimulant for all us slow people and can help us to lose weight.) Prefers full sun and soil rich in compost. Spanish variant has straight twigs and people use it to make kebabs.
* Lavender – smells divine, makes potpourri. Bake lavender shortbread biscuits, use in bath water and it will calm you. Use in herbal pillow for wonderful night’s sleep. Different leaf shapes, grey to lilac and different flowers. Nice variety. Prefers full sun and soil rich in compost.
* Thyme – small ground cover type plant. Excellent in meat dishes. Prefers full sun and soil rich in compost. Different fragrances and leaf colours.
* Parsley – very popular but must be planted in a pot or own bed and must be newly planted every year.
* Garlic – although not a herb it is excellent in meat, fish and Mediterranean dishes. Easy to grow. Plant individual cloves of garlic 3 to 4 cms deep in the ground.

Doesn’t it sound wonderful! These plants will work like a charm and they can also be dried and processed if necessary.

How it will benefit your child? On a basic level it will bring our children back to the fresh air and it will also, hopefully, ignite a small spark of interest in how the earth works and where our food comes from. This can be seen as a fundraising project, but think WIDER than the obvious and see it as a community education project and in-service training for our teenagers for their life ahead.

The learners are going to get practical knowledge of gardening and will be able to apply this knowledge in their own existence. We all hope that our children will be productive members of society and will behave in an environmentally responsible way. Except for the practical knowledge, the community involvement will be an integral part of the project as everybody in the vicinity of the school will gain from the project.

The learners that insist on disturbing their classes by acting in an unacceptable manner, or who ignore other rules of the school, will get more of these benefits of the herb garden as they will take part in the physical work during detention times. In this way something positive will be generated from their bad behaviour and the hard physical work of the garden will get done! Everybody knows how to remove weeds, but will prefer easier tasks like watering the plants and harvesting.

Basic planning for the herb garden:

* The small plot where the garden is to be planted has already been fenced and laid out.
* The soil must be treated and allowance must be made for enough drainage and nutrients.
* The spacing of the plants is very important as herbs do not like to be squashed into a small space. Here we can already see the resemblance to our own learners – tempers flare up pretty easily in too small a space!
* Plant the baby plants and give lots of attention and care without babying them. Almost like our learners!
* Best time for planting is from August to April and that is why we hope to be ready for action by August!
* The plants must be watered regularly and compost must be worked in once a month. Please note that this requirement falls within our detention schedule – be warned, learners! Too much compost is not beneficial to the plants. They must struggle a little bit to make them stronger. This means that there must not be too many sinners in detentions and also that we must not baby our children. Herbal psychology!
* Herbs must also be pruned regularly, but this forms part of the pleasant work! Certain of the cuttings can even be used to supplement a compost heap.
* It is also a good idea to plan a few walkways – stepping stones – between the various sections of the garden. This will help matters when it comes to watering and weeding.

Please contact me if you want to be involved!

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**Claims of the medicinal benefits of some herbs**

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| **Herb** | **Amount** | **Benefit** |
| Aloe | 2 tsp aloe juice daily | Stimulates insulin production  Prevents constipation |
| Celery and parsley | Eat fresh stalks and leaves daily | Natural diuretics that assist the kidneys to eliminate |
| Dandelion | 10-15 flower stems daily in springtime | Helps to reduce blood sugar |
| Garlic | 2-3 cloves daily, eat them raw or cooked in your food or take garlic pearls | Stimulates insulin production  Strengthens the walls of the blood vessels |
| Stinging nettle | 1 cup herb tea daily | Helps to reduce blood sugar |
| Sutherlandia | 1 cup herb tea daily or 1 capsule 2x daily | Stabilizes blood sugar levels  Relaxes blood vessels |