

## **A garden project for blind children to 'see' with their hands at the Nezahat Gökyiğit Botanic Garden, İstanbul.**

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### **Summary:**

A pilot project, based at Nezahat Gökyiğit Botanic Garden, İstanbul during 2006 was run for 7 children aged between 6 and 8 from the Parıltı Foundation for blind children. Every Monday for 7 weeks between 9:30 and 12:00 the children visited the Garden. During this time the children selected and planted which plants they wanted to grow. Lavandula, thyme, tomato, pepper, bean, onion and parsley seeds were sown in allocated areas which were about 1.20 cm in diameter. At the end of the 7 weeks, they harvested their plots.

### **Goals and Objectives:**

- To develop enviromental awareness,
- To inform children about using areas of plant kingdom,
- To help them develop sustainable relationships and an understanding of nature,
- To inform them about some agricultural materials and how to use them,
- To support them in the methods and requirements of growing plants.

### **Project Activities:**

On their first visit the group toured the Botanic Garden, given information and told about the project.

From a list of specially selected plants which were either scented or easy to grow, the children selected three plants that they wanted to grow in their areas. The project plants were; Lavandula, thyme, tomato, pepper, bean, onion and parsley.

During their second visit, they planted their plots and all the children sowed parsley seeds.

Throughout the remaining weeks the children took care of their plants by removing weeds from their plots and watering.

When the children found out that the birds were eating their plants, we decided to create a scarecrow to scare the birds away.

On the last day of the project, the children's mothers participated in the harvesting ceremony. The children gathered tomatoes and peppers, thyme leaves, onions, parsley and lavandula flowers.

They took parts of the plants for pressing between newspaper to make into herbarium specimens and using Braille they wrote the names of plants on paper to attach to the specimens. Sweet scented lavandula flowers were collected and dried and put into small cloth bags.

## Results

During the project the children learned about:

- the names of the selected plants,
- the structure and uses of the plants,
- how to grow and propagate the plants,
- the importance and uses of the plants,
- the parts of plants,
- the requirements that plants need to grow,
- how to use simple garden tools such as trowels and forks,
- plant care cultivation such as watering, hoeing and weeding,
- the function and importance of a botanic garden.

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