



# A School Garden for Wildlife and Pupils

**Country:** Germany

**School:** Rainald-von-Dassel-School

**Participants:** Six teachers and ninety students.



Reports about the massive loss of insects in Germany triggered the school's idea to convert a part of an unused lawn into a garden that would support wild bees and other insects with pollen and nectar through the year. Almost at the same time, the school saw how wonderful it would be if children could experience all kinds of wildlife first hand in a garden at school.



**There were many goals to this project.** They wanted to provide a natural habitat for plants and animals. Giving children the chance to experience nature was one of their priority, as there are less and fewer places to find it in a landscape with intensifying farming. They also wanted to give students the chance to have lessons outside the building in Biology, Design and Technology, Art and Home Economics (grow your own veggies and cook with them). The children learned about the importance of maintaining the natural world as part of a sustainable future.

**Several people from organisations to locals were involved in the project.** Two farmers helped take the turf off, they provided machinery and unwanted rocks for use in the pond. One of the student's grandmother did the weeding over two years. A local citizen, the town mayor and the council initiated the planting of new fruit trees along the road and financed them. Parents helped to plant and provided sunflowers. One parent provided horse manure from their stables for the garden. A gardening company built the pond and provided water plants. Also, a nature preservation group (NABU) provided the fruit trees at reduced prices and transported them to the school premises. It was collaborative work that connected the students and the locals on a common project.

**They managed to get financial support from different sources.** They had support from Dassel council, the School Activities Fund, the BINGO! Umweltstiftung (Environmental Foundation), a local company: KWS Einbeck, and the local authority: Landkreis Northeim - who owns the school and associated land and is responsible for its maintenance. Klaus Pohl was responsible for sourcing all the funding, and without this engagement the project would not have been such a success.



**The whole project lasted two years.** With the support of the headmistress and the permission of the local authority, they started by removing some turf to make space for planting trees, shrubs, and perennials. Later, they widened the flower beds and added an archway made of willows (using the coppiced branches from existing willows in the school grounds).

They planted bushes with edible berries and planted fruit trees along the farmer's road behind the school premises. Some older teenagers volunteered to organise and build a concrete base for a garden shed and put it up – the work was overseen by teachers from the Design and Technology department. They also built insect hotels and more recently built two bird tables – all of which now stand in the garden. The most recent project was to secure more money to build and plant up a pond – completed in June 2021.



**The project was a real success.** They have planted at least 14 new fruit trees, put plants and seeds in the ground of 300 different species. 1000 square-meters of land was transformed into a flowering garden where before there was only lawn. They also have had a pond built (6 by 8 m<sup>2</sup>) and helped with its construction by putting in rocks at the edge of the pond and adding the plants.

**Students acquired a lot from this project.** They learned about the names of plants and animals, the wide variety of species, and about their needs to live and survive. They learn that their commitment can make a change for life around them. Students got a practical idea about space and measurements (how long is 17 m, or how large is 10 m<sup>2</sup>). They also learned about gardening and the usage of tools, planting and harvesting vegetables and using them for cooking, thus learning skills for life. Students welcomed the opportunity to be outside and took part in practical and hands-on activities. Now, teachers and pupils see the garden as a place for peace away from the noise of the school.

*"Ute König tells me that she remembers her son Lukas coming home saying: "Mum, mum, may I go back to school this afternoon? Work continues on the pond and I want to go and help!" Ute König comments on it: "That doesn't happen very often!"*

*Lukas and Ella, two of the children in the class who helped put in the rocks and plants, tell me: "We are really delighted about our new pond. The other day we even saw a crane at the pond looking for food."*

**- Klaus Pohl for the school**

