

## Start early

**.....to become a master! Therefore: Nobody is too young to love gardens! Take your children and grandchildren with you into the garden and introduce them to the secrets of nature.**

*Text: Christina Bösiger (Gartenfreund/Jardin familial 03/2020 Switzerland)*

Exactly 180 years ago the first “Kindergarten” (children’s garden) opened its doors in 1840. The name already underlined the programme of the “Kindergarten” inventor Friedrich Fröbel, because the garden and nature seemed to him to be the most important environment to do justice to the



importance of early childhood education. Thus, he believed that young people should spend a large part of their free time in nature and in the garden in order to develop ideally. And this is still true today: Children should play in green areas instead of looking at screens! They should move, climb and be active. They should discover and explore nature that the little ones do not only learn about life cycles, but also discover how and where healthy food grows. By tending and caring for plants, they learn to take on responsibility, to make decisions and to understand the ecological relationships.

**Immersion into the realm of the senses!**

Digging, playing in the mud, shaping, smelling and tasting – sensual discovering is easy in the garden. While the parents poke the soil, the offspring can feel with their feet what is inside it. They run over freshly germinated lawn, hop over hard clods of earth and dig in the soil with their bare fingers. That feels good! Not only for the development of their personality, but also because they are in motion and in the fresh air. Give your children their own plot or a corner with large pots from the very beginning, where they can sow, plant, cut and later also nibble to their heart’s content. The amount of work involved in preparing the

ground depends, among other factors, on where you place the children's plot. If a small corner in the vegetable garden is left free for this purpose, then the soil is usually optimally prepared. If, however, the plot is to be laid out where lawn used to grow, the grass must be cut off and the soil loosened up in depth. The easiest way to do this is to buy ready-to-use garden soil from a specialist retailer without peat – of course – and then you can sow or plant. Get inspired together and go shopping for seeds, flower bulbs, tuber or seedlings. Special seed bands make sowing a child's play. Tip: For planting and digging, weeding and watering, the little ones naturally want gardening tools that look just like the big ones. There are plenty of true-to-original mini spades, rakes and watering cans suitable for children and – very important – small garden gloves.

### **Sweet scents galore**

A garden bed that smells as sweet as a candy bag – every child would like to stick its nose into it. It is hard to believe, which sugar-free smells, nature has to offer with which a beguiling child bed can be laid out. Also Rosa Wolf has described some of them in her book “Kinder im Garten, mehr Garten leben” published by BLV Buchverlag:

#### **Lemon balm (*melissa officinalis*)**

When you rub your hands over the leaves, you immediately breathe the intense lemon scent. The plant, which comes from southern Europe is completely undemanding and grows to 80 cm high. However, it should be cut back immediately after flowering, otherwise it will conquer the whole garden with its seedlings. Did you know? Lemon balm put on the heart is said to help with heart sickness.

#### **Chocolate cosmos (*Cosmos atrosanguineus*)**

From the dark, burgundy red blossoms a delicious bittersweet fragrance flows. In a sunny place it blooms from June to the end of October. It grows to a height of 60 cm. Like the dahlias, its tubers are placed every year after the ice saints in pots or in a bed and are taken out again to store them frost-free before the frosts in autumn.

#### **Chewing gum plant (*Chrysanthemum balsamita*)**

Its leaf smells as fresh as Original Wrigley's Spearmint. In sunny corners the 60 cm high perennial plant grows without any problems. From August it opens small yellow flowers. When dried, the leaves are nice smelling bookmarks. Already in the Middle Ages the fresh fragrance was appreciated for hymn books. It is therefore also called Mary's leaves.

#### **Mint (*mentha species*)**

Depending on the variety, the leaves smell of bananas or oranges, chewing gum or After-Eight chocolate.

Gummy bear flower (*Cephalophora aromatica*)

The little summer flower smells as sweet as gummy bears in all its parts. You sow it in April. It grows to a height of 50 cm. Indians use it to dye wool yellow.

