21 March

To all parents, learners and interested parties

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

The 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 with our own herb garden whilst enjoying the open-air experience. We also do not expect you to buy something this time (at least not yet), but we want your 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), to create a herb garden located on that small piece of land next to the netball courts at the back of the school.

This small piece of land will be ideal for this purpose as it has full sun and is close to a water supply point that can be used for irrigation. It will 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 of the spectacular end product!

We are planning to sell our herb plants at a reasonable price to the public and nurseries. We can also use our herbs for our hotel-and-catering course and any catered event that our school may present. The herbs can be dried and processed to be supplied to markets in our vicinity.

The herbs that we have decided to propagate 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, Rosemary, Lavender, Thyme and Parsley.

Sweet Basil – Used in pastas and salads. Grows into a beautiful green shrub with small white flowers. You also get a peach-coloured variety that makes a nice contrast. Plant in full sun and soil rich in compost.

Rosemary– Used in many dishes. Dark green shrub with small blue flowers. Plant in full sun and soil rich in compost. The Spanish variety has straight twigs which people use to make kebabs.

Lavender – Many different uses. It smells divine, and is used in potpourri. You can bake lavender shortbread biscuits, use it in bath water for a calming bath at the end of a day. Use it in a herbal pillow for wonderful night’s sleep. Some varieties have different leaf shapes, and flowers range from grey to lilac. Plant in full sun and soil rich in compost.

Thyme – Excellent in meat dishes. It is a small groundcover type plant. Plant in full sun and soil rich in compost. Different varieties offer different fragrances and leaf colours.

Parsley – This very popular herb must be newly planted every year, in a pot or sown in its own bed.

How will the herb garden 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 when we think WIDER than the obvious, we can see it as a community education project and in-service training for our teenagers for their lives ahead.

The learners are going to get practical knowledge of gardening and will be able to apply this knowledge in their own lives. We all hope that our children will be productive members of society and will behave in an environmentally responsible way.

Basic planning for the herb garden:

1. The small plot where the garden is to be planted has already been fenced and laid out.
2. The soil must be treated and allowance must be made for enough drainage and nutrients.
3. Plant the seedlings and give them lots of attention and care. Space the plants properly as herbs do not like to be squashed into a small space.
4. Best time for planting is from August to April and that is why we hope to be ready for action by August!
5. 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.
6. Herbs must also be trimmed regularly.

Please contact me if you want to be involved!

Susan Pienaar (0877728711)

**Lavender**

**Cultivation:**

**Plant in a sunny well-drained position. Cut bushes back hard after flowering to encourage further flowering. Shrub, 1.5m in height. Narrow, downy, blue-grey leaves with lavender coloured flowers on elongated stems.**

**Culinary uses:**

**Flavour apple jelly, Elizabethan cake icing and shortbread cookies with lavender flowers.**

**Medicinal uses:**

**A lavender pillow is sleep-inducing. It is said that a sprig of lavender worn under one’s hat will prevent or cure a head ache.**

**Other uses:**

**Use a fresh sprig in your bath for relaxation or dry the leaves and flowers for use in a potpourri for its anti-moth properties. Decorate gifts with dried or fresh flowers.**