

Growers News for the Week of January 1, 2018

The Growers hope that students and their families had a very safe and wonderful holiday season. We are looking forward to another gardening year.

Unfortunately, the gardens may look very sad when the students return to school after this prolonged very cold weather. The low temperatures and the long duration of them will do many plants in. Time will tell what damage was done to the plants. On Sunday, several volunteers gathered at the gardens to cover planting beds with frost-cloth in hopes of saving some of the crops. Lemons and grapefruit were also picked, and the oranges may also be picked on Tuesday in hopes of saving them from freezing. These will be given to students during their regular gardening day. We do hope that our citrus trees survive the cold. It was looking like a very good citrus year until this week.

Also during the break, work started on rearranging more planting beds in the main garden area to allow for an east/west configuration. This will maximize sunlight to the plants. The new beds will be lined with cement blocks for longevity and walkways will be made wider for safety and ease of movement. This is a backbreaking job, and will take some time to complete. It is also a challenge to change any existing beds as they are mostly in use with the crops of the season. There never seems to be a great time to make these improvements.

Mrs. Krenek's classes will start this week with a lesson on planting onions. The Texas 1015 y onion sets have been ordered from Dixondale Farms and should arrive mid-January. The onion crop is always a good crop and hopefully your students will be bringing large onions home in May. This crop has never failed to impress the students. Ask your student why these sweet onions are called 1015's?

Students will also be encouraged to bring in their \$3.00 donation for the purchase of the oak tree that each fifth grade class gives to the school. This donation should be earned by the students, not given to them. There are many creative ways they can earn three dollars. Help them accomplish this goal. The classes with 100% participation will be treated to a dessert party by the Growers.

In January the students will start keeping data on their harvests, fertilization, and other statistics on Chromebooks which they use in class. Denton Langridge and Debbie White were instrumental in putting this program together. Since the gardens are part of the science and math curriculum this is a natural extension of the 'hands on learning' experiences they are getting in this gardening and nature program. Using real data for entry and then analyzing the results is the goal and a new learning experience for these students. A big thanks to Trena Samford for her help in moving this to the School's web.

Thank you for the many bags of leaves and pine needles you have brought to the school the past few weeks. We can always use more, so do remember to save your pine needles, mulched leaves, and weed free newly mown grass clippings for us. Many of the bags of pine needles and leaves were used by Mr. Opperman in mulching all the past-planted class trees over the holidays.

The Growers still have a limited number of preserves left. There is still a supply of fig jam, gingered fig jam, tomato salsa, pickles and a bit of pickle relish and green pepper jelly left. Remember that these donations go toward funding the fifth grade garden and to the upkeep of the pollinator beds and school trees. Ask Mrs. Krenek or e-mail Mrs. Sanders at: josanders@verizon.net if you can help us liquidate these delicious preserves. When they are gone, they are gone until next summer! So, don't delay!

The OFE Growers are an all volunteer non-profit organization created specifically to fund and administer the gardens and nature programs at the school. Mrs. Krenek is our president. Do talk to her or send her an e-mail at: deborah.krenek@humbleisd.net, if you have questions. You can also learn about the OFE Growers and see pictures of the students in action in the gardens by going to their web site at: www.ofegrowers.org.