

It's potato planting time in the gardens. Mrs. Smart's classes planted two thirds of the long row in the orchard last week. This week, Mrs. Harisis' and Mrs. Fortner's classes will be planting the rest of the white potatoes. The potatoes that we grow have a red skin and white flesh and are called LaSoda. This variety has done well for us in the school gardens. Some of the popular potato varieties found in the grocery stores simply do not grow well here. Students should be harvesting the potatoes by May, barring anything unfortunate happening.

Speaking of harvesting, the student bags are fairly full of produce and fruit these days. The sugar pod peas are really coming on now, and if they are not eaten before they make it home with the students, make for some really good eating. They are good eaten raw with a dip or in a salad, stir fried quickly with some soy or tamari sauce and a bit of garlic. No need to pod them. Eat them pod and all. Leaf lettuce is maturing to the point of most students being able to take some home. Treat this lettuce gently as it bruises easily. Make sure to store all leafy greens in the refrigerator if using them at a later time. There were more radishes, collards, kale, mizuna, some spinach, and broccoli among other things. We will also be picking the Republic of Texas oranges, a tasty but seedy fruit.

The focus of the lesson in the classroom is planting the fifth-grade tree. Students have been given a leaflet to take home which gives information about the tree planting ceremony and the tree itself. Consider this an invitation to come and watch the tree planting ceremony. The leaflet also has good information in it on how to plant a tree successfully. A time capsule has been constructed and is in the process of being filled by the students. They will dig it up when they are seniors in 2027. The plaque for the tree is ready for pick-up, and Mrs. Sanders and Mrs. Opperman purchased the tree at Treeseach Farms on Monday. Now, all we need is for each student to do their part by earning their three-dollar contribution to this effort. Check out the Arbor Day tab on the website, [www.ofegrowers.org](http://www.ofegrowers.org). Remember this tree is to be from the students. Students who do not make their contribution will be able to watch but will not be able to participate in the planting exercise. Students in the various classes gave dessert suggestions to Mrs. Brown in anticipation of enjoying the promised dessert party to the classes with 100% participation. Mrs. Brown duly noted the suggestions. The Fork/Knife club cooks have promised that they will make a dessert as well! We are really looking forward to their surprise!

A number of students had worked Exercise Four on the OFE Growers web site([www.ofegrowers.org](http://www.ofegrowers.org)). During class this week two students from Mrs. Fortner's classes got the correct answer with work showing how they arrived at it. They were asked to demonstrate how they got their answers to this problem in front of Mrs. Smart's classes. Kennedy and Heavyn led their fellow students through the problem. They did a wonderful job, and for their effort in working this problem received a jar of OFE grape jelly as a prize. Be checking the web site for Problem Number Five which will be posted shortly. In addition to earning bonus points for grades, there will be prizes for timely correct answers.

Mr. Langridge has been pruning all our grape vines around campus. He and Mr. and Mrs. Opperman also tackled pruning the massive fig trees in the orchard. The Warren pear tree also received a beneficial 'haircut'. That leaves the Acres Home and Biscamp pear trees to be pruned. The loquat tree is mostly dead, due to a suspected borer infestation, so it will be cut down soon. Winter is an excellent time to prune fruit trees to encourage more fruit production. The District recently cut down a dead pine tree that was a potential threat in the wild border next to the orchard.

The volunteers will be working around the gardens next week while school is closed. Take a walk around campus next week and enjoy spring which is bursting out all over. The gardens are lovely. Butterflies and birds are already acting like winter is over. We hope they are not disappointed.