

## Growers News for the Week of February 19, 2018

Last Thursday was a good gardening day for Ms. Warnack's classes. Potato planting was once again the major task for the day. Students concentrated on planting them in the annex and finishing up a few spots in the orchard. Unlike the week before, two long trenches were dug in the forty foot bed along the wall. Fertilizer amendments were added, the potatoes were placed every 12 inches in the trenches, and then 2 inches of potting soil was added on top. Two weeks ago the potatoes were planted in individual holes. We are always experimenting with different methods to see which yields the best results. As the potatoes grow, more soil will be added to force the stem of the plant to grow longer with the expectation of producing more potatoes. Last year we grew a variety of red potato called La Soda and had very good results. Yes, we are trying them again.

Due to the hard freeze in early January, we are going through a period with very little to harvest in the gardens. We have replanted and hopefully will have a great spring and summer garden. Some students have been disappointed that nothing is going home right now from the gardens. It is a life lesson in agriculture that nature does not always cooperate.

In anticipation of **Arbor Day this Thursday**, the students were taught how to plant a containerized tree. Mr. Langridge explained to the students that planting a tree is not just digging a hole. If planted properly the tree has a much higher likelihood of growing properly and staying alive. This year the students are planting a Monterrey Oak, sometimes called a Mexican White Oak. This is a beautiful tree and will make a wonderful shady addition to the playground. This tree is a native to south Texas and is well adapted to our area. The planting will be at 1:30 on Thursday. Parents are encouraged to join us for this exciting event. This year the fifth graders were able to purchase the tree from Trees for Houston. This organization has planted over a half million trees in the Houston area over the past 33 years. If you or your family is planting a tree at home, do watch some of the videos available on the Trees for Houston web site. <http://www.treesforhouston.org/resources>

More radishes were planted in the garden. More lettuce was planted and transplanted. Onions are growing nicely and were given a fertilizer high in nitrogen to help them grow fast during this warmer weather. Most of the onions, too, have been mulched with shredded pine straw or shredded oak leaves. By doing this weeds are kept at a minimum. Weeds compete with our crops for moisture and nutrients, so they are always controlled with organic methods. No herbicides in an organic garden!

Last week the volunteers were offered several tons of landscape stones. Mrs. Sanders and Mr. Opperman drove Mr. Langridge, Ms. White, and Mrs. Opperman into Houston to pick up the stone. The stone is being used in the orchard area to replace rotting landscape timbers. We always appreciate donations like this! Several of us, too, got a great workout with this project.

We have received well over 1000 bags of leaves and pine needles this fall and winter. These are being used to mulch around trees and to make compost. Recently someone has been taking advantage of the situation by dumping lots of brush and trash along the east property line. This is not appropriate. Dumping is prohibited by state law in the nature areas and into the school dumpsters. If those doing this are caught they face a stiff fine and possible prison time. We welcome bags of leaves and pine needles but nothing else. If you observe someone doing this, take a picture of the vehicle license number and contact the school office.

The OFE Growers love volunteers! Let us know if you would like to help and learn to garden at the same time. Mrs. Krenek is our president. Do talk to her or send her an e-mail at: [deborah.krenek@humbleisd.net](mailto: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](http://www.ofegrowers.org). The web site is constantly changing. Recently a complete layout of the newly repositioned gardens was added. <http://www.ofegrowers.org/garden-layouts.html>.

**Let's all show our Falcon Pride by eliminating litter on campus and recycling as many items as we can. It makes our campus shine! If everyone picks up one piece daily we will be spotless! Have you recycled your soda can or water bottle and picked up a piece of litter today. If you don't, who will?**