

Growers News for the Week of February 26, 2018

The weather has not been a good friend of the gardening program at Oak Forest so far this year. Again our instruction and participation by students was interrupted last week due to heavy rain. While the 3.9 inches we received in the past week was nothing compared to the rain from Hurricane Harvey, it was enough to chase everyone inside on Thursday. No gardening classes were held and unfortunately the Arbor Day celebration that was scheduled for Thursday afternoon was postponed. Rain is in the forecast for almost all week again this week, so time will tell if we can get the tree planted on Thursday of this week. Mock Starr testing will keep the volunteers from the gardens on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week.

There is some good news from the gardens! The hundreds of onion sets put out in mid January are looking good and growing nicely. They were fertilized two weeks ago and all the rain has done a good job of "watering in" those nutrients to the roots of the plants. Potato seedlings planted just a couple weeks ago are already starting to poke their stems out of the soil. These will be covered with more soil to enhance the tiny plants chances of setting more potatoes along these stems. Both the onions and potatoes will be harvested in May. We certainly hope that sunshine will return and help these harvests to be more abundant!

Many of the greens that were replanted after the hard freeze in January have responded well to the rains and are now ready for harvest. Lettuce has done very well and we hope to have a harvest this week and should be able to send some bags of produce home with some students on Thursday. Can you believe over 2000 pounds of produce has already been collected this school year? Most has gone home with students although some of the citrus was shared with teachers and staff at the school. A few students have been seen eating their bag of goodies prior to its going home. So, fifth grade parents, if you have not seen produce coming home, you might ask your student if they have been snacking. We do recommend the students rinse anything before eating it, but since no pesticides or chemical fertilizers are used in the Oak Forest gardens, eating something straight out of the gardens is not really a bad thing.

If we can get the tree planted this week, it will join 14 previous class trees on campus. These gifts from the hard work of previous class members and this year's students have made a real difference on campus. While 15 trees are not a forest, they certainly do restore natural beauty and some of the benefits of a forest to the campus. If 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>

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 and is illegal. Dumping is prohibited by state law in the nature areas and into the school dumpsters. If these people are caught they face a stiff fine and possible jail 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 school district spends thousands of dollars each year hauling away trash from school property. This is money that would more appropriately be spent educating our children. Do your part by reporting illegal activities!

The OFE Growers love volunteers! Let us know if you would like to help and to 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, 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. 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 of litter daily we will be spotless! Have you recycled your soda can or water bottle and picked up a piece of litter today. Be an example! If you don't, who will?