

A new lesson will start this week with Mrs. Smart's classes. We'll be covering pollination. Students are learning that pollination is vital to seed production and consequently production of our food crops. Several types of crops are being allowed to flower and go to seed to visually show the progression of pollination. Mrs. Opperman will cover the in-class lesson. Bees are so important in the pollination process and account for up to one third of the food that we eat. Indiscriminate use of pesticides is a serious threat to the bee population. Pesticide should only be used as a last resort. The bee you kill today may be the one that pollinates the orange you were planning to eat next winter.

Three varieties of cucumbers were planted this past week as were two zucchini plants. Summer squash will follow this week as will pepper plants and eggplants. Many of the peppers were grown by Mrs. Sanders and Mr. Opperman. There is a good variety of sweet and spicy peppers to be planted. Typically the hot or spicy types are grown in the orchard, and the sweet ones in the main garden. This helps to prevent mixing them up and giving someone an unwelcome surprise.

We noticed the first potatoes blooming this past week. Onions are looking great, too. The loquats are ripening and soon will be ready for harvest. Spring is indeed here in spite of the colder temperatures this week. Days are getting longer and temperatures will also be increasing.

Two weeks ago, a team from Mrs. Smart's class cleaned up the marquee bed by the school sign. This past week another team from Mrs. Fortner's classes fertilized the bed and planted red pentas. They took great pride in their beautification project. On the way back to the classroom these intrepid students picked up trash blowing around the side of the school since they still had their gloves on. Comments were made as to how some people could just throw their trash out the car windows or just drop trash on the ground. Most of the fifth graders take pride in the appearance of the school grounds.

Emily Foxman of Urban Harvest paid our afternoon class a visit. She was most impressed with our gardening program and admitted to us that our program is the best elementary school gardening program in the Greater Houston area. She shares our gardening manual with other schools who wish to start a gardening program. That is some pretty high praise! You can go to [www.urbanharvest.org](http://www.urbanharvest.org) to get answers to your gardening questions or to check out the classes that they offer to gardeners. Want to grow a few citrus trees in your yard? They have a class for that. Want to start a backyard garden? They have a class for that.

After this week, there are less than two months left in the school year. How quickly time passes and our 5<sup>th</sup> grade gardening students will be off to middle school and lots of new experiences! We hope they will remember the lessons they have learned about gardening, nature, and how science and math are an important part of everything they do in their future lives. The next two months will rush by quickly. The gardens will be busy, too. Can't you just taste those tomatoes, peppers, squash and cucumbers already?

The OFE Growers is a group of parents, grandparents, teachers, and community members who volunteer to maintain the gardens and nature areas at the school. More importantly we consider the molding of the students to be team players and responsible citizens as our most important task. We are a 501-c-3 all volunteer non-profit organization. Emily Fortner, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade science and math teacher, is the president of the Growers organization. We welcome new volunteers and support from you. Call Mrs. Fortner at 281-641-2834 or e-mail her at: [emily.fortner@humbleisd.net](mailto:emily.fortner@humbleisd.net), if you have questions or can help in any way. Donations can be sent to: OFE Growers, PO Box 1525, Kingwood, TX 77325. We appreciate your donations to help fund the gardening program. And yes, think of the value of all those groceries your students bring home.

Don't forget to take a look at the new content on our web site: [www.ofegrowers.org](http://www.ofegrowers.org). There you will find all the latest pictures from the gardens as well as dozens of pictures from Arbor Day. Take a look at the Message Board for current lessons and experiments. Wondering what to plant in your home garden this month? Go to the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade program tab and then look for the planting chart. Your answer is there.