

## Growers News for the Week of April 30, 2018

This has been another wonderful week in the OFE Gardens. The cool mornings, however, have slowed the growth on the onions, tomatoes, cucumbers, and potatoes. Normally by this time of the school year we are picking and sending home lots of these vegetables. Last week we did pick a few tomatoes, our first of the season, and should have a few more this week. While the potato plants are still very green and growing, we have peaked under a few of the plants and will probably start harvesting this week if it is not raining on Thursday. Onions are very slow to mature this year. They are still only medium sized and we really like them to be more like softball size before we pull them. Generally we consider that they will be ready by about May 15<sup>th</sup>, so they do still have a few more weeks. Our first tomato to ripen is a variety called Sun Gold. It is a cherry tomato. If you got one in your bag last week or this, do enjoy it. It is one of the sweetest tomatoes we have ever grown in the gardens at Oak Forest.

Last week, Debbie White, one of our volunteers produced an interesting Power Point presentation called, "A Mystery in the Garden". Debbie along with Denton Langridge, have worked with the students building a data base of information from the gardens this year. At the end of class each Thursday the students enter data such as temperature, rainfall, date a plant is planted, date of harvests, weight of harvests, etc. with their Chrome Books. By keeping this type of data the students are challenged to try to understand how various changes in the way things are done in the garden affect the crops. This 'Mystery' is all about why several of our beds of onions have grown so much faster and larger than others planted right nearby and at the same time. We may be able to put this presentation on our web site and you can join in the fun of trying to solve the mystery. We will let you know when that is available.

The compost teams have been using up the finished compost they have made this year from all the green waste generated around the school gardens. They will have made and used over a ton of compost this year in the gardens. The process continues now as all the material in bin #2 is now being turned into bin #3. This will be used by next year's students in their fall garden. By the end of the school year the contents of bin #1 will be moved to bin #2. And, so, the decomposition cycle continues and none of this material has to go to the landfill. The students work hard turning this material but the real work is being done by the microbes. There are billions of them in every shovel full helping the decomposition process along.

The class lessons last week and this week are about insects and their role in nature. We are taking a close look at the insects that may cause damage to our plants in the garden. Then we discuss how we can best deal with damage-causing insects without using harmful chemical insecticides. Our garden is proof that using organic methods really does work.

The OFE Growers love volunteers! Now is the time for 4<sup>th</sup> grade parents and grandparents to join us as volunteers for next year. Let us know if you would like to help and to learn to garden. 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.

**On May 24<sup>th</sup> at 4 PM the OFE Growers will have their annual meeting. Please attend if you would like to offer input into how we function next year or if you have any questions. We do need parent input, physical, and financial help if the gardening program at OFE is to continue. The OFE Growers is a non-profit organization with no funding from the school district.**

Let's all show our Falcon Pride by eliminating litter on campus and recycling as many items as we can. If everyone picks up one piece of litter daily the campus will shine! **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?