

Growers News for the Week of May 14, 2018

While the calendar says that it is spring, the days are really feeling like summer is upon us. That means the cool season crops are quickly giving way to the heat-loving plants. Cucumbers, squash, tomatoes, peppers, and tomatillos are turning up their production. Most of the red potatoes have been dug. So far that totals 116 pounds, with one more row to be dug. Students have pulled 29 pounds of onions with the main harvest still to come. Eighteen pounds of tomatoes have gone home with students, but we never know how many disappear before they are even weighed. They are a real temptation, especially the very sweet Sungold variety.

We grow sweet peppers in the main garden, but do grow some spicy ones in the orchard. The spicy ones are sent home in little bags marked hot. Some students have been tempted to pop those into their mouths in spite of the label on the bag. This leads to lots of water consumption by the students! The capsaicin in the peppers makes them taste hot to us. The burning sensation caused by consuming them is best alleviated by drinking milk or eating some butter. Fats neutralize the capsaicin, not water. Heat from a pepper will not harm you, but it might make you uncomfortable for a while.

If your student brings home tomatoes that appear not ripe, there is a reason for that. The fruits are often picked or pecked by other creatures, such as birds and squirrels, if we allow the fruits to ripen and turn red. Unripe tomatoes should be left on a kitchen counter to ripen, but never placed in the refrigerator. After a few days they will be just as good as if vine ripened.

Due to the cooler than normal spring, harvests have been slow this year, but with the heat we are experiencing now, we do expect large harvests the next few weeks. Enjoy!

Mrs. Krenek's students were given their gardening final exam, which is an open-book test. The students will have until this Thursday to turn in the test for grading. Ms. Warnack's classes will receive their exams this Thursday and turn them in on May 23.

A summer gardening letter was also sent home with students in the fifth and fourth grades. The summer garden keeps producing pretty much into the early part of July. Lots of work will also need to be done to keep weeds at bay and to ready the gardens for next season. Anyone wishing to help out with this should come to the gardens at 8:30 a.m. on any Thursday to garden with the Growers volunteers who will be there. After an hour's work, produce will be picked and divided up among those who helped that day. This is a great way to get some good organic produce for a bit of work. The excess produce and fruit from the summer gardens will be canned by the volunteers and sold to fund the gardens for another year. Anyone wishing to learn how to preserve produce, can join the volunteers on any given canning day. Send us your e-mail address and we will add you to the weekly gardening newsletter list.

The OFE Growers love volunteers! Now is the time for 4th 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, if you have questions. You can learn all 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.

On May 24th 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?