

This month we have harvested about 83 pounds of produce mostly grapes, okra, and yard long beans with diminishing amounts of summer squash, peppers, and lesser amounts of tomatoes. Maybe you've noticed that the garden has slowly been transitioning to a Texas summer garden as the tomatoes are more and more unable to set new fruit and so we are removing the plants from the garden beds, the cucumbers have already been removed from the orchard and the okra has not been a robust producer to date. The okra should begin to show off as it has almost every season that I've been at the gardens. It usually grows so tall you can't reach the tops to harvest the okra without a ladder. So we will be monitoring the two new beds in the main garden as they begin to produce and the long bed in the orchard. During the past week the rain and the winds caused the ground to soften and the wind blew some of the taller okra over. So you may notice that the okra has been tied up to its trellis in the orchard.

To provide produce for the students that come back to Oak Forest Elementary this fall, we have planted more yard long beans. As the temperatures of August wane, we will begin to plant cole crops and root crops to supplement the produce that will go home with the students.

School is expected to start on-line August 11th, with in-school special education commencing August 17th, followed by all in-school attendance August 24th. It is anticipated that we will not start to have students working in the gardens until September 3rd. That seems like a lot of time before we need to be involved. The activities we need to complete between now and then are going to push us I believe. For one thing, narrated ppt (power point) lessons will need to be completed and approved and on the website by then. Our manual will also need to be finalized and also on the website by that time. And the website itself will need to be checked in final form as well.

We need to work out how we will meet the needs of interacting with the 2 classes in the morning and 2 classes in the afternoon. For example, students will be using the garden tools, do we need to wipe them down before the next class uses them or do we show the students how to do it. We will need supplies and a place for this activity whatever the choice. Will the students be providing their own gloves (or will they be given gloves as their own for the school year) and how do we instruct them to deal with the gloves? What about the student that has forgotten his/her gloves, do we provide gloves and if so how do we deal with the gloves afterwards. None of this is rocket science but still it needs to be addressed.

Since the plan is to have two - ½ hour Thursday classes (~ 10 students/class) in the AM (9:30 – 10:30) and again in the PM (2:00 – 3:00), there will be a long period of inactivity between the two sessions. Who can or wants to stay and who can not do a whole day will need to be worked out and a schedule put in place.

On Friday, OFE Growers was invited to talk to the Oak Forest Elementary School faculty about this year's OFE Growers 5th grade math and science program and to take orders for the canned goods that have been made this season. A special thank you is extended to Brooke Smart for finding the time and setting up this meeting. Making our canned goods available to the school faculty and staff has always been rewarded with much enthusiasm as it was again this year. This support as well as the support of the community really helps OFE Growers to fund the innovation and the supplies necessary to make what we offer engaging and exciting to our 5th grade students.

While the store is open “so to speak”, we continue to restock the pantry with products that are made with in season garden veggies, such as jalapeno mustard and pickled okra. Thanks to Leslie, Phyllis, Lisa, and Eric for preparing an additional 38 half pint jars of jalapeno mustard for our “store”. Canning the juice from this year’s grapes is scheduled for this week or the next, I’m told.

Please remember, if you want a printed OFE Growers blouse, Kristi has offered to make printed OFE shirts for those of us that want one. The shirt is to be provided by yourself which means it will be the right size. Bring in your shirt with a name tag (to eliminate any mix up) along with the desired color of the design/print (see below). Kristi, thank you for such a gracious offer!



As always please stay safe,