

Growers News for the Week of October 30, 2017

It was another good sweet potato harvest for the students in Ms. Warnack's class. Due to early release, classes were squeezed into the morning. To top it off, a fire drill occurred during gardening. In spite of the time constraints, the annex garden was cleared of sweet potatoes. This week we will dig the ones growing in the orchard. Again we will dig only a quarter of the whole planting, saving the rest for next week. This allows most of the students to enjoy the actual harvest. It is after all, one of the most anticipated and fun harvests of their gardening career. We want to remind parents once again to allow the sweet potatoes to cure for at least two weeks at room temperature before use.

We will be welcoming Ms. Sanders back to the class. She will teach the class lesson on seed planting. As she recovers from knee surgery she will not be actively gardening with the students, but will teach some of the lessons. She has said that she really missed the students during her absence. She is the founder and backbone of our program, and she was sorely missed.

This lesson is apropos, as we are indeed seeding quite a few vegetables in the garden. Warm temperatures and dry conditions this fall have had a negative effect on germination rates of our cool season crops. For instance, the carrots were reseeded three times before we got effective germination. Unfortunately, on Saturday while checking the garden, volunteers noticed that the young carrots had been 'bulldozed' by some creature. Ah, the challenges in gardening never seem to end.

Radishes, eggplants, okra, beans, peppers, tomatoes, French sorrel, and of course sweet potatoes went home with the students last week. The harvests of the warm season crops are dwindling with the cooler weather and shorter days. Soon our cole crops will be harvestable. Citrus will be coming on soon as well. The Satsuma oranges are nearing maturity. They usually are the first of the oranges to ripen. Lemons will not be far behind.

This coming Saturday morning, several of the volunteers will meet at the school to move the benches and podium from the nature area to the annex garden area. This will become our new outdoor classroom. It will be named in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Sanders, who have contributed so much to this gardening program at OFE.

Do remember to save your pine needles, mulched leaves, and weed free newly mown grass clippings for us. Drop your bags on the east side of the school near the water tower. There is a sign there telling you where to drop them. We can also use your plastic grocery store shopping bags. They are used to send vegetables home with the students.

The OFE Growers are an all volunteer non-profit organization created specifically to fund and administer the gardens and nature programs at the school. Mrs. Krenek is our president. She envisioned this "hands-on" approach to learning science and math over 15 years ago. If you have questions or comments on the programs of the Growers, do talk with her or send her an e-mail at: deborah.krenek@humbleisd.net. You can also learn about the OFE Growers and see pictures of them in action by going to their web site at: www.ofegrowers.org. New pictures of this year's students in the gardens are available now by going to the web site and clicking on: photos from the classroom gardens. By clicking on news, you can follow what is happening in the gardens each week.

If you have not purchased fig jam from the orchard garden, we still have some available. This is our fundraiser to keep the gardens operating. Send a note to hoppergo@aol.com if you would like to obtain any of the preserves. Stocks are depleting quickly, so if you wish to purchase any as a holiday gift for grandparents or friends, order soon!