

We start this newsletter with some sad news. Past garden volunteer, Mrs. Karen Langridge, wife of Mr. Denton Langridge passed away last Saturday. We have missed her dearly during her battle with cancer and are deeply saddened by her passing. Husband, Denton, who is the webmaster of the Growers site, has our deepest sympathy and prayers.

Last week started the big sweet potato dig. Mrs. Smart's two classes dug 178 pounds of the tubers. Two teams wrestle the vines and tubers after volunteers loosen the soil with shovels. Students are always eager to pull the tubers out of the ground. The excitement is much akin to an Easter egg hunt.

Mrs. Harisis' and Mrs. Fortner's students will do the same this week. We hope that the rain holds off to allow us to finish the digging process. Mrs. Harisis' class will finish digging in the annex garden, while Mrs. Fortner's classes will dig the tubers in the orchard. We will again try to send home some sweet potato leaves in the student harvest bags. The leaves are very nutritious, and can be treated as you would use spinach. In most areas of the world where sweet potatoes are grown, the leaves are routinely used as an edible green. All the Mandarin oranges from the tree by the shed have been picked. This week we will harvest the Satsuma oranges in the orchard. These are a bit drier and not quite as sweet as the Mandarins, but peel very easily. If you don't see oranges in the harvest bags, it is because students often eat them before they ever get home. We would love to know how you use produce sent home with your fifth grader. In fact, Mrs. Smart's students are encouraged to send her photos of how they use the produce for a bit of extra credit.

Speaking of extra credit, have your students spend some time on the Growers website working exercise #3. Correct answers, with the steps used to obtain the answer, will garner extra credit for the students as well as hone their math and reasoning skills. Go to [www.ofegrowers.org](http://www.ofegrowers.org), then click on Fifth Grade Program, then click on Exercises. Use the Student Comment Form and fill out the required fields. In the comment section have your student show their work with the answer.

We have been busy planting seeds in the garden. Sugar snap peas are up and thriving. Lots of radish seed has been planted, including one bed where the sweet potatoes had been. Carrots are being planted by classroom, and lots of lettuce seed has been planted as well. Dill and cilantro have been seeded out and are growing nicely. Lots of parsley plants have also gone into the ground. Students also planted bunching onions from seed, which will go home as scallions later this year. Usually we plant onions from transplants, but since we were given many free seed packets by Kingwood Garden Center, it was decided to try them from seed. Among all the free seeds, were packets of seeds for microgreens. We're exploring ways to grow these with the students. Microgreens pack a fantastically nutritious punch when used raw in salads or smoothies.

Currently the students and volunteers are using bags of pine needles and leaves to mulch the gardens and trees. Some of it is also used in the compost bins to make our fabulous OFE Compost. If you mulch your leaves and bag them, even if it includes green grass, we would love to have it versus it being sent to the landfill. Drop your bags by the water tower in the east parking lot. Remember, students can't handle very heavy bags and we don't want them handling trash, so only clean materials, please. Send trash with the trash man! Also, no limbs or brush please. Last year we processed over 1000 bags of these materials back into the environment instead of the landfill. You can and should do the same in your yard.

Thank you for supporting the Growers during our preserve sale last Thursday. We were able to liquidate quite a few products. We do have some preserves left, should you still want to purchase some for gift giving or personal use. To assure you get some of what is left as a holiday gift, send an e-mail to [hoppergo@aol.com](mailto:hoppergo@aol.com) and we will reserve it for you. Go to the following link on the web site to find out what is still available. First come first served. [www.ofegrowers.org/produce-inventory.html](http://www.ofegrowers.org/produce-inventory.html).

Give us your feedback. We welcome your thoughts and contributions of any kind. We are a non-profit organization and rely on contributions to keep the gardening program going. [www.ofegrowers.org](http://www.ofegrowers.org)