

This past week again was sweet potato week in the gardens. Two teams from all three classes in Mrs. Fortner and Mrs. Harisis' classes spent their 30 minutes outside wrestling the vines and tubers after volunteers loosen the soil with shovels and potato forks. Students are always eager to pull the tubers out of the ground. The excitement is much akin to an Easter egg hunt.

There was also some excitement before classes as ABC13 TV was at the school to film a segment for the evening news. If you did not see this one minute segment, you may still be able to see it at this link:

https://abc13.com/5662633/?ex_cid=TA_KTRK_FB&utm_campaign=trueAnthem%3A+Trending+Content&utm_content=5dbb67a38021ed000132d8e4&utm_medium=trueAnthem&utm_source=facebook

Nice job Mrs. Smart.. If you ever decide to give up teaching, TV will certainly want to sign you up! And, how about the students who were interviewed? Really nice job, too.

Other than the sweet potatoes, the harvest was fairly modest. Some okra, peppers, and radishes were available in a few of the student take-home bags. Along with the herbs in many of the bags, sweet potato leaves were also sent home. These leaves are just as nutritious as the potatoes themselves. In many parts of the world this is a staple in the diet. They can be cooked much like spinach or eaten raw in a salad. We would love to hear from you as to how you used them, if you did. You can always leave comments on the website: www.ofegrowers.org.

There is never a rest for the garden beds. Already several of the beds where sweet potatoes were harvested by Mrs. Smart's classes have been reseeded by the students with radishes. The radishes will mature in January just in time for the beds to be planted with 1015 onion sets. Those will be harvested in May. Then sweet potatoes will likely go back into the beds making them three-crop pieces of real estate.

The "in class" lesson the next two weeks will be on composting. The students and the Growers collect lots of organic matter each year to make into compost. Much of it is also used as mulch in the gardens and around trees on campus. If you have never visited the compost operation next to the little red shed on the south side of the school, do stop and take a look. The sign on the outside shed wall tells all about what is "happening here". There is a similar composting operation in the orchard and between the two of them nearly two tons of compost are made each year. Compost is a great organic fertilizer for plants and a great soil conditioner. At the end of the next two weeks each 5th grader will be able to tell you the five ingredients needed to make compost. The amazing thing is that all the components are free!

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. No brush or bush or tree trimmings.

If you do walk by the shed after school or on weekends, you will note a short bed outside of the garden and south of the shed. Each year students plant oak trees from acorns. At the end of the year they are welcome to take a tree home to plant in their yard or wherever they wish. Last year there was a surplus. Some have been bumped up to a larger size pot. You are welcome to take one if you have a place to plant it. Occasionally other plants are placed there. They are always free! Help yourself, but first come first served. Right now, in addition to the oaks there is a pot of sugar cane and a young fig tree.

Any student wanting to earn extra credit, should 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, 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.

Thank you for supporting the Growers during our preserve sales this fall. 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 and we will reserve it

for you. Go to the following link on the web site to find out what is still available.
www.ofegrowers.org/produce-inventory.html. When it is gone, there will be no more until next fall!