

Composting is the current lesson being taught by Mr. Compost himself, a.k.a. Mr. Opperman. Having his Master Composting certification, he loves teaching this unit to the students. He reduces a complex subject down for them to understand. The importance of composting can't be over emphasized! Typically, the compost bins fed and tended by the students, yield somewhere around a ton of compost per school year. The smaller three-bin system located in the orchard has a smaller output. All the compost made is used to enrich the growing beds and to fill containers where plants are grown. All during the process, students are taught that this is the sustainable thing to do. Composting our green and brown plant wastes keeps the valuable resources from filling our landfills.

Mrs. Harisis' class and Mrs. Fortner's classes will have the opportunity to learn about composting this week. Activities in the gardens will include planting more radishes, lettuce and carrots. Turnips, spinach, some beets, more broccoli and cabbages will also be planted. Hopefully the freezing temperatures predicted for mid-week will not damage any of our winter crops. Of course, the summer crops are going away. More of the okra plants and peppers will be pulled out and cut up to feed the compost bins. Such is the life cycle of the garden.

More citrus will be harvested in the coming weeks. The Satsuma oranges were a disappointment as they turned out to be dry and rather tasteless. However, the little Mandarins and the Clementines that will be picked this week are juicy and sweet. More sweet potatoes will go home as well. These are mostly of the Murasaki variety with the reddish skin and white flesh. A slip will accompany these in the students' bags as to what to do with them.

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 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!