

## **Growers News for the Week of November 27, 2017**

We hope that the sweet potatoes harvested early in November made it to the Thanksgiving table of many a fifth grade student. We were so thankful for the wonderful harvest! And, we have been thankful for the wonderful fall weather. Our gardens are growing nicely and harvests have been good.

The focus of the classroom lesson this week will be the leafy greens, with a review of seed planting and transplanting those seedlings. As lettuce is one of our big leafy greens crop, the students will get to practice what they have learned in the classroom by transplanting lettuce seedlings into other beds and openings in the cement blocks around the beds.

In the week prior to the Thanksgiving break, the harvest included peppers, tomatoes, kale, basil, cilantro, parsley, sorrel, broccoli, radishes, lettuce, mustard greens, collards, beets, and some kumquats . The season is almost over for the tomatoes and peppers. The okra and basil plants were pulled out and sugar snap peas were planted in place of the okra. The sugar snap peas planted earlier in the place of the cucumbers are already starting to produce. Baring a heavy freeze this winter there should be snap peas until early spring.

The benches in the outdoor classroom were given a second coat of sealer by Mrs. Sanders and company. Two teams of students worked in the Monarch Watch beds pulling weeds and dead-heading flowers. Lots of excitement ensued when the students discovered monarch larvae and eggs on the plants. Gentle hands guided larvae back to the milkweed plants that still had leaves after some of the caterpillars had stripped the plants they were on bare.

Speaking of monarch butterflies, on Monday 50 adult, tagged monarchs were released in the front of the school to the delight of many students whose teachers brought them out for the launch. Mrs. McKinney takes the butterfly eggs and larvae from the plants at Oak Forest and raises them to adulthood at her home. This allows the butterflies a much better survival rate, safer from diseases and predators. After emerging from their chrysalides, the butterflies are tagged by her with a tiny paper tag affixed to their lower left wing. If they then migrate, they may be identified as ones that were raised here. The students were absolutely delighted at the sight of so many butterflies taking to the air. Many of them alighted on some of the students, to the students' utter amazement.

Volunteers worked this Thanksgiving Break to spread many bags of leaves and pine needles on our garden paths and to mulch the natural areas and trees. Do remember to save your pine needles, mulched leaves, and weed free newly mown grass clippings for us. You can drop your bags and any pumpkins that you still have on the east side of the school near the water tower where you see the 'Drop Here' sign. We can also use your plastic grocery store shopping bags. They are used to send vegetables home with the students.

The Growers still have a number of preserves left. A four pack in a cedar carrying case is an ideal gift for holiday gift giving. There is still a supply of fig jam, gingered fig jam, tomato salsa, pickles and a bit of pickle relish and green pepper jelly left. Remember that these donations go toward funding the fifth grade garden and to the upkeep of the pollinator beds and school trees. Ask Mrs. Krenek or e-mail Mrs. Sanders at: [josanders@verizon.net](mailto:josanders@verizon.net) if you can help us liquidate these delicious preserves.

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. Do talk to her or send her an e-mail at: [deborah.krenek@humbleisd.net](mailto:deborah.krenek@humbleisd.net), if you have questions. You can also learn about the OFE Growers and see pictures of the students in action in the gardens by going to their web site at: [www.ofegrowers.org](http://www.ofegrowers.org).