

It was a busy week in the gardens as the weather was perfect on Thursday. Mrs. Smart's classes got their hour of gardening last week. Lettuce, radishes, bok choy, kale, peppers, broccoli, and herbs were harvested in the main garden. In the orchard, citrus is now abundant. Each student was able to take a lemon home from the Meyer lemon tree next to the garden shed or from the trees in the orchard. Oranges and cumquats were also harvested and sent home.

Mr. Langridge taught the in-class lesson dealing with root crops. The lesson was well received by the students. Never has the lowly radish had such a spotlight shown on it. We learned that it isn't the outer rind of the radish, but chemicals between the outer and inner that combine to produce that "zingy" taste. We all learned something that none of us knew. Mr. Langridge was a chemist with a large corporation in his former life before becoming a volunteer gardener at Oak Forest. The volunteers and students always look forward to the science lessons when he presents them.

The students really liked the slide showing the multicolored carrots and asked if we could plant some. We have in the past planted maroon carrots and some of the teachers and staff always call them Aggie carrots.

In the gardens we planted lettuce, carrot, radish, turnip and beet seeds. If the weather stays as mild as it has been the past few weeks there should be more great harvests in the months ahead. The garden is really looking good right now. Do drop by over the Holiday break and take a walk around campus to see all the gardens and nature areas.

We appreciate the donated leaves and pine straw that have been dropped near the water tower at the back of the east parking lot. 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. We use these nutrient rich resources to mulch trees and garden plants and to make compost. 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. We have collected many pumpkins that were being discarded. They are on display in the main garden and will be used for seeds and compost in January.

Exercise #4 is still on the Growers web site. Several students have answered the quiz. A correct answer, with the steps used to obtain the answer, will garner extra credit for the student 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 show your work with the answer. While on the web site you might want to also look at all the gardening pictures that have been taken this year. Mr. Langridge has also put some readings on the site that you might find fun and entertaining.

Students are being reminded about the tradition at Oak Forest that started in 2004. Former 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Debbie Krenek, took up a collection from her class to buy a tree which they planted out in front of the school. Every year since, 5<sup>th</sup> graders have been collecting their pennies, dimes and quarters to plant another tree on campus. Each student is asked to earn \$3.00 as their contribution to this annual event. The long holiday vacation is an excellent time for students to rake leaves, babysit, or do other chores to earn their money. This year's tree will be planted in late January or early February. If you would like to learn more about the Arbor Day tradition and see a list of all trees planted as part of this tradition, go to the Growers web page (see above) and click on Arbor Day. It is always an exciting day with all students who donate for the tree helping in the planting exercise.