

OFE Newsletter for January 13, 2022

This week we concluded our discussion on soils. We made an important distinction between soils and dirt. Are they the same, soil and dirt? We also completed planting our onion sets. When do you think the onions will be ready to harvest? Can you recall how we can tell when the onions are ready to harvest? We also planted radishes, turnips, and lettuce in the main garden this week.

Next week we will discuss the different types of potatoes that we grow in our gardens. We have already been introduced to one type of potato that we grow because the growing of this potato takes two school years to plant, grow, and then harvest doesn't it? You should know which potato I'm talking about since we harvested this year's crop in October? Potatoes are an interesting crop as they come in different sizes, colors, and grow best at different times of the year. And in fact while we call them a potato, they are different families of plant! So why do we call them a potato? They are also a desirable crop because potatoes feed large populations of people. More about potatoes next week, but you can get a head start by looking in your manual, page 21, Take particular notice of the difference of this type of root crop than say the beet.

Finally I would like to talk a bit about the weather and the garden. Although we live in a subtropical climate, we still experience cold weather where the temperatures can go as low as the high teens and low 20's for a night or two and even occasionally for a day or two during the months of January and February. Because of this we need to keep watch on the long term weather forecasts and protect those plants that cannot tolerate such temperatures. An obvious fragile vegetable is the tomato even a low temperature for a couple of hours at night can be enough to kill this plant. At this time we are planting mostly greens such as collards, lettuce, turnips (a green and a root crop), and onions for instance, these vary in their ability to stand a cold night and so we may need to protect these plants from time to time., One way to do this is to avoid planting until the weather is perfect for the crop, another is to start the plants in a protected environment such as a green house or indoors and wait for the weather that accommodates your vegetable. Some plants don't transplant well such as carrots and while they can take pretty low temps for a short time you might be faced with having to protect them too. One way is to cover them with dry mulch such a dry leaves. Onions for instance can take cool weather but a freeze would kill our crop so here we use freeze cloths to keep the temporary cold from freezing the plants. So the message here is PLANNING.... We need to keep watch on the week's long term forecasts to be able to anticipate! And finally don't plant crops that can't accommodate the swings in our weather at this time of year.

And last but not least we need to ask for your help to provide the plastic grocery bags that we use to send home vegetables. Due to the emphasis on recycling and such, it would appear that many people are taking their plastic grocery bags back to the store for recycling. Because of that we are finding that we don't have enough grocery bags to send home with the students on Thursdays. So, if you have extra plastic grocery bags and are willing to donate them to OFE Growers we would very VERY much appreciate it.

Thank you and See you Thursday!