

This week we started to harvest the onions from the Annex, each student got to harvest an onion of their choice. The next week we will continue to harvest onions for the students to take home. We continue to be able to harvest lettuce, a few sugar snap peas, spinach, kale, and collards. The tomatoes are getting heavy with green tomatoes so we will soon have tomatoes to harvest as well. The white potatoes have not yet shown any signs of being ready to harvest, so we dug one potato plant up to see how they were progressing. From one plant we unearthed 1 pound of potatoes, one large and several medium and small. So the potatoes are coming and will be ready to harvest probably by the end of the month or our last two classes. So the yield will be greater than at this point and looks to be very good based on the appearance of the plants at this time.

We will complete the butterfly/butterfly garden lesson set this coming week after which there will be a week dedicated to STAAR testing before we meet again with the students for the last two weeks of gardening. During the last two weeks, we will work in the garden digging potatoes and also have treats to celebrate this academic year. These last two weeks are not meant to be unscripted / undisciplined. We need to complete garden tasks as well as to share in the enjoyment of a year "well done". This means a time to be serious and a time to have fun! Of the last couple of weeks, I've noticed a lack of focus by some when doing garden work. While being outside is fun, it is also a time to learn and a lack of focus means little desired learning is happening. While gardening seems like an entertainment exercise, it is in fact a serious adventure. For instance, we've learned in our pollination lesson that without our bees 1/3 of our garden crops would no longer be available, due to a lack of pollination, meaning a lot of foods we enjoy would no longer be on our tables, things like squash, and beans to name a few. See if you can name a few more. Hopefully in class you've learned about the yearly loss of a large number of animal and plant species that become extinct for a lot of reasons but mostly due to human behaviors such as pesticide and herbicide use. We talked about pest management in the class lesson - insects and IPM. We experienced unexpected climate variation in the form of drought during last summer and a longer than usual cold spell this spring. These events resulted in a loss of almost all of our citrus so no oranges or lemons for next few years. That is if new trees are planted. Also prolonged cool weather this spring is resulting in some of our crops being smaller in size due to less time for our crops to thrive. We believe that the figs, beans, and sugar snaps, are not doing as well this year than last do to the cold snap. Just to tie it all together, remember, I mentioned that the potatoes aren't quite ready yet. They were planted a week before the frost. Well last year we were harvesting our white potatoes in early May (5/7) and last year's 5th grade class harvested a total of 172 pounds of potatoes. This year we will be harvesting at the end of May and we are concerned that we may not meet the yield of last year even with the extra time.

I want to emphasize that it has been fun working with you all this year. The pandemic presented us with many challenges and we met those challenges and still had a great time. I hope you've learned a lot about gardening and have gained respect for the science of growing food and flowers! Both are important for our wellbeing, I hope you agree!