

So far this month, the garden has produced 404 lbs of assorted vegetables with 75 lbs just this past week. The garden has been coaxed to yield a total of 4217 lbs so far this year. The garden is beginning to show the switch over to summer conditions with the slow demise of the tomatoes. The squash is still producing as are the cucumbers which were the major producer this week with 36 lbs followed by the yard long beans at 8 lbs this week. Canning continued with the completion of the grapes this last week. This year's grapes are beginning to show some color so we should check and pick those that are ready as mustangs and muscadines are not specifically bunch grapes. So we need to pick them as they are ready. Grapes and figs usually ripen around the same time. Speaking of figs, after the heavy rain last week, we experience significant splitting of those figs that were ripe. They are so sweet that fermentation sets in quickly and can make a split fig unusable. We have some 2.5 gal zip lock bags in the red shed that should be used when picking the figs as they split easily when being picked. If they are clean and freshly split they are still good and should be placed in the bags along with the rest for processing. If when picking you place a ziplock bag opened in a small pail that will free your hands to pick the figs tenderly for preserving. Remember, picking figs is a sticky process and short sleeves and shorts will result in lots of itching while harvesting the figs. When you get back to the shed washing ones hands will relieve that annoyance.

As I've mentioned before our garden participation has been outstanding this year and with so many volunteers working together I feel I should mention that mask wearing needs to be followed especially since we are under red alert conditions. We have had a number of grounds keepers from the school visit us this last week. I don't want them to think we are not following the appropriate guidelines. Now that Houston is at capacity ICU beds, I think it is our responsibility to protect each other and ourselves by wearing a mask when we are milling about the shed area or in close contact in the gardens. Since they are not fun to wear, if working alone, one can take the mask down for easier breathing and less eye wear fogging. We will try to have extra masks at the shed in case you haven't one with you.

We need to continue the fertilization of the gardens this week. Okra that was planted in beds M15 and M16 need to be weeded and mulched with grass mulch. Harvesting of beans, cucumbers, eggplant, squash, and okra will need to be looked after and possibly if the weather continues to dry out watering may need to be done as well. I'm not sure whether the second cloud of sahara sand will be reaching us this week but if it makes you feel uneasy or you just don't want to be out in it that's fine and please just let us know.

This week, we will continue to work on the front areas along with the harvesting and watering. The red shed door area needs to be repaired and made ready for painting the sash and door itself. This week the following volunteers will be helping in the gardens per our schedule:

Tues 6/30 (Denton, Phyllis, and Sydney)

Thurs 7/02 (Denton, Phyllis, Annette, and Sydney)

Sat 7/04 (Hal and Denton)

As usual if you can't make it for some reason please let either Hal or Denton know and thank you all for your help and enthusiasm!

Sadly, the OFE volunteer party to be held at the home of Phyllis and Steve Bost had to be postponed. We will announce a new date and time with any other necessary information when we know. A hearty thanks goes to Phyllis and Steve for their hospitality and to all those that were involved in the preparation of this event. Thank you so much.

One last bit of business, we are looking to make a list of keys that are out to those of us that have one or many. With a complete listing we will try to make available keys to those that wish to have or need keys. If you have a key or keys could you please let me know, email is fine, stating the location and whether you think you need additional key(s). Our issue to date is access to the school grounds. I don't make any promises that the school will let us have more but we'll see.

Thanks and please stay safe!