

OFE Growers Newsletter for 10.28.2021

This week the 5th grade class harvested 277 pounds of sweet potatoes from the Annex gardens. Most of the harvested sweet potatoes were weighed, bagged, and sent home with the students. Newly harvested sweet potatoes need to be allowed to rest and cure for about 2 weeks allowing the plant sugars to be converted to carbohydrates before using. All the harvested sweet potatoes remained unwashed before taking them home as washing removes the protection afforded by the soil and bacterial layer that exists on the potato skins. If the potatoes stay moist they will become susceptible to bacterial decay. They need to be allowed to dry; so that the skins will harden and become a protective layer around the potato. If they are washed, once at home, it is important to put them in an area where the skins can dry to form this protective layer around the potato.

There are 35 pictures of the students harvesting sweet potatoes on the website(<https://www.ofegrowers.org/5th-grade-program.html>) as of this writing. This includes both morning and afternoon class periods,

Next week we will complete the lesson on Cole crops. We will also harvest the remaining sweet potatoes from the orchard garden area. As was done in last week's harvest this is a team of teams effort. We will need a vine composting team responsible for removing the vines and composting them, a harvesting team responsible for collecting the potatoes from the beds once the soil has been loosened by a volunteer digger, a weighing and transporting team responsible for weighing, bagging, and getting the potatoes to the classroom. It is a fun harvest; everyone will need their gloves, and be thinking of safety as there are a lot of different simultaneous activities in progress during the harvest.

Last year we harvested a total of 742 pounds 2 ounces of sweet potatoes from both the Annex and Orchard potato beds. The orchard potato area is nearly the same size as the Annex so I am expecting another bumper crop this week, hopefully, the weather will be cool and dry and good for harvesting.

See you all in the gardens!