

This Thursday we began our discussion on Onions and Garlic page 20 in our manual. The family that onions and garlic belong to (Amaryllidaceae) are really different than root crops in that the storage of carbohydrates is done in a structure (called a bulb) that is part of the stem where as root crops store their carbs as part of their root system. Both onions and garlic along with a number of others such as chives and leeks belong to the genus *Allium* which refers to a category of vegetables that are not only bulb producers (Amaryllidaceae - family) but also produce organo-sulfur compounds (*Allium* - genus) employed as part of their defense strategy against pests. Some European countries use these oils as organic pesticides. It is really fun see how plants have evolved protective strategies in support of their life cycles.

We also discussed a strategy for optimizing garden usage by starting plants in a nursery setting and then transplanting them in the garden at a suitable time for their maturation dictated by their intended use. We use this strategy for quite a few of the vegetables/fruit that we grow in our gardens. Can you name a few cases? How about tomatoes, we start them inside in late January or early February and then transplant them to the garden in early March. Not every vegetable can be handled in this manner though, take carrots, for instance, transplanting carrot seedlings results in deformed and retarded carrot growth. So gardening takes a lot of planning doesn't it?

In our garden this week we planted onion sets in 2 beds in the Annex, as well as smashed a lot of pumpkins. Can you remember why we smashed the pumpkins? One reason was to remove the seeds so that our compost won't be contaminated with pumpkin seeds. Another reason is that small pieces of pumpkin will result in ready-to-use compost faster than putting the whole pumpkin into the compost bins. Normally we will see the temperature in bin #1 go way up (possibly 150 degrees) due to increased microbial activity.

If you want to read about onions and garlic in our manual you can find the manual on our website and go to page 20. (https://www.ofegrowers.org/uploads/8/7/5/2/87524472/ofe_5th_grade_science_and_math_gardening_manual_2022_-_2023.pdf). The internet is also a rich resource when exploring onions and garlic.

We continue to take clean leaf/grass clippings and pine needles, if you are looking for a place to get rid of them. There is a sign at the big tree by the water tower (East parking lot) showing where to drop off the clippings or pine needles. We use them in the gardens and orchard so please feel free to drop off your bags at the drop off spot. Thank you,

Happy holidays,