

This week we began our lesson on composting including how to make compost tea. Compost tea is a foliar liquid fertilizer (a mixture applied to plant foliage). One of the experiments we will be doing this year is comparing our on-site compost tea with commercially available foliar fertilizers and organic solid fertilizers in our gardens. Compost is unique in that it is the recycling of those nutrients that our vegetable plants utilized when they were growing and so can be very specific to the needs of the next generation of vegetable plants to be grown.

We planted broccoli in bed M9, one side using compost tea and the other side of the bed using only solid fertilizer (6-2-4 microlife). We also planted a number of herbs, moved compost from bin2 to bin3 as well as harvested okra from the main garden beds M15 and M16. We keep notes on our activities during gardening and these notes are recorded in a spreadsheet called Garden Activity and kept on our website ofegrowers.org (<https://www.ofegrowers.org/garden-activity.html>). Scientists rely on good observations to draw conclusions when asking questions about say how much okra have we harvested so far? or are there any differences observed when compost tea is used when growing broccoli. This means we need to take notes and review every so often to see if we can offer evidence in support of a conclusion. Those notes are to be added to the bottom of the work sheets for the team that is doing the experimenting and will be added to the spreadsheet for later reference. During the course of this year there will be several experiments that we will run in the gardens regularly monitored by the team doing the experiment.

During the next couple of weeks we will be planting and taking care of garden while waiting for the veggies to grow and make a harvestable crop. So we are in the beginning stages of gardening aren't we. First we prepare the garden beds, then we plant, care for the plants, and finally start to harvest. Sometimes the plants take a long time to be ready to harvest such as sweet potatoes. You may have noticed them in the annex or orchard if you've been out there. These plants were put in the ground in May so that the potatoes could grow through the summer. Who planted them you might ask, well it was the class before you. But they planted them so that you could have a crop to harvest when the school year has started. If the summer conditions have been good and we planted by the end of May, then we can expect to harvest the sweet potatoes by early to mid-October. Radishes, on the other hand, grow quickly and within a month and a half of planting we may have radishes to harvest. If you look at the last page in your manual you will see a planting chart for the Lake Houston area. The chart has a wealth of information in it. For instance it can give you an idea of how quickly a particular seed will germinate (start to grow). It will also tell you how long from the time of planting it usually takes before you can harvest that vegetable/fruit. See if you can spot that information and figure out how many months it takes for sweet potatoes to be ready to dig? See if I was right about radishes?

Remember the manual is on our website so if you have a computer at home you can look it up ([https://www.ofegrowers.org/uploads/8/7/5/2/87524472/ofe\\_5th\\_grade\\_science\\_and\\_math\\_gardening\\_manual\\_for\\_2022\\_-\\_2023.pdf](https://www.ofegrowers.org/uploads/8/7/5/2/87524472/ofe_5th_grade_science_and_math_gardening_manual_for_2022_-_2023.pdf)).

I hope you all enjoyed gardening this week and we look forward to seeing you again soon.