

Firefly Scientists' Garden



Environmental Education at The Lemberg Children's Center

JUNE IN THE GARDEN

Staff Updates

We are so excited to introduce our new intern Christie! Christie is a Junior at Brandeis studying Sociology with concentrations in Legal Studies and Education Studies. She aspires to pursue a career in Social Work and Educational Policy. Christie enjoys spending time with family, musicals, and trying new food. She joins Athos and Sylvia in maintaining the garden and running garden lessons each week. Welcome, Christie!



Meet Christie!

Potato Cages

We started off the month by planting potato cages. In this lesson, we reviewed the different parts of a plant, and because the children were

well-versed, they recognized and could define the different parts on a diagram of a potato plant such as stems, roots, and leaves. In addition, we talked about how potatoes are not really the roots of plants, but are actually something different called tubers! We then layered the potato cages, starting by taking handfuls of compost to sprinkle on the ground. Then, the kids put sprouted potatoes in a circle at the edge of the cage. Finally, we sprinkled handfuls of hay on top, explaining that the hay kept the moisture in so the potatoes would continue to grow from their sprouts.



Sylvia handing out potatoes

Planting Sunflowers for The Pollinators

Summer is finally here and so are the wonderful plants we adore! We spent some time this month learning about how the plants in our garden grow. One of the most essential parts of this process is the help of our pollinators. We spent some time reading about pollinators and

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identifying a few that visit our garden often, like monarch butterflies, and a few that live far away in the rainforest, like chocolate midges!

We spent some time discussing how the fuzzy yellow stuff in the middle of flowers, pollen, is spread by different pollinators from plant to plant. This helps the plants to grow, and provides the pollinators with yummy food. To help our pollinator friends, we planted sunflower seeds. We watered them all together after we were done planting, and are excited to see them sprout!



Prepping a warm spot for the sunflower seeds



Tucking our seeds away

Making Worm Fertilizer



Working with Athos to collect worm castings

Together we read the story of *Ruby the Red Worm's Dirty Job* by Scott Stoll, which explained how worms make compost. The kids brainstormed different things worms could and couldn't eat, and we talked through different examples of good food for the worms.

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We fed the worms with weeds from the garden, paper shreadings, and other things the kids knew the worms enjoyed, like food scraps. Then, we mixed together the worm castings and water to create fertilizer, which the kids poured over the different plants in the raised beds and throughout the garden! The kids really enjoyed knowing that they were giving the plants nutrients and helping the plants grow.



Feeding the worms with Athos

Mint Hunt

This month we also looked at the distinct differences that the plants in our garden have. To do this we examined spearmint, peppermint, and lemon balm. The children shared their thoughts on what features help best identify these plants, like the smell or feel of the leaves, the shape of the stems, or the size of the roots.



Picking mint leaves with Sylvia

After chatting for some time. We gathered together and went on a mint exploration adventure. The children helped gather mint leaves, lemon balm, and wood sorrel to make tea in their classrooms. We all had so much fun learning about how these plants taste and smell, not only as we eat them, but also how they can flavor the water that we drink. Chants of "mint tea, mint tea!" were heard around the garden.

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Lemony wood sorrels = Yum!

All the children love hunting for plants like wood sorrel now, too. The plant, which looks quite similar to clover, tastes strongly of lemon. If you see a member of the garden team, let us know if you would like to try some!

Toddlers in the Garden

In the summers, our toddler classrooms continue to come to the garden, not only to sample some of the tasty plants growing in the space, but also for water-play! This month, the children decided all on their own that not only were the sprinklers for running and playing in, but also for watering the plants! Students collected water in watering cans and brought it around the garden. We love seeing them take ownership of the space, and their enthusiasm for caring for it!



Filling up watering cans with Christie

Animal Highlights

This month, we have also been excited to see a bird's nest under the gazebo out in the garden. The morning doves that live there are beautiful, tranquil creatures. See if you can find them the next time you are in the space!



Christie holds up some friends to peek at the birds!

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A closer look at the doves

Family Garden Day

On June 4th, families helped us to sew new grass seeds in the garden!



Prepping to plant grass

We have worked so hard together for the past year on transplanting kiwi vines and yucca plants. The patch of grass where those plants used to live was smoothed out and weeded, and we then sprinkled grass seeds and watered them heavily. The grass is already starting to

grow, and it is so much fun to watch the children enjoy the new space to run around. Parents also worked together to carry our heavy ficus trees outside, where they can enjoy the summer air along with the rest of us. Thank you so much for everyone's hard work! Our family garden days for the summer will be on **July 16th, August 6th, and August 27th from 9:30-11:30 am**. If you would like to participate or have any questions, feel free to contact Sylvia (skohnlevitt@brandeis.edu), the Environmental Education Associate Director.

Recipe Book

The Environmental Education team at Lemberg is starting a Lemberg Recipe Book in hopes to make our curriculum more inclusive and relatable to students! Our hope is that all Lemberg families will participate by submitting one recipe that can be made with some of the fruits and vegetables growing in the garden. The book would be distributed to all Lemberg families and integrated into the Environmental Education curriculum.

If you are a parent or family member of a student here at Lemberg, and your child would like to participate, please click [here](#) to fill out the form or visit <https://tinyurl.com/35rzs66>. This is a brief overview of the information we ask for in the form:

- 1 recipe per child- can be a family recipe, a dish from your family's culture(s), or something your child likes to make/eat at home!

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- Ideally, we want to make the recipe including ingredients from the Lemberg garden- so a dish that incorporates a fruit or vegetable would be great.
- Ideally nut-free so it can be made and/or eaten at Lemberg.
- A short sentence from your child on why they would like to include this recipe in the book.

Please fill out the form by July 31st, 2022 to participate– we hope to receive recipes from as many children and families as possible! If you have already sent in a recipe for your child earlier this spring, no need to do so again, we have received it!

Thank you, and please feel free to reach out to Hummingbirds Teaching Fellow Cassady Adams at cassadyadams@brandeis.edu or the Associate Director of Environmental Education Sylvia Kohn-Levitt at skohnlevitt@brandeis.edu with any questions.

STANLEY UPDATES

June brought some big changes in the Stanley Learning Garden. Thanks to the vision and determination of teacher Kimberly Cox, the biggest change has been the construction of a new garden shed. Mrs. Cox obtained a beautiful, large, second hand shed, and coordinated materials and volunteers to reconstruct it in the Stanley learning garden. The shed is set to be completed this month and

will provide essential storage space for tools and equipment needed to maintain the garden.



View of a new raised bed, with the shed under construction in the distance.

We have also added a new raised bed, and brought in additional compost. As the school year drew to a close, teachers, students, and the Lemberg garden team cleared out weeds and filled the beds with vegetables. The garden is now bursting with ready to harvest snow peas and kale, along with tomatoes, squash, peppers, eggplants, and so much more that are growing well and will soon be ready to eat.

We are looking forward to working with Stanley families on garden days throughout the summer.

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The Feinberg Family