

Firefly Scientists' Garden

Environmental Education at The Lemberg Children's Center

APRIL AND MAY IN THE GARDEN

Buds are bursting! Flowers are blooming! The smell of spring is in the air, and the sun is shining! The garden is overflowing with new energy and it's very exciting. We've been planting away and the spring season is truly underway.

LEARNING THIS MONTH

Log Hotel Bird Nest

All the preschool classrooms worked together to make an addition to our Fairy Garden - our very own human-sized bird's nest! Not only will this space provide us with a place for imaginary play, but it will also serve as a home for many different critters and creatures. We read *Log Hotel* and were reminded of how the decomposition of logs gives many opportunities for all sorts of animals to live and flourish!



Lang reads us the story.

After reading the story, we headed outside to gather various sticks and form a large bird nest. Everyone contributed, starting with three logs and piling other sticks on top. Each classroom added on to the previous classroom's work, so all three preschool classrooms worked together to create a beautiful nest.



We all worked together to build our nest.



So EGG-citing!

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Planting Peas

Spring is here, which means it's time to start planting outside. Peas are a wonderful way to start! They can be planted as soon as the ground thaws. In the classrooms, we read *A Seed Is Sleepy* by Dianna Hutts, reminding ourselves what seeds need to grow big and strong. The students asked questions such as why seeds grow and why some produce flowers and fruits.



We carefully covered up our seeds.

Outside, we prepared a garden bed and everyone planted a pea in the soil. Then, we watered the seeds to make sure they can sprout. We look forward to munching on some yummy peas in a few months!



We gave the seeds a drink.

Colorful Rocks

Rocks rock! For this lesson, we learned all about rocks and how they are so assorted. In the classrooms we read *A Rock Is Lively* by Dianna Hutts Aston. Before we began, the students told us what they knew about rocks— they are hard, some of them are made of sand and lava, while others have crystals inside.



Cassie read to us.

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After the book, we went outside to search for rocks in the garden! There were so many to choose from. Once we each selected our preferred rock, we painted them as we pleased. Some friends even hid theirs in the garden while others brought them home.



So many colors to choose from!

Potato Planting

Whether you call them potatoes or potaatoes... It's time to get planting!

We started the lesson by discussing all the yummy dishes we eat that are because of potatoes - french fries, mashed potatoes, roasted potatoes, potato chips, etc. Instead of reading a story this week, we showed a diagram of a potato plant and discussed the various parts that help the potato grow. We paid attention to the mother tuber, how a potato will grow. Rather than planting a seed, we plant a piece of a potato to grow more potatoes! After

our discussion, we went outside to the long garden to plant some potatoes.



Plop!

Inside chicken-wire cages, students poured soil, and each laid pieces of the mother tuber. The students then helped to fill the cages with more soil and layered hay on top to help retain moisture.



Hey, Hay!

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Finally, we watered the cages. We can't wait to harvest in the fall!

Vegetable Dance

There are so many delicious veggies and fruits! As the spring season brings us the beginning of natural abundance, we discussed our favorite fruits and vegetables. We then read *Eating the Alphabet* by Lois Ehlert. The students followed along by repeating the names of the vegetables and fruits shown in the book. Some were familiar and some were new to us, like vegetable marrow and Ugli fruit.

Afterward, we played a game of freeze dance where we danced to a silly vegetable song and when the music stopped, we froze and made our bodies resemble the shape of the different vegetables a teacher shouted out.



And, freeze!

Protecting Pollinators

With spring's warmth and sunshine, out come the pollinators! This week we focused on who pollinators are, why they are important, and how they help us. We read *Protect the Pollinators* by Rachael Rose Zoller and discussed the variety of pollinators (ants, wasps, flies, bees, bats, hummingbirds, butterflies, and, even in some places, lemurs!) and reviewed how pollinators carry pollen from flower to flower.

Outside, the Pathfinders planted some sunflower seeds for the pollinators.



"Come out, come out, wherever you are!"

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The Voyagers and Navigators went on a pollinator hunt - searching around the garden for any pollinators and drawing them as they were found. Pollinators really are the bees-knees!



The magnifying glasses helped us look closely.

Worm Fertilizer

With the plants in the ground, we have to make sure they are getting the sustenance they need to grow big and strong. Our worm farm provides a perfect way to fertilize them! We use their castings to make a nutrient-rich concoction.



We poked around in the worm bin.

We read *An Earthworm's Life* by John Himmelman and learned all about the life cycle of a worm, using our bodies to mimic aspects of the story. We discussed the different parts of a worm's body, naming the mouth, the tail, the segments, and the egg ring. Then, we went to our worm "factory" and looked through all the layers, searching for worms. When we made it to the bottom, we collected castings and placed them in a bucket. Afterward, we filled the bucket with water and used sticks to mix it up. With our completed recipe, we poured the fertilizer on our new plants. We hope they continue to grow well!

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Hello, worms!

A Heartfelt Goodbye

After being a part of the Garden team for over three years, it's time for me, Sarah, to bid farewell. After graduating from Brandeis University with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and Studio Art, I am leaving Massachusetts and pursuing an Americorps Service Year in the Western part of the United States.

It has been such a joyous experience to grow alongside the plants and the children. I will miss the Firefly Garden dearly, and all of the classrooms will have a special place in my heart. A core part of my college experience, Lemberg has seen me through my journey as a student and as I grow into adulthood. The children here bring me so much warmth and I learn every day I spend with them. I have loved cultivating and

caring for the garden space, seeing it through many seasons, and helping it flourish.

However, despite my sadness to leave, I am comforted as I know the garden will be in good hands this summer, maintained by Lang and a fantastic team of new interns.



We try to plant Sarah in the garden!

Thank you for everything.

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Family Garden Day



We work together to plant!

Thank you to everyone who joined us to officially ring in the season and wake up the garden beds at our first family garden day on April 6th! We had a blast and are so grateful to all the helping hands. Together, we removed our winter mulch and added fresh compost to all of our garden beds so they are all ready to be planted.



Planting new strawberry plants!

We are also so grateful for all the helpers who joined us for our second family garden day on May 11th. We worked together to plant dozens of new seedlings in the raised beds, the Pollinator Garden, the front entryway, and the Fairy Garden. Our next family garden day will be in June, so keep your eyes peeled for an email update.

Please reach out to Lang if you have any questions at langcheng@brandeis.edu.

Thank you to our many wonderful alumni donors and friends!

