

Firefly Scientists' Garden



Environmental Education at The Lemberg Children's Center

JULY IN THE GARDEN

Vegetable Planting and Harvesting

Despite the summer's unusually damp weather, most of the garden has been doing well this summer. Corn, beans, zucchini, fennel, garlic, peppers, carrots and more are maturing and fruiting prolifically. The cucumbers suffered from fungus and the tomatoes would really like more hot sunny weather.



Harvesting mint

Children learned how to harvest plants and got to use the garden as their own personal, organic grocery store. They brought home lettuce, herbs, garlic, and even some giant zucchinis.



Shopping for basil in the produce section

Grapes and blackberries have started to fruit but they still have a little time before they're ripe. Everyday the kids excitedly check on them to see if they're ready to be picked. In the meantime, they get to enjoy raspberries, if the squirrels don't get them first.

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Taste testing grapes

Native Wildflower Pollinator Garden

At Lemberg, we have our own native wildflower garden that attracts and feeds pollinators. Exploring our pollinator garden, we learned about the parts of flowers, what pollinators do, and why pollinators such as bees and butterflies are so important. Then, we drew pictures of the pollinators we saw. Now we're starting to notice pollinators all over the garden!



Exploring the pollinator garden

Leaf Prints

Kids learned about the importance of leaves and why they change colors. They found out that without leaves, trees wouldn't be able to make food.

Kids collected leaves in the garden, either on the ground or on bushes. Then they put leaves under their papers and colored over it. Presto, a leaf print was born! They designed their very own, rainbow colored trees.

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Voyagers drawing their own colorful trees

Kale Chips

What's the point of growing vegetables in a garden if you don't get to eat them? While the kids love picking vegetables after their garden activity, the best part is tasting the results after cooking with what they harvested.

An easy recipe to make is kale chips. A volunteer kale plant in the tomato bed had grown to the perfect size and was ready to be harvested. It was even bigger than some of the kids!

Kids helped to tear up the kale leaves, mix olive oil and salt on them, and lay them on a baking sheet. Then they were put in the oven and in no time we had plenty of kale chips for all our friends.



Tasting our fresh kale chips

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LEAF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

This summer, Lemberg is collaborating with Waltham Partnership for Youth to provide a summer internship experience for local youth to explore environmental activist career paths. This new youth development program, the Lemberg Environmental Action Force (LEAF), includes 9 paid interns from Waltham High School working on environmental stewardship projects with guidance from Janet, Sylvia, and Elyse. The LEAF interns have been helping to maintain the gardens at Lemberg and the Stanley Elementary School. They have also spent the past few weeks planting native species across two sites on the Brandeis campus to support local pollinator populations. They planted 600 seedlings in total!



One of the completed pollinator gardens at Brandeis

Our LEAF interns have been hard at work sanding, priming, and painting the raised beds in the Lemberg garden. There are beautiful scenes along each side of the beds, and they are excited for everyone to see their work!



LEAF interns painting our raised beds

The LEAF interns have been working in public spaces as well, such as their work in partnership with the Waltham Land Trust. Pedestrians walking along the Charles River watershed path are able to see more of the river now that the LEAF interns have cleared out a significant amount of invasive Japanese knotweed. The interns are very proud of the positive impact they've been able to make in several different spaces in Waltham! Community members have come to recognize their green T-shirts.



Interns removing Japanese knotweed.

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At Stanley Elementary School, the LEAF interns removed many bags full of invasive bittersweet, black swallow-wort, and tree of heaven, and planted creeping thyme to create a lovely, sweet-smelling path next to the raised beds. They also transplanted milkweed from the middle of the vegetable garden, where it was an unwanted volunteer, to create a new pollinator patch nearby.



Transplanting milkweed requires digging up as much of the root as possible!



Creating a new milkweed patch

The LEAF interns have done an amazing job, working hard to protect the environment and building a sense of community within their team cohort. As we garden, we have plenty of time to discuss and develop language for their plans and hopes for addressing the inequities they observe and experience in their own lives, which in many cases are intimately intertwined with the systems responsible for climate change. We are incredibly proud of how successful the program has been at both promoting environmental activism and in providing opportunities for Waltham youth to experience environmental science, while building workplace skills and gaining insights into future career possibilities.



The LEAF team

A huge thanks to the FS Foundation, who funded this vital youth training opportunity for budding environmentalists.

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A Monarch butterfly visits milkweed in the Stanley Garden

STANLEY SCHOOL UPDATES

Stanley continued to host family garden days this month. Even with some weather that was less than ideal, several families participated in both garden days. Rain or shine there was a great turnout!



Weeding the carrots

Families planted pole beans in the back of the beds so they could climb the fences. Kids also filled baggies with mint, lettuce and peppers to bring home. Who would have thought that the best party favor would be vegetables?

Students explored the garden in search of leaves to make leaf prints and plant collages. They used mint, cherry leaves, pinecones and more to create beautiful designs.



Using leaves to create art

Lastly, families were able to help with projects at the garden. There was lots of weeding to be done and everyone dove in, parents and kids alike. Hands were dirtied in the process, but that's part of the fun!

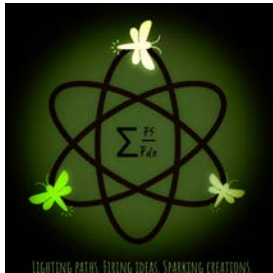
Thank you to all the families for your hard work and we hope to see you again!

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Thank you to our 2021 donors!



FS Foundation



The Feinberg Family