

# Firefly Scientists' Garden



Environmental Education at The Lemberg Children's Center

## INTERN INTRODUCTIONS

This month, two new interns have joined our team! Caroline Sturgeon and Sarah Eckstein Indik are both sophomores at Brandeis University.

Caroline is a teaching assistant for the Explorers and is excited to combine her love for nature with her passion for working with children. She has been exploring the California wilderness since she was a kid, and worked this summer as camp counselor, taking kids on backpacking trips through Yosemite. Caroline can't wait to help the kids have lots of positive experiences in nature!



Sarah is looking forward to working in the garden and inspiring inquisitive, nature-loving minds. She loves working outdoors and spending time with children, having farmed with a local produce initiative, served as an invasive species manager, worked as a camp counselor, and gardened for neighbors. Sarah is thrilled to spend time outside with the kids and foster a deep, loving connection to nature.

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## OCTOBER IN THE GARDEN

### Exploring Leaves

Given the season, we had a lesson this month about how and why leaves change color every Autumn. The students were really engrossed in the ideas of trees understanding and reacting to changes in the weather. As it gets cooler and days get shorter, our trees prepare for winter by shedding their leaves, exposing the beautifully warm colors "hiding" beneath the green chlorophyll that we see the rest of the year.



*"Look at all the leaves we found!"*

After our lesson, we gathered fallen leaves from around the garden and made prints from them, which highlighted their beautiful vascular structure.



*Hard at working making leaf prints*

### What's Under a Log

The kids had a great time trying to answer the question, "what's under a log?" They loved looking for bugs around the Fairy Garden, and working together to turn over the big logs felt especially fun.

The children did a great job of verbalizing if they would rather not touch the bugs, and friends stepped in to help hold them.

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*We all turned the log over together!*



*Slug slime was particularly fun to feel.*

Using magnifying glasses to observe organisms up close made the exploration feel extra special, and everyone did a great job of sharing materials. We found a lot of earthworms, which led to discussions about the difference between

these worms and the ones in our worm bin. We also saw lots of slugs and centipedes, as well as some fungi from all of the rain earlier this month!



*Our magnifying glasses helped us see up close.*

## Exploring Trees

This month we read *The Hugging Tree* by Jill Neimark, a book about how nature must be resilient just like us, and how humans can help support nature just as it supports us. We had a discussion about the importance of our role in giving back to trees because of all they give to us. Then, we walked around the garden to observe each of the trees that grow here, asking ourselves questions about their shape, size, texture, even smell! We also spent a lot of time thinking about how bark comes from trees.

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*Looking closely at our peach trees*

The children loved talking about how trees help us breathe, and as we walked around the garden, wanted to give the trees hugs, kisses, and gentle touches.



*"Can I give the tree a hug?"*

## Toddlers in the Garden

The Hummingbirds, Explorers, and Adventurers have all lent a helping hand this month, feeding our worms and helping to water and fertilize our garden. We used castings from our worm bin (that the toddlers help us feed every Friday!) and mixed it with water to make a potent fertilizer for our strawberry bed, as well as other plants around the garden.



*Taking turns with the fertilizer*

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*Collecting Marigolds to bring home*

We have also continued to explore the colors of fall through the leaves, as well as the beautiful Marigolds continuing to grow.

The kids absolutely love to feed the worms, so we carved a pumpkin together, looked at everything inside, and then fed the leftovers to the worms!



*Feeling the squishy insides of pumpkins!*

## Middle School Volunteers

This month, we had two different volunteer groups from Brandeis visit our garden. Language and Cultural Enrichment (LaCE) and Afternoon Enrichment are both student-led groups on Brandeis's campus that work with students from local middle schools, offering tutoring and mentorship.

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*Students harvesting arugula*

We invited them to visit our garden to see how we maintain it and incorporate environmental stewardship into our lessons with children. They did a great job lending a helping hand planting seeds, weeding, and watering. We are excited to have them visit us again in the Spring!



*Planting greens for the cold season*

## Family Garden Workday

We had another successful Gardening Workday this month! Volunteers helped us trim our kiwi vines to prepare for transplanting, which we intend to do at our next Family Workday. We also raked leaves and spread compost in the preschool playground. Children and their parents all lent a helping hand, and it is so appreciated!



*The raking was an activity for all ages!*

Thank you so much to all of the volunteers for your invaluable help in maintaining this space! If you would like to participate in the next Workday, it will be on November 6th! Feel free to contact Sylvia ([skohnlevitt@brandeis.edu](mailto:skohnlevitt@brandeis.edu)), the Environmental Education Associate Director, if you have any questions.

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## STANLEY SCHOOL UPDATES

October 15 marked family harvest day in the Stanley Elementary garden. It was our best attended garden day so far.

Enthusiastic children picked an abundance of eggplants, tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, beans, and radishes.



*A small sample of our harvest*



*Showing off some lettuce leaves*



*Reading a book about milkweed*

But it was more than just a harvest day. It was also a chance to explore the garden, read books about plants and insects, and plant new seeds.

*\*Wait! What? Planting on harvest day?\**

That's right! We planted seeds for basil, spinach, cilantro, and more. It's true that these are not winter vegetables, but they won't have to be cold tolerant to grow inside the Stanley library. Mrs. Cox and the students will look after the new seedlings in a grow rack which has special lights that allow the plants to grow well indoors even through the dark winter months.

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Filling up seedling trays with soil

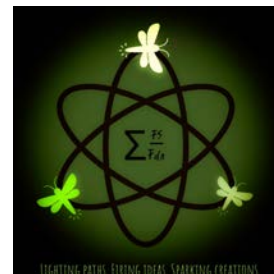


Carefully placing seeds in the holes



Mrs. Cox demonstrates use of the seed spacer.

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