

Firefly Scientists' Garden

Environmental Education at The Lemberg Children's Center

JULY IN THE GARDEN

July marks the beginning of the Summer Session here at Lemberg! During this month, some of the crops are almost ready to be gathered and we cannot wait to get harvesting. This month, the tomatoes, zucchini, and turnips are being picked. As a result of this, towards the end of the month and leaning into August, we will begin incorporating both harvesting and cooking activities into the lessons.

LEARNING THIS MONTH

All About the Deserts

During the first lesson of July, we decided to take our prior knowledge of plants and how they grow and incorporate it into a lesson about a habitat, the desert. Upcoming lessons will be about different habitats to further our understanding. The goal of this is to learn about the different locations where plants can grow and how they differ from what we see in New England.



"Look at its eyes!"

At the start of this lesson, we read "The Desert Book" by Kate Sowinski with the garden team. This book has a focus not only on the plants of the desert, but also many animals that lived there, portraying the entire ecosystem.

Afterwards, the kids had the opportunity to engage in a fun crafts activity! Similar to the classic hand-traced turkey, this lesson added a twist and allowed the children to make hand-traced cacti!

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All About the Swamps

The Garden Team decided to keep the theme about habitats going and thought swamps would be an amazing transition! This week, we read "Deep in the Swamp" by Donna M. Bateman and continued the lesson with a crafts activity. The book taught us about the various animals that live in swamps, such as otters, damselflies, and crawfish. We thought that the frogs and crocodiles pictured in the book were super cool!



We then utilized plastic pots to make and decorate our very own mushrooms! The mushrooms were made of plastic pots and saucers with velcro to keep them attached. We got to use any color we wanted to decorate our whimsical fungi. The Garden Team even walked around the garden to see real mushrooms! We loved seeing the mushrooms up close, but knew not to touch them as they were grown in the wild!

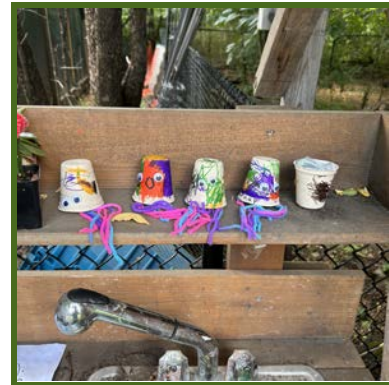


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All About the Oceans

In this third habitat-based lesson, the kids discovered the wonders of the oceans! We began by reminding them about the deserts and swamps we had previously explored, and then read "Life in the Sea" by María Rius. In our post-discussion, it was great to compare what we knew about the three habitats. The kids loved recognizing how the habitats were similar and different! We had a lot of questions for the Garden Team about the animals that live in the oceans; we were really curious about how mermaids live in the deep seas.



After sharing our thoughts on the book, we then went over to the bench to start an exciting activity. We got to make and design an octopus! With our own mini pots to decorate, as well as some silly googly eyes and pieces of yarn to look like legs, we were able to bring our octopi to life! We learned that an octopus has eight legs that help them swim.



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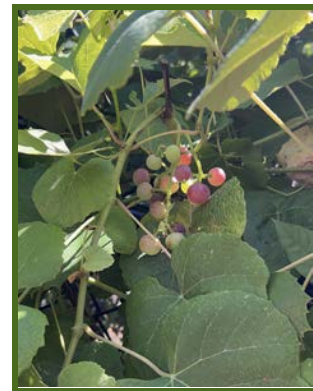
July Harvesting

Beginning the Harvest Season

Each week, we have begun harvesting with the kids as the plants become ready! We are so excited to begin cooking with these crops during our lessons in the coming weeks!



The blackberries beginning to ripen!



The grapes are turning purple!



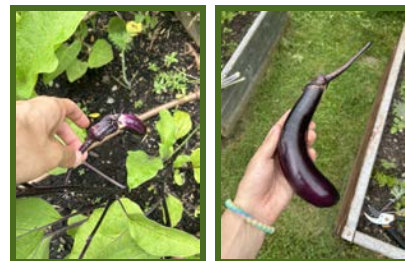
Kids helping with harvesting and weeding!



The first zucchini!



Enjoying a tasty cucumber snack!



Eggplant Growth!

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Stanley Elementary Update

With ample sunshine and rain, the Stanley Elementary garden has been thriving. Garlic, tomatoes, beets, radishes and more have all grown beautifully over the month of July, but so have the weeds. Fortunately, the Lemberg Environmental Action Force (LEAF) stepped up to help. These teens spent three July afternoons weeding the Stanley garden beds, removing invasive plants like bittersweet and tree of heaven from the garden area, planting tomatoes and cabbage, organizing the garden shed, and helping to install irrigation in the newest beds.



Putting together irrigation lines

July also saw the first Stanley family garden day of the summer. Several families stepped up to help Mrs. Cox with weeding, planting, and watering.

Turning over a new LEAF

Through collaboration with the Waltham Partnership for Youth, we welcomed nine high school interns to join the garden team for the summer! The LEAF interns have worked on different projects to encourage child exploration in the garden. They have built colorful bird feeders and wind chimes with both upcycled and natural materials, primed and painted the raised garden beds, weeded and removed invasive plants like tree of heaven, turned mint into mint tea and baked kale chips, and even facilitated a nature scavenger hunt.



Painting the raised beds

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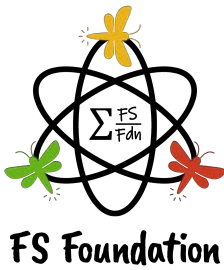
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Five senses scavenger hunt around the garden!



Adding some finishing touches on bird feeders made out of plastic jugs



Thank you to our many wonderful alumni donors and friends!