Goodnight, beans!

In February we did our first gardening activity with the kids! Since it was still too cold to garden outside, we brought a little of the garden inside. We first worked with the downstairs rooms and have now finished a similar gardening activity with the older kids upstairs.

In the Hummingbirds rooms, we brought two big pots of soil for the kids to dig around in. We helped them add water and then some beans before we put the pots in the sun to grow. Some were more interested than others, but they all helped clean up!

In the Explorer room, we gave each child their own little pot for planting. Everyone got to play with their own soil and pick out which beans they wanted to plant. Although it got a little messy, everyone loved the activity and we can’t wait for the beans to grow!

Bios:

Meghan O’Connell is our new Environmental Educator at the Lemberg Children’s Center. She works with Judy Fallows, who just became a recent grandmother to baby Chloe, and who now continues to work at Lemberg as an Environmental Advisor. Meghan first discovered her love for gardening while working as an after-school teacher in Watertown where she led the creation of an edible learning garden program. In 2015, she began work as a home gardener and promotes food growing wherever possible. Meghan is excited to continue the work that Judy Fallows started a few years ago with the amazing food forest garden that functions as both an agricultural and educational play space.

Haley Prudent is our new Environmental Intern at the Lemberg Center. She is currently a sophomore at Brandeis University, and is double majoring in Environmental Studies and Politics with a minor in Pre Law. Haley is a member of the Brandeis Women's Soccer Team and a part of the NCAA Student Athletic Advisory Committee. She plans to study abroad next year through the School of Field Studies to gain more experience in the field while also obtaining credits for her major. Haley is very excited to work with the kids and has a lot of ideas for projects to do, indoors and outdoors.

See you in the spring!  ~Haley Prudent & Meghan O’Connell
March 15, 2017

Since winter won’t give our garden a chance, Meghan and Haley found a way to bring the garden inside to the classrooms. Last week, they brought worm boxes into a few rooms for the children to observe. Four of the classes adopted their own mini worm compost bins. The children got to learn all about the worms and even touch them if they wanted to.

Worms need moisture to breathe (through their skin) so when the compost is feeling dry, we spray it with water. The children also feed the worms vegetable scraps provided by the teachers. So far we’ve only had one worm box fatality (RIP). It was a learning lesson and the replacement worms have been just fine. In the Explorers classroom, the kids gave the worms some ripped up paper towels and a few carrots for them to munch on. Overall, the kids and the worms seem to be happy!

Everyone has been very helpful and responsible with watering the beans that the children planted a few weeks ago. Many of them have now sprouted and are growing really tall! But because beans grow so tall, they need something to wrap around to support their stems. So, Meghan and Haley attached strings to the windows for the plants to twist around and support themselves with. Now the beans can be happy, too. We are all looking forward to when we finally start planting outside!

Until next time!
~ Meghan O’Connell & Haley Prudent
This month in the Lemberg garden, Meghan and Haley planned lots of fun activities planned for the kids to do outside with the warmer weather. Last week, they took some of the Navigators out to pick scallions. The scallions were then used to make an Asian-inspired noodle dish for everyone to eat during snack time the next day! The students also picked some of the newly bloomed flowers in the garden, and gave them to their friends.

Another activity the kids helped out with was the Forsythia Palace project. The Forsythia palace had not yet fully bloomed at the time, but the kids found branches with green buds to put in water containers and into the classrooms. The children then observed the buds over the next few days as they bloomed into beautiful yellow flowers!

The garden also has a few new plants that have started to sprout in the cold frames next to the playground. With help from the students, Meghan and Haley planted a variety of vegetables: Carrots, Lettuce, Onions, and Radishes are just a few of the seeds that are beginning to sprout in the cold frames. Along with the cold frames, the kids planted some strawberries in the garden bed next to the Forsythia palace. So many future snacks!

Until next time!
~ Meghan O’Connell & Haley Prudent
June 3, 2017

Hello to all Lemberg friends and families! My name is Minjee Lee and I am a rising junior at Brandeis University where I study Environmental Studies and Business and play on the Women’s Varsity Soccer team. Yesterday, I finished my first full week as a TA in the upstairs classrooms. In addition to lots of back rubbing, tiara making and table sanitizing, I also spent a lot of time in the Lemberg garden, which I am pleased to say I will be working in with Meghan this summer. As a newcomer, most of my projects and tasks revolved around getting to know the Lemberg garden and my hope is that all of you do too!

In a fenced area closest to the building, there are raised beds filled with an assortment of vegetables such as radishes, carrots, onions, parsley and lettuce. We also have three other beds framed with netting to keep hungry critters out. The two closest to the building hold kale, broccoli, garlic and lettuce while the third has strawberries (and some potatoes that stuck around from last year regrowing with our strawberries!)

Also in this eden is a variety of different types of trees such as apple, cherry, plum, peach and pear trees. Most of these are still too young to bear fruit, but all four of our peach trees have baby peaches growing that we will be able to harvest this summer!

Despite the cooler weather, my Lemberg friends and I managed to find many ways to spend time and learn in the garden the past two weeks. On one rainy day, my Voyager friends, Kian and Jack, found earthworms in the playground that they felt should be transferred to the garden where they wouldn’t dry out and instead would help the crops get the oxygen and nutrients they need. Another day, a group of friends and I were digging around one of the apple trees to make the land around it flat when we found a red-backed salamander! (We had to release its because it got scared.)

The highlight of this week might have been the hunt for caterpillars that have been happily eating all the leaves on our apple trees. While my Lemberg friends went up to the trees to pull the bugs right off and collect them in cups, I sprayed the leaves with a natural, homemade pesticide that I created using water, dish soap and canola oil, which I’m excited to say has been effective so far!

I look forward to the upcoming weeks in the garden and updating you with all that we will do!

~Minjee
Hello everyone,

My name is Laura Broffman, and I am joining Minjee this summer as an Environmental Education Intern in the lovely Lemberg Garden, as well as helping upstairs with the Voyagers and Navigators! I am a rising senior here at Brandeis University; I major in Environmental Studies and Sociology, and am captain of the Women’s Varsity Fencing Team. I am so excited to be working with all the kids in the garden this summer, we've already gotten so much accomplished in just the past three weeks!

For the Navigators and the Voyagers, a classroom staple is kale chips! The kids have been great at helping us pick and prepare them, and even better at eating them [all]. After washing them, we just massage a little bit of olive oil and salt into the leaves, before baking them into crispy chips. We’ve also experimented with some of the cilantro and dill we have growing next to the kale leaves. Cilantro was the perfect herb to mix in with some homemade guacamole, and then we used dill to mix into a tasty cucumber salad! (The guacamole was a much bigger hit than the cucumbers though…).

Now that summer is here, we’re able to start harvesting a lot of our produce, including raspberries, peaches, garlic, and onions. Minjee, Meghan and I just finished planting beautiful, tasty herbs in the new raised beds in the playground, and are looking forward to watching them grow throughout the summer.

I am currently working on a map of the garden, which will help everyone to identify the different produce and herbs we have growing. We hope that you and your families will take some time these next couple months to walk around the Lemberg garden, we want to share everything we’ve been working on. Enjoy the summer sunshine and all of the tasty fruits and veggies that are in season!

~ Laura
Hello Lemberg Families,

Summer is in full swing here in the Firefly Scientists’ Garden, where our many plants are growing taller by the minute! This past month was filled with lots of planting; our garden now has green beans, soy beans, corn, peppers, and eggplants, and a wide variety of herbs. The tomatoes are growing quickly, and will be ready to harvest within the next week or so, but we’ll have to wait a little bit longer for the corn, which should be ready in late August.

In addition to growing upwards, the garden has been expanding outwards, with one of our biggest changes being the newly enhanced woodland area, which lies behind sheds in the back of the garden. This new improvement can be credited to a leadership cohort from the local Running Brook day camp, which has been working in the Lemberg gardens since June. Last week, they installed a new fence surrounding the wooded nature spot and built a beautiful and safe path for the children to use. We are so happy and grateful to have such wonderful volunteers here this summer!

Other changes can be credited to our own Navigator and Voyager friends who were all eager to give a helping hand to Laura and me. Just a few weeks ago, they helped us plant green beans and soybeans in a raised bed right outside the playground. We brought the garden and the outdoors into the classroom as well with many activities. One that I particularly enjoyed was our seed study, which fit in seamlessly with the theme of seeds and growth that has characterized our garden this summer. The children and I learned a lot by studying various different seeds and putting them through the germination process, just on wet paper towels inside plastic baggies. Check out the bulletin board by the stairs to see more photos, sketches and notes about what we learned!

Another activity that Laura conducted involved our students making “bird-finders”. We used recycled toilet paper rolls, tape and string. The Navigators and Voyagers had a lot of fun making them, and they now have binoculars at Lemberg to help them look around the garden.

We have a lot of fun in store for the next few weeks, including some environmental storytime lessons and garden yoga. Make sure to tune in next month to hear about how we finish up the summer!

~ Minjee
August 2017

In this final month of summer, the Firefly Scientists’ Garden has continued to grow. This last month, we harvested even more than we did in July! We had massive eggplants, colorful peppers, tart blackberries (not quite ready yet!), sweet raspberries, and tasty herbs and unlimited amounts of green beans fresh off the vine.

We harvested so much that often times, we left crops in the main office for friends and families to take home. If you haven’t yet been able to enjoy any of these goodie bags, I encourage you to keep your eyes open for the next opportunity to take some of the garden home! Now that we are entering the colder seasons, many of our summer crops are gone but that only means we have space in our garden for autumn and winter appropriate crops! For example, we recently planted pumpkins around the large tree by the shed, and kale in the smaller square beds right outside the playground, both of which can last until winter. That is, if the bunnies don’t get them first!

With so much produce, cooking and baking is a wonderful way to incorporate the outdoors with indoor hands-on activities. Luckily, we have many teachers at Lemberg who used the garden to carry out these types of projects. During this past month, I can recall several days when I arrived at Lemberg to see the students happily munching on snacks they had made with garden ingredients. One day it was lemonade with garden mint. Another day it was popsicles made with garden berries and yet another time it was salsa made from our garden tomatoes. There were even some days that I would catch the children eating things straight out of the ground like my friend Kellen (right) who greeted me one day with a single leaf of swiss chard sticking out of his mouth. As fall approaches, we look forward to what our garden will bring! ~Minjee
September 2017

My name is Lilah Doris, and I am joining Minjee this fall as an Environmental Education Intern in the lovely Lemberg Garden, as well as helping upstairs with the Voyagers and Navigators! I am a senior here at Brandeis University; I major in Environmental Studies and Anthropology, and am a part of Waltham Group as well as a Mandel undergraduate fellow in Jewish education. I am so excited to be working with all the kids in the garden this summer, we’ve already gotten so much accomplished in just the first few weeks of the new school year!

Now that it is officially fall, we have been moving the last of our summer crops inside to use and enjoy for both snack time and cooking activities. We have a beautiful variety of peppers that we made into a yummy pepper salsa in the Navigators classroom. For that, we chopped up peppers, added salt, pepper, olive oil, and some corn that we had in the kitchen and roasted it all up for a simple, nutritious snack. We have also used our eggplants to make a baba ganouj-like spread! We combined eggplants roasted with olive oil, salt, and pepper, with Wow Butter, garlic, and a little bit of parsley and ate it spread on bread and crackers. Another day we harvested a giant broccoli head with a few students and ate that at snack time.

We’ve removed the tomatoes plants that have gone bad and Minjee and I recently planted radishes and spinach as fall crops to use in the coming months.

Something new we have in our garden is flint corn, sometimes called “Indian corn,” as it was grown by Native Americans who taught early colonists how to harvest it. When ready, it is going to be a nice purple color that we can use to decorate our classrooms for the season. While it is not edible, it is beautiful and fun to look at and play with. We opened and examined our first husk recently, and it was a big hit!

We invite you to come take a look at our garden and what we’ve been up to! Minjee and I also hard at work planning some environment and science based activities to share with the children so they can continue to connect and grow with our garden. We cannot wait to see what this school year has in store!

~ Lilah
October 2017

Hello to all our Lemberg friends and family!

With the academic semester in full motion, Lilah and I have been super busy, but luckily our time at Lemberg has only gotten better with each week. During October, we had the opportunity to start clearing out the garden for the winter with a bunch of harvesting activities. With the help of our students, we did a lot of hands-on work harvesting jeweled corn, broccoli, sweet potatoes, kale, green beans, soy beans, and the remaining peppers and raspberries.

It’s clear (and a little saddening) that the garden is no longer as full and colorful as it was before but on the bright side, this meant that we had a lot of cooking projects to carry out inside! One week, we harvested kale and seasoned it with light salt and olive oil to make kale chips. Some of you might remember that this is an activity that I did with the students during the spring: that’s because kale is a crop that likes cooler weather.

Another week, Lilah and Meghan worked with students in the garden to harvest sweet potatoes. These guys had been hiding underground for quite a while now and they were so much fun to dig up! After we laid them in a dry dark place to cure for a few days, Lilah, Meghan and I spent a morning washing and cutting them up into fries. Students seasoned them with salt, cumin, cinnamon and olive oil. They had fun smelling and tasting the spices! Then we put the fries into the oven at 425° for 30 minutes to make baked sweet potato fries for snack time. I have to say that this might have been my favorite cooking project that I have done at Lemberg so far!

One of the main crops this month was the jeweled corn, which as Lilah mentioned last month, is unfortunately not edible on the cob, though Native Americans used to grind it into flour. While we were not able to turn it into a cooking project, the children still had a great time harvesting it, looking at it, and counting all the beautifully colored kernels.

Lilah and I have used some of the open space to plant radishes and spinach, which we just covered with makeshift hoop houses to try to extend their growing time. The garden is slowly clearing out as we begin to prepare for winter. My hope is that as the days get colder, we find other ways to explore the fall and the outdoor space that we are so privileged to have!  ~Minjee
Lilah: It is unbelievable to think about how quick these past four months have passed! In the coming weeks I will be graduating and heading off to the working world. It has been such a joy working at Lemberg this past semester. It has been a pleasure getting to spend time with the kids while learning and exploring the garden together, and I’m so thankful I got to share my time with this wonderful community! Along with the kids, I have learned so much and had a ton of fun, and will be carrying this experience with me into my next chapter. While I will no longer be at Brandeis, I am confident that this garden will continue to be an integral part of daily life, learning, and playing at Lemberg.

Minjee: It is hard to just think about saying goodbye to all the special and unique staff, families and students that I have gotten to know over the past 6 months. I can sincerely say that being a part of this community has been such a meaningful experience (as well as a stress relief) that I will always remember. Luckily, I still have at least one year left at Brandeis so I will be in the area, using that time to continue my studies in the fields of Business and Environmental Studies (and hopefully start to set myself on a concrete life path). Although I will no longer be interning with Meghan, I am confident that the garden will only flourish more and I hope to remain a part of the Lemberg community as a TA and a friend!

~Lilah and Minjee
November 2017

Hello to all our Lemberg friends and family!

It is now definitely fall, and with the colder weather setting in, we have been getting the garden ready for the winter and have been moving our learning and exploring indoors.

As it got colder over the month, we spent a lot of time clearing out the garden for the coming months. We had fun working with the students to pull out plants (usually not what we encourage but a fun activity appropriate for the beginning of winter), move them to the compost pile, and dream about what we’re going to plant come springtime.

Even though the garden has been prepared for the winter and is no longer as colorful as it was a few months ago, the gardening doesn’t stop now. Luckily our kale is still growing thanks to our cold frame season extenders (designed to sit on top of and insulate beds while letting light through) meaning more yummy kale chips for the classes! We spent a lot of time last week harvesting the kale and we even found lots of little critters munching on some of the garden’s only remaining gems. More noticeable is our winter greenhouse which has recently been filled with soil that will host whatever we choose to plant in the spring.

We also took the gardening indoors this month. With Meghan’s guidance, we ran an indoor planting activity with the Voyagers, Navigators, Adventurers, and Explorers. With assistance from the students, we planted swiss chard, kale, lettuce, spinach, and arugula in containers that live on the classroom window sills and are taken care of by everyone.

In other news, this is the last time we will be writing these monthly newsletters to update you on the garden. As we head into finals week, our academic semesters are coming to a close and our internships will be ending soon. We are both really sad to say goodbye to Lemberg as the “garden people” and wanted to use this newsletter as an opportunity to individually say a few last words and let you know where we will be in 2018!