Happy Spring!
Hello to all my Lemberg friends and family! The last time I wrote to you all, I said farewell as I was approaching the end of my environmental internship. However I have extended my internship, which means that I will be around for just a bit longer!

Welcome our new Environmental Educators
This month, we are giving a warm welcome to our two new environmental educators. They have been so insightful thus far and we are excited to have them on board for the upcoming growing season. Keep reading to learn more about them in their own words!

Janet Fuchs: My name is Janet Fuchs. I’m the new Environmental Education Program Manager. I’ve been a PK-8 teacher for more than 30 years, focusing on experiential, thematic learning that promotes discovery, flexibility, critical thinking and a sense of agency. I have a similar approach to adult learning, and have facilitated workshops for teachers, homeowners and landscape professionals. As a Certified Sustainable Landscape Professional, I’ve worked with adults to design and install permaculture gardens and regenerative native landscapes. I’m excited to support the mission of the Firefly Scientists’ Community Garden at Lemberg and look forward to helping your children grow their appreciation for the wisdom of nature and the interconnections among all life.

Beth Lowe: Hello everyone, I’m Beth Lowe, the new Firefly Scientists’ Garden Project Manager. Many of you know me as Theo and Portia’s mom, but I am also a landscape designer with 14 years of experience running my own small gardening business. Prior to starting my business, I completed the Graduate Certificate in Landscape Design from the Landscape Institute of the Arnold Arboretum, where I learned to design functional outdoor spaces that draw on the beauty of the natural world, while enhancing local biodiversity, ecological stability, and human health. I used this education to inform my designs for clients over the years, particularly focusing on low maintenance native plantings. The opportunity to work at Lemberg opened up just as I made the decision to transition away from my business and onto new things. I look forward to drawing on my experience creating beautiful, sustainable residential landscapes, as I work to enhance our children’s play spaces with multisensory opportunities to interact with nature.

Indoor Fun
In the past few months, we have spent most of our time inside as the New England weather has prevented us from enjoying the garden. However, we have been making the most of this time with fun activities from making sun catchers to indoor planting.

One activity that was particularly fun was the toilet paper tube planting project. This idea was brought to us by Janet who taught us that recycled toilet paper tubes could be used as biodegradable pots that can eventually be directly transplanted outside. Both the upstairs and downstairs (Adventurers and Explorers) classrooms helped with this project and we now have a variety of seeds, from squash to corn to kale and beans, sprouting in each classroom!

Another thing we had fun doing was uncovering a few beds in the garden and finding that the kale that had been growing there had thrived throughout the winter. We took this opportunity to go out and harvest! I’m glad to say that this will be the first of many warm days and I can’t wait to tell you about all we have in store for the spring.
After several surprise snowstorms, Spring is here at last! Come check out the gardens and enjoy the sights, smells and sounds. Last week, Beth discovered a baby bunny nest in the Long Garden, so we have all been really careful not to disturb them.

**PARENT WORKDAYS:**  
**JOIN US IN THE GARDEN!**

Two Saturdays: May 5 and May 19  
from 9:30 to 11:30 am, weather permitting

Earn parent hours by planting, moving compost, cleaning up the playground, and more.

Email Beth with questions or to RSVP: belowe@brandeis.edu

**APRIL ACTIVITIES**

While it was still too cold to do much planting outdoors, weekly indoor explorations included comparing four types of soil; comparing, dissecting and sprouting seeds of various sizes; and understanding the functions of roots, stems and leaves through experiments and observations. We read companion books to go with each activity: *Dirt* by Steve Tomecek, *I Am A Seed* by Jean Marzollo, and *Plant Plumbing* by Susan Blackaby.

Out in the Firefly Scientists’ Garden and playground, Beth, Janet and the interns have been mending fences and hoses and getting the garden beds ready for planting.

In mid-April, we planted some cool weather crops: peas, lettuce, spinach, chard, radishes and potatoes. Kids helped move the spinach and chard from indoors to the outdoor beds. They made seed tapes on biodegradable paper to plant rows of lettuce and carrots. Late in the month, many small groups visited the greenhouse, where they learned how a greenhouse holds heat and protects plants from wind and cold. We learned that some vegetable plants need a lot of heat and humidity, while others thrive in cold weather. Voyagers and Navigators planted melons, cucumbers, zucchini and gourds in the greenhouse, and commented on the smell of hot, humid soil.

We planted flowers with the Creative Connections Campers during vacation week and had a volunteer workday on Saturday, April 21. Members of the Brandeis group *Symbiosis* and some parents dug strips in the grass on the hillside for planting wildflower seed balls. They filled up the raised beds with compost, spread compost in the Long Garden, swept sand in the upper playground, and improved the fencing in the back part of the garden. Thanks to everyone who participated.
Early Native Americans found that eating corn, beans, and squash together promoted health. Modern science shows they are all rich in vitamins, minerals, complex carbohydrates and essential fatty acids. When both are included in one’s diet, corn and beans contain a good balance of essential amino acids.

WORM COMPOSTING

We’ve added a multi-tiered worm bin composter to the gardens, and Judy Fallows provided the worms. The worms are happy in their new home, and we’ll be doing activities with the kids in May to learn about worm anatomy, what they eat, their behavior, and all the things worms do to help build fertile soil. The kids will help feed the worms, watch the decomposition process, collect the castings and spread this fabulous fertilizer on the vegetables growing in our garden.

COMING SOON

THREE SISTERS GARDEN

This year, we’ll be planting a “Three Sisters Garden”, a Native American tradition dating from 6,000 years ago. The three sisters, Corn, Beans and Squash, help each other grow. Tall, strong corn stalks provide support for the climbing bean vines; the beans’ roots collect nitrogen-fixing bacteria which pull nitrogen out of the air to nourish all three plants; the broad leaves of the squash vines provide shade around all of the roots, acting as a living mulch to suppress weeds and hold moisture in the soil. Bean leaves have small, prickly hairs which trap insect pests, and the spiny vines and leaves of squash help keep animals from eating the corn.

BENEFITS OF GARDEN EDUCATION

Garden experiences are beneficial in so many ways. When kids grow their own food, they become more adventurous eaters who love vegetables. Our visitors are often surprised that the children love kale and spinach. Sensory exploration in nature relieves stress and fosters appreciation for interconnectedness.
The days are long, and the weather is hot! A perfect time to come to the garden and see what we’ve got!

**OUR NEW SUMMER INTERNS**

We’re excited to have Mennen Gordon and Viriya Vilavongsa on board as summer interns. Mennen studies Film and German. She has worked in the Lemberg toddler classrooms in the past. Viriya, known as “We”, is a graduate student at the Heller School. They’ve both been working long hours and now our garden is in great shape.

**COMING SOON**

Running Brook Camp Buddies at Lemberg

From June 26 through mid-August, Navigators and Voyagers will have the opportunity to participate in a collaboration with middle-school campers from the Running Brook Camp Leadership Program in Waltham. Jonathan Rabinowitz, a Wellesley school teacher, is bringing campers who are especially interested in developing skills necessary to work with young children. The shared goal for Lemberg and Running Brook is for cross-age interactions that expand the social/emotional growth of both age groups through activities that provide age-appropriate, experiential, interactive and nature-based engagement.

The Lemberg kids who participate will be paired up with a middle-school buddy, and under supervision of Janet, Beth, Jonathan and the interns, they will share activities in the garden on Tuesday mornings. Some of the activities we have planned are: a scavenger hunt, building scarecrows, harvesting garden produce, preparing interesting recipes with raw ingredients and decorating the garden fences.

If you would like your child to participate in these learning experiences, please let the classroom teachers know.
MAY/JUNE ACTIVITIES

Garden to Table

The kids have been eating so many delicious things from the garden! Our pea plants have been growing well, so we can pick them to snack on when we’re in the playground. Above our heads, grapes are growing on their vines. They’re tiny now, but they’ll be ready to snack on late in the summer.

We harvested many different things for Lulu’s Lemberg Cafe: peas, small carrots, a spicy green called mizuna, garlic chives, swiss chard, butter lettuce and flowers for the tables. The kids learned how to harvest gently so the plants will keep growing.

Kale Harvest and Kale Chips

Do you like kale? “Yes, I love it,” answer the children at Lemberg. On several occasions, the kids picked kale in the Apple Tree Garden. We had plenty for kale chips although the kids ate quite a bit as we picked it. The yellow kale flowers are yummy and taste like broccoli!

Three Sisters’ Garden

The Three Sisters’ Garden is growing. Navigators and Voyagers planted squash and corn seedlings and pole beans from seed in the Long Garden. The kids understand the advantages of growing these three plants together and they recognize the seeds and leaves of all three plants. They learned how to transplant young seedlings by digging the soil, handling the roots carefully, covering the root systems and watering.
What’s Under There?

We’ve been exploring a whole world right under our feet. After reading *A Log’s Life* by Wendy Pfeffer, *Winnie Finn, Worm Farmer* by Carol Brendler, and *Wonderful Worms* by Linda Glaser, we went out into the garden and playgrounds to turn over logs and rocks to see what we could find. We saw pill bugs, sow bugs, centipedes and millipedes, ants, spiders, and even fungi. The kids examined their discoveries with magnifying glasses and treated all the creatures carefully and respectfully. They now understand the life cycle of a tree, and how a log goes on and on providing food, shelter and fertilizer for a multitude of organisms, including baby trees.

The best place to see worms is in our worm composting bin, where the red wiggler worms eat and turn the plants we give them into healthy soil. The children learned to recognize mature worms, baby worms, pregnant worms and worm eggs, and understand how they make healthy soil. They know the worms like quiet and darkness, and approach them with care.
THANK YOU!

We’d like to extend a big thank you to all of the families who have helped us in the gardens in April and May.

With your help, we’ve spread a mountain of compost, planted a new flower bed in the lower playground, pulled weeds, planted cucumbers, herbs, and more, and organized our shed!

We are looking forward to a fun and educational summer with the Lemberg community!