LOTS OF FUN INDOORS

*Just because it’s cold and gray doesn’t mean we can’t have lots of life and color around!*

**Worm Observations**

Our indoor worm bin is always a fun place to get your hands dirty and drop off some food scraps. Recently some of our worms made a trip into the classroom to stay in a Worm Hotel constructed by the students. Not only does it have great amenities for the worms (carrots, rocks, and cardboard!), but the kids can visit them any time from the comfort of their classroom.

*Students move worms from the worm compost bin into the hotel.*

**Mushroom Exploration**

Mushrooms are tasty to eat but what exactly are they and how do they grow? Together we read a book about the life cycle of a mushroom, and then explored what was learned by dissecting mushrooms and observing their gills with magnifying glasses. Using a big portobello mushroom, we made a beautiful print of the spores inside. There are so many parts to a mushroom! It’s not quite a plant since it doesn’t use the sun to make food, but it’s not an animal either. Fungi are their own special beings that feed on dead plants and grow vast underground networks that help both plants and animals.

*Studying the mushrooms’ gills*

*Mushrooms taste great, too!*

Written by the Environmental Education Team
Window Boxes

The toddler classrooms had a lot of fun getting messy while creating a window plant box for their classroom. They planted baby beans from an earlier sprouting activity, as well as kale, cilantro, and basil seeds. Once the greens come up they’ll make a quick and tasty snack right from the window box.

Bug Hunt

We had an indoor bug scavenger hunt to prepare for the real thing as temperatures start to rise outside. Kids worked together to search for hidden pictures of bugs that we might find outside in the garden (worms, butterflies, snails, earwigs, etc.) We then regrouped to discuss the characteristics of each bug; is it long or short? Does it have legs? Wings? Is it slimy? What color is it? By the time it’s warm enough for the bugs to come out and play, our preschoolers will be bug identification experts.

Plant Based Dye

This month we started a three week long project of making our own colorful dyes with plants. Using carrots, spinach, celery, beets, cabbage, and avocado skins and pits, we filled jars with vegetables and water,
heating them up in the sun to draw out the pigment. Now that the dye is ready, we’re patiently waiting for the fabric we placed in the jars to soak up the colorful stuff. The next step will be stamping the fabric with more vegetables!

HELP FROM SYMBIOSIS

A group of Brandeis student volunteers from Symbiosis generously offered a Saturday morning this month to give our greenhouse some much needed enhancements. We can’t thank them enough for all their hard work.

Filling up our jars with colorful veggies.

A new floor and shelves for the greenhouse.

Straining the liquid one week later.

Symbiosis at work.

Written by the Environmental Education Team
THANK YOU TO OUR PARENT VOLUNTEERS

Many thanks to our parent volunteers who joined us for the first garden work day of spring. We picked up trash and debris, cut back plants, swept sand, removed an old fence, and more!

JOIN US IN THE GARDEN

Saturdays: April 6 & April 27, 9:30 to 11:30 am
Weather permitting, earn parent hours helping with garden and playground projects.
Email Beth with questions or to RSVP: belowe@brandeis.edu

ENVIRONMENTAL TIPS FOR PARENTS: KNOW YOUR HOUSEPLANTS

We love houseplants, and they’re great for improving indoor air quality. With children and pets around, it’s a good idea to know which plants can be toxic if eaten or touched. Here are some common houseplants to be careful with. If you want to grow them, place them in safe spots where pets and children can’t reach them. Source: https://dengarden.com/gardening/Dangerous-Beauty-Twenty-Toxic-Houseplants-to-Avoid-Around-Children-and-Pets

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</table>
FIREFLY SCIENTISTS' GARDEN

A feature of the Firefly Scientists’ Community Playground and Garden at Lemberg

Written by the Environmental Education Team