



KIDS IN BLOOM

NEWSLETTER

School Year 2009-2010

January, 2010

Program Coordinator
Nancy Pappas
azop@gvtc.com

Assistant Coordinator
Lee Franzel
leefranzel@gvtc.com

Newsletter Editor
Linda D. Valdez
ldvaldez@satx.rr.com

(Note: Photos should be submitted in their original form to the newsletter editor)

**Date for January Workshop Set:
Saturday, January 30, 2010
9:00 a.m. - Noon**

3 FREE CPEs

Creative, Engaging Ideas
for the Classroom

Answers to Your Garden Queries

Opportunities to Network with Colleagues

Delicious Snacks

These are all reasons to come to the
teacher workshop.

If you choose to participate in the **KIDS IN BLOOM** program, Comal County Master Gardeners can assist you with your gardens. Seeds, plants and an informative garden notebook are also available. The **KIDS IN BLOOM** program provides hands-on opportunities to incorporate science, social studies, and language arts into your curriculum. Gardens can spark the interest of some of the most reluctant students.

Rules and Tools for January

1. Look to see what needs to be moved, replaced or placed in a different location.
2. Work on existing beds: work the soil, add humus and fertilize, then allow beds to settle.
3. January is the best time to plant bare-root or container-grown fruit and nut trees as well as grapes and roses.
4. In your flower garden, this is the time to plant bluebonnet, dianthus, pansy, and snapdragon transplants. Dusty Miller can be set out now; with its silvery leaves, the garden will resemble snow. Sow seeds in flats for your vegetable and flower garden now.
5. On those warmer winter days, the gardener can clean and sharpen the garden tools, mowing equipment, and pruning equipment.
6. While deciduous trees are now in their dormant state, it is the right time for pruning. Trees should be pruned back to their natural shape removing any limbs that might be brushing walls or are broken. Never prune the tops of the trees - crape myrtles included.

Arlon R. Seay Elementary School Spring Branch, TX



Wendy Clark and Master Gardener, Lee Franzel Standing in the green house. College students are in the background.

On Saturday, October 17th, a group of teachers, and a college youth group along with many parents worked hard to beautify the greenhouse. These groups of special people were led by Master Gardener, Lee Franzel, and the kinder teachers at Arlon Seay. The kinder team received the greenhouse by writing a grant to the Comal Education Foundation last spring. It was built this summer. The pastor from the Crossings in Kyle, Marty Mosher, volunteered a college youth group that helped landscape, shovel dirt and gravel.

It was wonderful to see the parents working side by side to help make this experience as beneficial for the children as possible.

If anyone has used potting flats or pots to donate we sure would appreciate it.

Wendy Clark
Kinder Room # 501
x 8744
Arlon R. Seay Elementary

FEATURED SCHOOL

Oak Run Middle School

Article by Middle School Teacher, Mr. David Heefner

A year ago last September, we began our agricultural experience. Through grants from the PTA, Grow a Fruit Tree Foundation, American Seed Foundation, the Plant Haus, Henzel Rental, and a lot of help from students, staff, parents, Master Gardeners, the community, and **KIDS IN BLOOM**, we built a garden area, it was planted three times, and cared for with a 35 fruit tree orchard. We grew over 300 heirloom tomatoes from seed into plants which we sold at The Plant Haus.

The garden took about 4 weeks to build. Unexpected issues developed during the year. We had some major problems with water running off the roof, which caused us to build a French drain around two sides of the garden. The first crop went in and got harvested just before the holidays with no problems. All the students enjoyed a wonderful holiday party of garden greens, carrots, radishes, and spinach. Mustard greens were not a hit. Many students made comments about the fact that they never knew where or how "garden stuff" (produce) grows. We were not so fortunate the second harvest. The deer discovered the garden. They sampled pretty much everything we had, which was just enough to destroy what we had. We got smart after that and put up a deer fence around the garden. We have two beds devoted to herbs which we did not fence in. It turns out deer do not like fennel, mint, basil, or rosemary - at least the deer around here.



Students laying out the square foot garden



Students working in the garden



In early spring we turned our attention to putting in an orchard. The plan was to plant 5 trees of the following: plum, peach, tangerine, pear, apple, pomegranate, and one fig. There were many problems we had to face. The worse problem that we faced was the day I found out I was expected to get the holes for the trees pre-dug before the foundation folks showed up to help plant the trees. So, I in my ignorance of the soil makeup, I took a class, shovels and picks to the area with the full intention of digging 35 holes. When the students tried to dig into the dirt, the shovels ricocheted off like a bullet bouncing off a metal plate.

The kids thought maybe the pick would work better. Three swings of the pick and the handle broke. I was now three weeks away from planting day and no idea what to do. I found out that one of the students' dad happened to be an equipment operator. The dad told me he would dig the holes if I could get my hands on a Bobcat with a drill bit. Many calls later, Henzel's Rental offered to help me. She asked me, "How much money did I have to work with? I told her, "None". My grant money was all gone. She made a great offer to me and so we started drilling holes only to find out there are rocks the size New York City just under the surface. The bobcat was traded in for an excavator. It took two weekends to get those holes dug.



Digging holes for the orchard.

On the day of the planting we had over 30 student, staff, relatives, and parent volunteers along with four folks from the Grow a Fruit Tree Foundation.



Students and adult planting the orchard.



This picture shows the first planting coming in for harvest.

The garden was planted in the spring with gourds and sunflowers. They required watering every 3 days all summer long, but they sure turned out real nice. The garden has a new crop growing in it, just planted two weeks ago. It is doing fine. We planned to build a ten by ten PVC green house by the end of December with the help of a grant. See a photo of the green house on the next page.

The orchard is just amazing. The trunks have more than doubled in less than a year. We had fruit this spring and summer even though we planted those trees in February.

We added four grape plants which grew grapes, but did not taste all that well.

We also hauled in 13 dump trailer loads of mulch from the recycle center and covered the entire orchard with 6 to 10 inches of mulch.



It has been fun watching the myriad of plants that have grown up out that mulch from wild watermelons to palm trees. The kids love to just go up to the orchard and simply walk through it. Their whole demeanor changes when they do. They'll start playing a tag and start asking the trees questions. There is something about an orchard that is just plain spiritual.



Deer fence mesh surrounds the orchard



In the month of December, 2009, during the Christmas break, and under the direction of Science school teacher, Dave Heefner, the green house was erected. Master Gardeners Theresa Frasch, Don Tuff, Germaine Tuff, and on site Master Gardener, Haskell Hart helped erect the PVC style green house.

Out of the Spout

Understand how water moves through different soil textures
(From Chapter 2 JMG Soils and Water)

Activity

Cut spouts from each 2-liter bottle. Have the students invert the spouts over the jars to serve as funnels. Take the group outside to find differing soil types (a well-draining and a poorly draining soil are needed). Fill each spout with a different soil type. Have the students slowly pour 1 cup of water into each funnel, record how long it takes to start and finish draining, and measure the amount of water that has drained into the jar.

Lesson

Explain how water movement through the soil is important to a plants' health. Soil that prevents water from traveling through it and soil that allows water to travel too quickly are unhealthy for most plants. Have the children evaluate which of the three soils they think is best. Remind them that organic matter helps water move faster through a poorly drained soil and helps it move more slowly in soil that drains too fast.

