

KIDS IN BLOOM NEWSLETTER

School Year 2009-2010

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Kids In Bloom is a 12 week vegetable gardening program designed to help every teacher include an aspect of gardening into their classroom instruction. Comal Master Gardeners are honored to support those efforts through hosting KIB workshops, acting as mentors and advisors and gathering resources and information for local area teachers.

Kick off for the **KIDS IN BLOOM** program was on Saturday, August 29th at the Comal AgriLife Extension Office. Coordinator, Nancy Pappas, began the morning with an introduction of teachers, and Master Gardeners present as well as County Extension Agent 4-H & Youth Development Co-coordinator, Summer Steinbach.



Summer Steinbach demonstrating
Secret smells game

Secret Smells Game

Objective: Discover how insects use pheromones to communicate.

Time: 30-45 minutes (or less)

Materials: opaque jars (like film canisters), cotton balls, variety of scents.

People are so accustomed to talking it may be difficult for your gardeners to imagine using scents instead of language to identify and recognize each other. Illustrate this concept by playing the Secret Smells Game. Prepare the jars with a cotton ball dipped in a scent. Have 2-5 of each scent, and then mix them up.

Tell your gardeners they are going to be insects. Their mission is to search out their partner insect using only their sense of smell-NO TALKING- Each student takes one canister, going to person to person comparing smells trying to group themselves by scents in the canisters. Discuss results.

Nancy reported that it is important for gardens to be weed free and the soil to be enriched with compost and fertilizers. Other topics covered included Worm Composting (vermiculture), resources available, plant propagation and Square Foot Gardening. Additionally a number of hands on activities for students were demonstrated including Grow Cards, Secret Scent Game and Know & Show Sombreros. All activities were adapted from the Junior Master Gardener Program.



Theresa Frasch

Worm Composting

(Vermiculture): Master Gardener and RavenStar (www.ravenstaroutdoors.org) curriculum director, Theresa Frasch, discussed nurturing the gardens by promoting healthy soils which could be enriched with worm castings. Creating a worm composting bin in your classroom can be a fun and easy way to demonstrate composting with your students. Contact a Master Gardener representative for more information.

Resources for Teachers.

Teachers were advised to speak with their principals and PTA. Another great idea is to send a letter home with your students letting parents know about the gardening program you are creating. This is an opportunity to ask for donations of materials, like garden gloves or plants and to encourage parent involvement.

Other resources include:

- ❖ Boy Scouts in need of projects for their Eagle Scout Award,
- ❖ Master Gardeners (contact Nancy Pappas azop@gvtc.com)
- ❖ Master Naturalists (AgriLife Office 830-620-3440)
- ❖ High school programs that require students to perform service hours.
- ❖ Some non-profit organizations will also donate to schools.
- ❖ Write a grant, many education foundations are supporting the school garden effort.

Additionally, The Comal County Recycling and Chipping Department will deliver mulch free to schools but only when they have it. Contacting them at 830.643.8945



Nancy and Richard Wackerbarth, CMG Plant Propagation Specialists demonstrated how easy it can be to propagate plants in the classroom. They discussed building mini-greenhouses using recycled containers such as soda bottles, egg cartons, Styrofoam cups and other material that are frequently discarded. Plants tips for seeds and simple propagation of plants from cuttings were demonstrated.

Know and Show Sombreros: Summer demonstrated how to take two sheets of newspaper to create sombreros around a child's head and then providing them with miscellaneous supplies to decorate the hats. Each child can then demonstrate things that plants need to grow: sun, rain, soil, etc.



Participants Jenny Wassom, Sheila Pfeffer, Alba Johannessen, & Melinda Kniseley model their Know & Show Sombreros!

Garden Books: Master Gardener, Donna James talked about the plethora of children's books on the subject of gardening available at most local libraries and hopefully in your schools. At the end of this newsletter you will find a lengthy recommended list of books for children. Donna also discussed square foot gardening, and using paper towel gardening for planting seeds. She also demonstrated making paper maché grow cards from recycled paper and seeds.



Donna James

GARDENING CHORES

Ideally these chores should be completed a week or two before planting. If time is of the essence you can plant immediately after completing chores. Clean all trash, markers and any old remnants of last year's crops.

Weed, weed, weed!

Turn soil over gently, a good garden fork is the best tool.

If at all possible add manure compost and work into soil as you turn it about 2" deep on top of entire bed.

Rake soil smooth and water it well. This optimizes activity of microbes in the soil.

GROWING VEGETABLES:



Vegetables to be grown in a garden are grouped into

- **Warm Weather Vegetables**
- **Cool Weather Vegetables**

While beans are 'warm'-- peas are 'cool.' The warm weather veggies can't take a frost. **Cool weather veggies** don't like hot weather or they'll 'bolt to seed' or become bitter and not edible. We usually have a frost around Thanksgiving although sometimes we only have a light one and then have several more weeks of growing weather. So, it may be possible to cover up tomatoes for a night or two and still get the green fruit to ripen by Christmas. Oct 1 would be too late to expect a baby tomato transplant to produce ripe fruit this season. If the plant is already well on its way, it will probably produce. (The suggested time to plant small tomato transplants is the last week of July.)

Here are other **Warm Weather Vegetables** that would **not** be successful planted this late in the season:

- ❖ Beans, bush or pole
- ❖ Cucumber
- ❖ Peppers
- ❖ Squash, any (Winter squash such as acorn is named such as it ripens in fall and stores well to be used in the winter.)
- ❖ Tomatoes—Eggplant
- ❖ Melons
- ❖ Basil

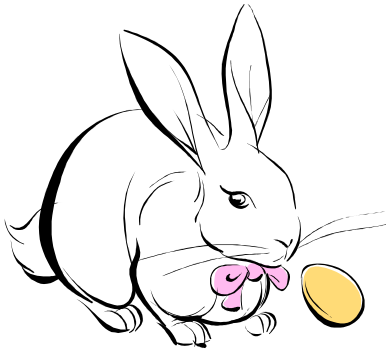


Cool Weather Vegetables

These are the vegetables which happily grow through our winters here with temperatures falling to about 25°. An unusually hard freeze may damage some vegetables but with a little luck, these will perform well:

- ❖ **Beets** and **Chard** are from the same family. The seed is a little hard to germinate through crusty soil, so it's a good idea to cover the seed with a little peat moss or compost to help the babies. Red stemmed Chard is pretty. Use like spinach, but is tastier.
- ❖ All the **Cabbage family**--broccoli, cauliflower, kale. Seed now or transplants. Do succession planting as it they grow quickly and you may wish two crops by mid-March. They are heavy feeders, so fortify the soil as allowed.
- ❖ **Carrots**: Plant seed now though mid-Oct
- ❖ **Onions**: 1015 variety is named that as Oct 15 is the target date to plant seed. Or use transplants. Also leeks, chives can be used.
- ❖ **Lettuce**: Important--Don't cover the seed with soil. Just scatter it on the ground and water gently. It needs light to germinate.
- ❖ **Mustard Greens**: By far the best variety is Florida Broadleaf. The others are bitter tasting. Use like spinach.
- ❖ **Peas**: snap or snow peas. Make a tepee about 5' high and let them vine up. Kids love shelling English peas. Will grow all through winter
- ❖ **Radish**. Are very easy and fast growing. Plan on several plantings about 2 weeks apart. Use when young or they become bitter. Greens are edible also.
- ❖ **Spinach**: Hates hot weather. If we have a warm spell in the winter, it may bolt. New Zealand spinach isn't as fussy about warm temps.
- ❖ **Turnips**
- ❖ **Herbs**: Mediterranean oregano, dill, parsley, winter savory, chives, thyme, sage, cilantro (bolts very easily during warm weather--keep trimming.)





All vegetables can be wiped out by deer in one night. **Rabbits** aren't as visible, but will destroy most veggies. Pill bugs may eat your babies which have sprouted from seed. Cooler weather deters a lot of bugs which are big problems in spring gardens. Many think the fall garden works much better than the spring one.

SCHOOL OF THE MONTH: Bill Brown Elementary

"On Sept 3, CMGs Nancy Pappas and Lee Franzel worked with Jennifer Marshall and her third grade class at Bill Brown Elementary. Their eight garden beds were cleaned up, a layer of compost added, and the soil was turned in preparation for a fall vegetable garden."



We'd like to feature your school in our next issue. Please send us your photos!

BOOKS FOR GARDENING

Carlson, Laurie Green Thumbs: A Kid's Activity Guide to Indoor and Outdoor Gardening

Curtis, Bruce: Kids Container Gardening

Dannenmaier, Molly: A Child's Garden: 60 Ideas to Make Any Garden Come Alive for Children

Kite, L. Patricia: Gardening Wizardry for Kids

Krezel, Cindy: 101 Kid-Friendly Plants

Lovejoy, Sharon: Roots, Shoots, Buckets and Boots

Matthews, Clare: How Does Your Garden Grow? Great Gardening for Green Fingered Kids

Macleod, Elizabeth: Grow It Again

Rushing, Felder: Dig, Plant, Grow

Spohn, Rebecca: Ready, Set, Grow! A Kid's Guide to Gardening

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Azarian, Mary: A Gardener's Alphabet

Benet, Stephen Vincent and Rosemary: Johnny Appleseed

Brett, Jan: The Umbrella and Honey- Honey- Lion!

Burnett, Frances: The Secret Garden

Bunting, Eve: Flower Garden

Bunting, Eve: Sunflower House

Cole, Joanna: The Magic Schoolbus: Plants Seeds: A Book About How Living Things Grow

Cooney, Barbara: Miss Rumphius

De Paola, Tomie : The Legend of the Bluebonnet and The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush

DiSalvo-Ryan, A.: City Green

Ehlert, Lois: Growing Vegetable Soup, Planting A Rainbow, Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf, Leaf Man, Waiting for Wings, Eating the Alphabet

Foreman, Michael: A Child's Garden: A Story of Hope

Garland, Sherry: The Lotus Seed

Hall, Zoe: The Surprise Garden

Henderson, Kathy: And the Good Brown Earth

Jeffers, Susan: Brother Eagle, Sister Sky

Kraus, Ruth: The Carrot Seed

Nolen, Jerdine: Plantzilla and Plantzilla Goes to Camp

O'Callahan, Jay: Tulips

Potter, Beatrix: Peter Rabbit

Schechter, Ellen: The Big Idea

Silverstein, Shel: The Giving Tree

Stevens, Janet: Tops and Bottoms

Stewart, Sarah: The Gardener (Caldecott Honor)

Tamar, Erika: The Garden of Happiness

Bibliography compiled by Donna James