

The Garden Dirt

News from our school garden and compost program -- November 2010

Web site: www.jeffersongardens.wordpress.com

In spring 2009, the program began creating school gardens and food waste composting systems at local schools. A Dept. of Ecology grant received by Jefferson Co. Dept. of Public Works Solid Waste Division makes this possible.



Compost helpers harvest blueberries at Finn River Farm

Premier Exhibit Award

Our school gardens received the Premier Exhibit Award at the Jefferson County Fair. Because of the number and quality of our garden entries we were awarded over 20 blue and red ribbons as well as the best in class award for our compost.

Let's hear it for our school gardeners!

COMPOSTING

At both Grant St. Elementary and Quilcene schools, the compost program is now a student led program. Student compost helpers assist their fellow classmates decide what should go into the compost bin and what should go into the garbage can, which then goes to a land fill 350 miles away. They add compost to the garden and study the many benefits in doing so. Ask your child about our hit song "The FBI" - Fungus, Bacteria & Invertebrates, the creatures who help make our compost.

Compost helpers from Quilcene enjoyed a field trip to Finn River Farm where they picked blueberries, made blueberry ice cream and hot pear cider.

Fall harvest is upon us at the Grant Str Elementary School and Quilcene School gardens where around 600 students participate in the school garden and compost programs. We want to welcome six new classes from Grant Street School who have joined us. Now every student at the school participates.

In garden class students are harvesting many delicious crops while also identifying which part of the plant they eat, its function and its nutritional value. They harvested raspberries, apples, spinach, carrots, kale, summer squash, lettuce, potatoes and an abundance of juicy, sweet tomatoes. Thanks to all the hard work that students put in last spring, this fall's crop has shown us an excellent variety of crops we are capable of growing in Jefferson County, despite an unusually wet summer.

The increase in support of the program by parents and volunteers this year has been a blessing. Their time and effort has aided us in our effort to reach as many students as possible with the opportunity to learn about food cycles, sustainable gardening, nutrition and life science through hands on learning. We are especially looking towards volunteer support in order to continue this program in its fullest capacity.

We look forward to our coming days in the garden with the wonderful students as we ready

WE LOVE OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank you to all our generous school staff, administration & board, volunteers, organizations & businesses who have made our garden program a wonderful success. We have grown beyond our wildest dreams and we couldn't have done it without your generous support!!!

******* WE NEED YOUR HELP TO KEEP OUR GARDEN GROWING *******

We have been blessed with the support of Jefferson County Public Works Dept. who received a two-year grant from the Dept. of Ecology. Without the vision of Public Works and the support of the County this program would not have happened. The grant cycle ends in 2010. Thank you Quilcene School for helping support the program through 2011 school year!! We are also seeking other means of support including donations, fund raising and community involvement. We are moving under the umbrella of the Jefferson County Farm to School Coalition, a local non-profit. To find out how you can help and to learn more about the organization go to: www.jcfarm2school.org

Harvest of the Month

We began a program that features a seasonal, locally grown food in the school cafeteria monthly. Featured in September was organic carrots, in October organic spinach and coming in the next months are organic kale and potatoes. Thanks Veda for preparing these delicious foods for the school lunch!



Mrs. Moriarty's class threshes wheat by hand

LESSONS FROM THE GARDEN

Wheat Study: In September Elise and Candice harvested wheat at the Port Townsend Dry Land Farm Project and also received wheat kernels for our project. Students were engaged in an extensive wheat study, which included threshing the wheat by hand and grinding wheat kernels with a bicycle powered grinder! We discussed the nutritional value of whole wheat, which includes the bran and germ and learned that wheat is the oldest cultivated crop in history, going back over 10,000 years!

Pizza Day In Quilcene, local pizza chefs John Shelley and Sara, from Dented Buoy Pizza brought their wood fired pizza oven to school. Students rolled out the dough for crust made from the wheat that they ground into flour. They topped their pizzas with fresh tomatoes from the garden and pesto made from school grown garlic. It was a wonderful reward for all of their hard work! Thanks John and Sarah for donating your time for this great event.

Red, white and blue potatoes: Our young gardeners dug up California Red, Yukon Gold, Ozette, and All Blue potatoes of all shapes and sizes. We learned about nutritious roots that we eat, which store energy from the plant under ground. We discussed the importance of planting more than one variety to prevent crop failure in case of disease or pest infestation. We learned the history of our Ozette potato, which has been grown by native people since Spanish explorers brought the potatoes from the Andes to Neah Bay.

Compost and "Green Manure": To prepare garden beds for the winter and coming spring, we added rich compost and planted cover crop or "green manure" to increase the fertility of our soil. Compost contains millions of microorganism & nutrients that improve the tilth of the soil. Cover crop, including rye, vetch and winter peas will grow over the winter and protect the soil from erosion. In the spring students will turn the grassy cover crop into the garden, which add even more fertility and organic matter to the soil.

Garlic: Students planted garlic that was saved from last season's phenomenal crop, that won first place at the Jefferson County Fair. They also learned the many health benefits of eating garlic.

WHY WE LOVE TO EAT CARROTS

One cup of chopped carrots are:

- Rich in beta carotene
- A good source of fiber, Vitamin C and potassium
- A source of Vitamin B6, folate and several essential minerals including calcium, magnesium and manganese.

Helping Your Kids Eat Healthy

You can buy baby carrots to take with you for an easy, on-the-go snack. Try adding raw carrot sticks as a crunchy side dish at lunch. Grate carrots into salads and over soups to add a crunchy, sweet flavor. Carrots are a great addition to any meal.

Ask your child fun ways to include carrots in family meals

Vegetable Quesadilla

Ingredients:

1 large carrot, grated
1 zucchini, grated
8 flour tortillas
3/4 cup shredded cheese
Bottled hot sauce, to taste

1. In a bowl, mix carrot and zucchini
 2. Sprinkle 1/2 cup mixture over four tortillas. Top each with 3 tablespoons cheese. Add hot sauce.

3. Cover with a second tortilla.
 4. Heat a nonstick pan over medium heat until hot. Place each quesadilla in a pan and cook 1 minute.
 5. Turn over and cook 1 minute longer or until the cheese melts.
 6. Cut each quesadilla and serve warm.

Makes 4 Servings