
Firefly Scientists' Garden



Environmental Education at The Lemberg Children's Center

MARCH IN THE GARDEN

Spring is here! The birds are chirping their spring songs, buds are bursting with bright colors, and there is a freshness in the warmer breeze. How lovely it is to get outside and get our hands dirty again. The busy season has begun, and we are so happy.

WELCOME TO THE TEAM

Cassie Mastronarde is happy to be joining the Lemberg Environmental Education team this spring! She's a Brandeis junior studying Environmental Studies and Education Studies, and she's so excited to incorporate these interests together, helping kids learn about the world around them. She is also student teaching at Stanley Elementary school, and she's looking forward to fostering hands-on learning and exploration in the garden.



Cassie is all smiles to be joining us!

LEARNING THIS MONTH

Nature Notebooks

The garden is a beautiful place to observe changes and notice the big and the small, zooming in and out. In the classrooms, we created our very own nature notebooks to help us document all that we see, smell, hear, feel, and (soon) taste in the garden.

We asked the students what they thought they would write inside them - some said spiders, worms, drawings from nature, a seed cracking open, leaf prints, trees, and more. Agreeing with all they shared, we discussed that their notebooks would house all their nature observations, defining observations as what they notice when they deeply look at something.



A rainy day brings our observations indoors.

Firefly Scientists' Garden

Environmental Education at The Lemberg Children's Center



We constructed our notebooks with green paper for the cover and white paper for the interior, folding them in half to form a book and having a teacher help staple them together. The students then decorated the covers with whatever patterns, colors, or scenes that connected with the garden.



Drawing in the garden is so much fun!

Finally, we went outside and documented our outdoor observations, taking inspiration from the beautiful world around us. We look forward to adding more to our notebooks as the season progresses!

Signs of Spring Scavenger Hunt

With spring right around the corner, we were so excited to poke around and investigate in the garden. In the classrooms, we read *Finding Wild* by Megan Wagner and discussed how the world wakes up in the spring, and that, with a little searching, we can see signs that spring is close. Sharing how in the winter it's much colder, plants are asleep, and that we get less sunshine, we talked about how the spring brings flowers, new leaves, warmer weather, and longer days.



"I found the sun!"

Firefly Scientists' Garden

Environmental Education at The Lemberg Children's Center

Outside, the students each received a scavenger hunt sheet illustrated with different signs of spring.



"A flower!"

Working individually, in pairs, or in teams, they explored the garden space and identified flowers, grasses, tree buds, mushrooms, puddles, and more!

What's a Plant and What's not?

With the warmer weather, plant shoots and early flowers are sprouting and growing day by day. But what distinguishes a plant from other

things? Is a mushroom a plant? Is a rock a plant? Are we plants?

In the classroom, we read books about seeds and pollination and talked about how plants produce their own food using sunlight. We discussed the various parts of plants and how there are a lot of varieties. This makes them different from fungi, animals, soil, and humans. We shared the reasons why these other things are not plants - fungi need water, but not sun, humans need water, but we don't get nutrients from soil, and rocks don't need water or sun!



"NOT A PLANT!"

Firefly Scientists' Garden

Environmental Education at The Lemberg Children's Center

Outside, the students went on a search to find examples of plants and not plants in the garden space. Every student had the mission of finding five of each, pointing out grasses, flowers, trees and toys, rocks, and sticks.



"Not plants!"

Roots and Weeds

We know what makes a plant a plant, but what makes a weed a weed? Diving deeper into our understanding of roots, we read *What Do Roots Do?* by Kathleen V. Kudlinski and discussed how plants need roots to stay alive. They help all types of plants (trees, vegetables, cacti) stay in the ground, suck up water, and absorb

nutrients. Friends asked important questions like "why do roots grow underground?" and "what roots do we eat?" We also learned how weeds are plants that we do not want to grow in our garden. They often grow quickly and are spread by the wind, our feet, or animals – not intentionally planted by us. They make it harder for our planned plants (like yummy carrots or cucumbers) to grow strong. When we weed in the garden, we have to make sure to pull out their roots so they don't grow back!



"Roots!"

So, we went outside to explore the various weeds and roots in our garden. Putting on our garden gloves and using our magnifying glasses,

Firefly Scientists' Garden

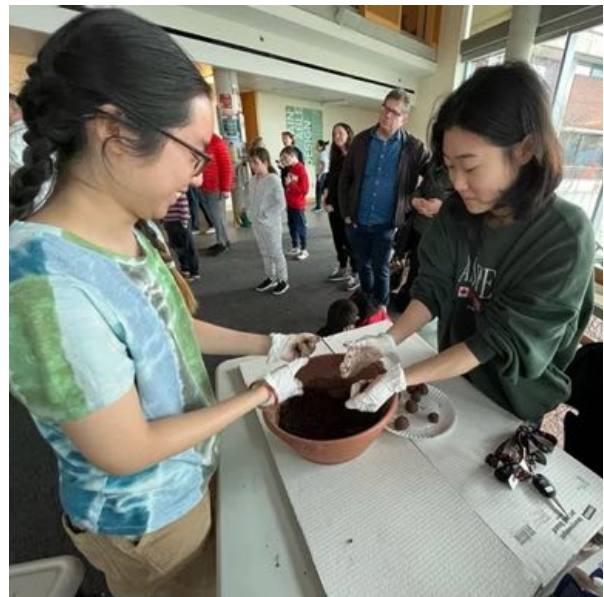
Environmental Education at The Lemberg Children's Center

we took a closer look at the tiny green plants that are all over.



"We are master gardeners!"

This month, the garden team collaborated with BJEP, Boston-area Jewish Education Program, for their Purim carnival.



Squish, squish, roll...

BJEP Purim Carnival



Our set-up

We brought our seed-ball activity, helping students learn about the importance of pollinators, native seeds, and getting their hands dirty. We also led students and parents in the decorating and designing of yarn-wrapped stick windchimes, an excellent example of eco-based art! It was loads of fun!

Firefly Scientists' Garden

Environmental Education at The Lemberg Children's Center



Working together is a great way to make windchimes!

Thank you to our many wonderful alumni donors and friends!



FS Foundation

Family Garden Day

JOIN US FOR OUR...

FAMILY GARDEN DAY

HELP US WAKE UP THE GARDEN FOR SPRING

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| APRIL 6TH, 2024 | LEMBERG CHILDREN'S CENTER | 9:30AM TO 11:30AM |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, REACH OUT TO SARAH AT SECKSTEININDIK@BRANDEIS.EDU

Our first family garden day of the season is right around the corner on **April 6th. From 9:30 am to 11:30 am**, we will work together to ready the raised beds for planting and prepare for the busy season ahead. Our next family garden day will be on May 4th.

Please reach out to Sarah if you have any questions at secksteinindik@brandeis.edu.

