

# Firefly Scientists' Garden

Environmental Education at The Lemberg Children's Center



## DECEMBER AND JANUARY IN THE GARDEN

Brrrrr... The chilly days are here. We don our coats, gloves, hats, and scarves, readying ourselves to explore the outdoors in all sorts of weather. The garden may be sleeping, but there are always ways to explore nature and learn even when it's cold! Winter offers great opportunities to discover more about freezing/melting, the world of fungi, and other ways to be informed little environmentalists.

## RECENT LEARNING

### Birding!

What makes a bird, a bird? The preschool classrooms learned more about birds and had the opportunity to search for birds in the garden.

Birds are special creatures - they are very different from us. They've got feathers, wings, and beaks, and they lay eggs. Our garden often has many bird visitors, whether we see them up in the trees or hopping around in the garden beds.

Not everything disappears in the winter, some hardy animals "tough it out" (as one of our preschoolers shared) and stick around during these frigid days. We discussed how there are some birds that we see in the winter and even continue to visit our garden. We read and discussed a book that described the variety of birds and how some migrate or stay in the area.

Then, we had the opportunity to make our very own pair of "garden binoculars".



*"I drew me in the garden."*

First, we strung a piece of string through two hole-punched paper tubes. Then, we taped the two tubes together. Finally, everyone had the chance to personalize and decorate their creations. Some students chose to draw people in the garden and others utilized their favorite colors and patterns. So fun!



*"Eye see you!"*

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*"We're migrating!"*

We ventured outside to put our binoculars to use. Turning on our listening ears and observing our surroundings, we found many types of winter birds (and we identified them with the help of an info sheet). Two of our preschool classrooms even saw a red-tailed hawk!

## Bird Sounds and Bird Feeders

We continued with the bird-themed lessons - there is so much to learn about birds! First, we played a bird-call game, which taught us the calls of European Starling, Bluejay, Northern Cardinal, Black-topped Chickadee, and American Crow. We described what we heard and what we saw when looked at their pictures.

Everyone shared their thoughts on what made each call distinct - "squeaky", "clicks", "sounds like a real song", "sounds like a mouse", etc. and even tried to mimic them. For the game, each teacher held up a photo of a bird and we moved to the middle of the rug. Listening closely to the random bird sounds, we guessed where to move - matching a picture to the sound. Some birds were easier to remember like the Bluejay, whereas the others got a bit tricky.



*"All done!"*

Then, we traveled outside to the garden to create pinecone birdfeeders for our bird visitors during the winter months. We slathered sun-

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butter on the pinecones with a spoon, creating a yummy glue. Then, we sprinkled birdseed on top, making sure everything was covered. Finally, we ran around the garden, searching for the perfect place to put them. Eat up, birds!

## Snow, Ice, Water

January brought us snow, giving us ample opportunity to explore the cold and beautiful flakes. With the Voyagers and Navigators, we investigated freezing and melting. First, we read *Here Comes the Snow* by Angela Shelf Medearis and discussed all the "gear" that we wear when we go out to play. Then, we put on our scientific goggles and coats and conducted an experiment. In three identical containers, we stuffed snow, poured water, and stacked ice to the very top.



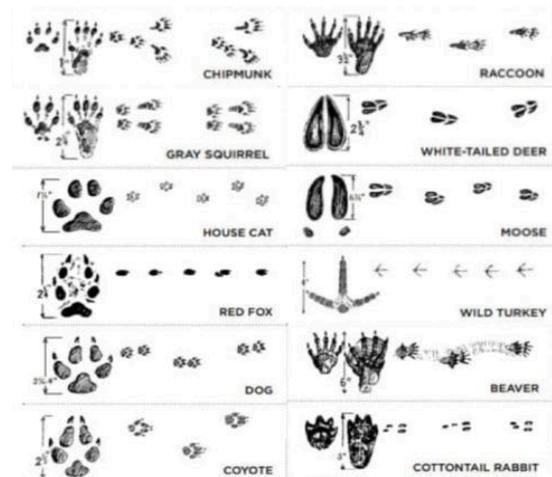
*Which will melt first?*

Everyone made hypotheses about what would happen – which one did we think would melt

first? which one did we think would have the most water at the end? The next day we analyzed our results, seeing that the snow melted the fastest, but the container with water had the most liquid! We learned that because there was more air in between the snowflakes and ice, there would be less water after they melted. Brrr...So cool (literally and figuratively)!

## Animal Tracks (in the Snow)

After reading the same book, we donned our snow pants, snow boots, gloves, hats, and scarves to go on a scavenger hunt for animal prints and tracks. We realized that the snow acts as the perfect canvas to discover the ways animals move.



*So many different types of footprints!*

You can see how a bunny hops or how a person walks. The Pathfinder class had the opportunity to look at an information sheet with many

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different types of prints, finding evidence of squirrels, foxes, birds, and rabbit visitors in our garden. It's so fun to become detectives in the snow.



"Look!"

## Trash and Recycling

It's always a good time to recycle! In the classrooms, we discussed what we already knew about recycling and trash - like how trucks come to pick them up, how trash is burned or put in holes in the ground, and that it can sometimes be stinky.



We read *Why Should I Recycle*, learning more about recycling centers and how recycling allows us to repurpose different materials to make new things! We also learned how landfills and garbage are not kind to the earth and that some things take millions of years to break down. Then, we played a game of sorting trash and recycling. We had two posters that showed examples of objects we can recycle (like bottles, cardboard, paper, and cans) and objects that have to go into the trash (thin plastic wrap, straws, pencils, and tissues).



"Can we recycle cardboard?"

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Together, we worked to sort through and decide where we should dispose of the objects. Now, we are on our way to becoming recycling experts, and we will keep on practicing inside our classrooms!



*Some of our collected trash.*

Our Navigator friends were so invested in their recycling roles, that they spent most of their time in the garden looking for and collecting any litter in and around the space. The earth says, thank you!

## Saying Goodbye and Thank you!

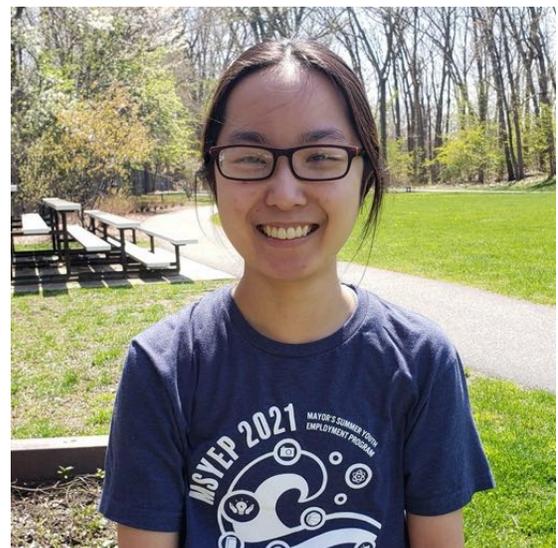
These winter months brought us two big goodbyes and giant thank yous. Beth, our wonderful garden helper of many years, and

Daniel, our lovely garden intern, are moving on to some fantastic, new opportunities.

Thank you so much for everything you've done here at Lemberg! We will miss you.

## Saying hello and Welcome!

Lang Cheng is joining the garden team as an intern.



*Hello, Lang!*

Hello, my name is Lang. I recently graduated from Brandeis with a degree in Environmental Studies. I have been a TA in the Hummingbird room since January 2022 but have also helped out in the Explorer and Adventurer classrooms. This semester, I am thrilled to combine my academic knowledge and experience here with children at Lemberg by interning as an



environmental educator. I have seen how impactful an early awareness and appreciation of nature can be for a child and hope to play a larger and more meaningful role in shaping their early years.

### Family Garden Day

The garden is nicely tucked away and cozy - we look forward to gathering together in the spring to help wake it up!

Please reach out to Sarah if you have any questions at [secksteinindik@brandeis.edu](mailto:secksteinindik@brandeis.edu).

**Thank you to our many wonderful alumni donors and friends!**

