



CCMS Garden Newsletter



(Above) Chard vigorously growing under one of the few sunny days we received this summer.

Growing from the past and into the future...

Greetings on behalf of Cesar Chavez Middle School's After school Garden Project!

Our school's garden began as 6 abandoned raised beds in a dry weedy field. Now, 3 years later it is a highly productive garden that is growing delicious organic food where noxious weeds once dominated.

This has all developed thanks to the support from the administration along with the Club Chavez Staff, and equally important, the dedicated students that as-

sisted in planning, planting and maintaining our school's garden in the after school's club, iGrow.

Our main goal is to increase our school's food security; essentially meaning to provide fresh, safe, and organically school grown food to be made directly available to our students.

The garden also serves to further enrich the student's educational needs, by providing an engaging environment for learning math,



(Above) The Ever Lasting Strawberry flower is a big hit with the bees!

sciences, history, and even language arts!

Classes are always welcome to utilize our school garden during the school day. If interested, contact Patrick Littleton, for further details.

What's growing right now?

Common name: Swiss Chard

Scientific Name: *Beta vulgaris*

Native to the Mediterranean region, Swiss Chard (pictured above) became popular with the Greeks, as it was believed to have astounding health benefits.

Today, Swiss Chard tops the list on being one of the most healthful foods available, containing high levels of vitamin A, C, E, & K with loads of minerals like manganese and iron too!

Students at CCMS have begun to really develop a taste for this nutritious green, as it's been 'sold-out' numerous times at our weekly Farmer's Market. Stir-frying the chopped greens in a bit of olive oil and teriyaki sauce, and you can't go wrong! You can find it growing at the CCMS garden all year round. *Bon appetite!*

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Successes

This past school year was our last year receiving funding from the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant. Our students consumed \$32,000 worth of organically grown fruits and vegetables sourced from local farmers.

The 'Pixie' Tangerines and the stir-fried 'Dinosaur' Kale were some of the year's popular items served during our weekly, free 'Farmer's Market'.

Many thanks goes out to the Food Service Staff for their enthusiastic support and assis-

tançe throughout the year; and also to Live Earth Farms, ALBA, and Coast Produce who supplied all of that delicious and nutritious food!



What's Growin' On!?

Club Chavez's iGrow garden club has made substantial progress in the establishment of our food forest project. This past year iGrow students planted roughly 30 perennial* fruit trees ranging from weeping mulberries, blueberries, apples, pears, persimmon, nopales cactus, figs, and strawberries— all of which will ripen during the school year.

We also planted 5 Gaint Sequoias and 5 Birch trees,

thanks to Jill Madden who kindly coordinated with Monrovia Nursery for the donation.

This year, we hope to continue to build our soils fertility by utilizing compost and cover-crops, along with growing a diverse selection of winter vegetables like collards, leeks, kale, carrots, cabbage, and many others.



(Above) Club iGrow Students: Felicia and Gabriella Davidson, Jennifer Cardenas, Israel Renteria, Marco Patino, Fabian Ramirez, and UCSC volunteer, Lindsey, finishing planting a raised bed of blueberries in late May 2010.

Starlight shines bright at CCMS Afterschool

Beginning last year, Club Chavez's iGrow partnered with Starlight's Afterschool Program to establish a mentor program.

Every Friday, 3-5th graders walked up the hill to join Club Chavez's iGrow students for various educational garden activities; from doing a bug

hunt while turning the compost pile, to planting their own strawberry patch and learning about the various structures of a plant from roots to fruit!

The program empowered the iGrow students to teach the skills they learned earlier in the year to the Starlight students.

The partnership has proved to be quite successful, as we look forward to another exciting year of this engaging program.

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Food for the humming birds, and easy on the eyes; this Penstemon rockin' it in full bloom.

Authors note

I'm looking forward to yet another exciting year in working in the afterschool program and building upon last years successes with iGrow. Feel to contact me if you have any questions, comments, etc.

Thanks for your time.

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(Above) A Fuji apple almost ready to be enjoyed; part of our mini apple orchard, with unique varieties like 'Winter Banana' to common types like 'Gayla.'

*Perennial; referring to a plant that takes multiple years to complete it's life cycle, apposed to an annual, which needs replanting each year. Perennials require a marginal amount of maintenance, while providing a sustained yield over many consecutive years