



Chicken News

Earlier in the year we put some fertilized eggs under one of our hens that had gone broody. Two hatched, one survived and the survivor laid her first tiny blue egg. Oh, are we relieved she turned out to be a hen and not a rooster. She is considered an Easter egger because she lays blue eggs. It is not unusual for hens less than a year old to lay small eggs as they work out how to be proper laying hens. These eggs are called pullet eggs or peewees.



We're expecting 15 day-old Buckeye chicks to arrive in the mail this week. They'll be housed in a separate hutch to protect them from the older birds and hopefully they will be ready to produce by spring of 2017. Buckeyes are an old heritage breed once widely kept as backyard stock. They almost went extinct but thanks to the

Livestock Conservancy, the breed is making a comeback. Buckeyes are hardy and courageous, known to keep their territory free from rodents and other small varmints.

Students Picked a Peck of Peppers!

This growing season was definitely the year of the pepper! The multiple varieties planted in our garden have flourished and are still producing. If you are wondering if a peck is an actual amount, yes it is! A peck is an Imperial and U.S. unit of dry volume that is equivalent to two gallons. Now you know how many pickled peppers Peter Piper picked.

If you are a pepper lover feel free to go into the garden and harvest any remaining peppers. One of my favorite pepper



recipes from my paternal grandmother, Edna is her recipe for pepper jelly. It is legendary and it makes a fantastic addition to a holiday cheese tray. Let me know and I'll be happy to send you a copy of her recipe.

Homesteading and Traditional Skills Elective



Students have been hard at work getting the garden ready for cool season vegetables. We will be planting beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, collards, lettuce, mustard, onions, radishes, spinach and turnips for the first fall crop.

Beekeeping

Sadly both our hives absconded over the summer, which means they left the hives and ventured out to find a new home. This summer has been difficult for honeybees in our region. The heat and lack of rain caused a nectar dearth leaving the bees stressed and open to pests. When the rain did come it came in torrents that diluted the nectar on the flower. On the bright side we will be moving our apiary to a more secure location. Moving the hives will free up the outdoor classroom space to the right of the vegetable garden. We will also begin using biodynamic beekeeping methods.

The beekeeping club will start meeting later in the year in time to ready our equipment and apiary for our new colonies arriving in spring. I will write about the transition from natural to biodynamic beekeeping next year as we welcome our new bees.

Parent Work Day

A parent workday is scheduled for September 24th from 9 AM to 3:00 PM. We have gloves and tools at the school so just bring yourselves and a picnic dish to share. We'll work on a number of projects including:

- Building a modified hugelkultur bed to slow the rainwater coming from the top of the campus. Hugelkultur is a permaculture technique that uses garden waste, limbs and leaves to build a garden bed. In our case we will dig a trench and fill with organic material and then cover it with soil. Water will be captured in the pit and will trickle into the earth rather than running off.
- Weeding around campus.
- Spreading mulch and compost.

Volunteer Thursdays

Thursdays from 3:30 PM to 5:00 PM continue to be garden volunteer opportunities and they will remain on the schedule throughout the autumn growing season. They are a great way for students to earn community service hours and have fun as well.

Thank you for your support!!

Edna Lora

Project Wish List

Every year we try to improve the gardening program at Academe of the Oaks and we are never short of ideas of things that will benefit outdoor learning at the school and move our environmental stewardship forward. Funds come from the school's budget, grants and individual donations. We can't do everything so we prioritize but there are a number of low budget projects that we can make happen if we work as a community. I have two projects in mind.



- **Wash Station**

It would be very helpful to have a washing station in the garden. Students could wash their hands; we can clean vegetables, eggs and equipment. Here is a picture of what I was thinking. Is there anyone out there who has replaced a sink lately or have other materials we could use? A person handy with power tools would be a big help. Please let me know if you would be interested in making this happen. Student volunteers are always welcome.

- **Year-Round School-Wide Worm Compost Bin**

As part of our Green School initiative of becoming a zero waste school we would like to create a year-round, school-wide worm composting system for food waste. The system will have to be easy for the students to maintain and sized to handle our school population. I have drawn up some plans that can be modified to use salvaged materials. Please let me know if you would be interested in being part of this project.