

# GARDEN NEWS

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*Fall, 2011*

Haldane's sustainable garden has taken root and is flourishing! Thanks to generous grants from Hudson Highland Land Trust (HHLT) and Haldane School Foundation, hard working parents and students have built a garden worthy of Blue Devil pride.

## **HOW DID OUR GARDEN GROW?**

A series of "theme beds" were chosen to organize the space, where students have planted a sensory garden of fragrant plants donated by Laurel Rimmer (a parent and gardener from the Bronx's famous Wave Hill), an herb garden, and a grass garden.

Raised beds south of the walkway are home to vegetables and flowers: 2nd grade planted cucumbers, 3rd grade a butterfly garden, and Mrs. Horn's 6th grade Environmental Science class planted an array of flowers known to attract birds. They also hauled soil, spread wood chips, and planted wildlife-attracting shrubs around the perimeter of the garden.

Mrs. Geller's 6th grade class participated in a cross-curricular project in which they studied decomposition, collected coffee grounds and leaves for the compost pile, researched plants, wrote letters to seed companies, germinated seeds, and finally planted the seedlings in the fertile compost soil they created!

## **A CORNUCOPIA OF IDEAS: THIS YEAR IN THE GARDEN**

With the garden well established, even more in-depth projects are coming to fruition this year. We would love to hear about (even help) with the garden projects you are planning for your own class: perhaps an "animal" themed bed with elephant ear (Taro), zebra-striped tomatoes and snake gourds; or a "rainbow" bed of coordinated flower colors. Projects can be big, like those below, or small -- just getting the kids out there to look around, or planting a few seedlings or bulbs. So far this year:

***Mrs. Geller's Class:*** This ambitious class harvested the cucumber bed and made pickles! They've also started a garden observation journal.

***Garden Mondays:*** Students and parents are all welcome to help out in the garden Mondays after school. So far, we've planted climbing roses donated by Yumi McCann, peony and yucca plants donated by Kory Riesterer, sweet autumn clematis and trumpet vine, along with bearded and Siberian irises. The kids have also made scarecrows and actively helped with the garden's general maintenance. On future Mondays in October we will plant bulbs and design a leaf compost bin to provide mulch for the spring.

### ***In the Works:***

**Mrs. Horn's Environmental Science class** is planning a number of projects with the Garden Committee:

- **Cover crops:** Planting cover crops will provide organic matter and nitrogen to improve the overall health of the soil. Peas inter-seeded with oats will provide good ground cover over the winter.
- **Garlic:** The class plans to plant garlic in one of the raised beds.
- **Rain Garden:** As a more in-depth project, a rain garden would absorb runoff from Haldane's paved playground, which in past years has caused flooding for houses adjacent to school property. Specifically, a rain garden is a planted depression that allows rainwater runoff to soak into the ground instead of flowing into storm drains, which contributes to erosion, water pollution and flooding. A landscape architect would work with the class to design the garden and select appropriate plants.

**Three Sister Garden:** Mrs. Hartford's 4th grade class hopes to design a garden that will tie into their Native American studies project.

### **THE ROOT OF THE MATTER - USING THE GARDEN**

The Garden Committee is drawing up a **set of guidelines** for using the garden. This reference guide will detail how to get a bed/area assigned, how to use the compost, where to get tools, how to clean up properly, things not to plant, etc.

We will also be developing a **curriculum handbook** with collections of simple, grade-level appropriate projects to make teacher work easier (e.g. harvesting marigold seeds to plant in the spring; or "magic scent bags" using the sensory bed). Over this first year, as classes create and implement projects, we will draw up basic instructions for those that were most successful. Supplemented with other viable projects, the handbook will provide a project "idea" guide that spans all the elementary grades. In the meantime, these links provide excellent resources:

- [http://www.hvfs.org/p/resources\\_23.html](http://www.hvfs.org/p/resources_23.html)
- <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/kindergarden/Child/school/ideas.htm>
- <http://schoolgardenweekly.com/instructional-activities/school-garden-lessons-activities-and-curricula>

### **TEACHER-TRAINING WORKSHOPS FOR HALDANE FACULTY**

Hudson Highland Land Trust's River of Words educators (Lisa Mechaley, Irene O'Garden, and Cathy Bakker) have offered to lead a teacher-training workshop for Haldane faculty. These workshops help teachers gain a comfort level with outdoor teaching and with using natural settings as a learning laboratory for all subject areas. This invaluable opportunity is ideal for teachers looking for ways to integrate the garden into their curriculum, as well as those with specific ideas they want to implement. We have **\$1,123.40** remaining in our HHLT grant and have earmarked these funds for teacher-initiated projects specifically. As one of HHLT's mission area school districts, Haldane can receive one (or possibly more, depending on demand this year) teacher-training workshop free of charge.

## **GARDEN PARENTS AT THE READY**

Haldane's garden is lucky to have the enthusiastic support of numerous parents. Several have volunteered to be Garden Parents for individual classes:

- Kory Riesterer ([kriesterer@optonline.net](mailto:kriesterer@optonline.net)) and co-GP Carina Frantz ([carina\\_frantz@verizon.net](mailto:carina_frantz@verizon.net)) for Mrs. Rasa-K.
- Danielle Pack McCarthy ([daniellepack@yahoo.com](mailto:daniellepack@yahoo.com)) for Mrs. Cretara-K.
- LauraLee Holmbo ([llholmbo@yahoo.com](mailto:llholmbo@yahoo.com)) for three classes: Mrs. Wilde-K, Ms. Isler-2, and Mr. Virgadamo-5.
- Melissa Angier ([melissa\\_angier@yahoo.com](mailto:melissa_angier@yahoo.com)) for Mrs. Comerford-1.
- Sandy McKelvey ([sandy@odara.com](mailto:sandy@odara.com)) for Mrs. Quick-2.
- Jennifer Marrinan ([jcmarrinan@verizon.net](mailto:jcmarrinan@verizon.net)) for Ms. Windels-4.
- Beth Sigler ([siglerhendersonstudio@verizon.net](mailto:siglerhendersonstudio@verizon.net)) for Mrs. Hartford-4.

If your class does not have a garden parent and you would like assistance in planning or implementing garden projects, please let the PTA Garden Committee know and we'll be happy to help!

## **THE SEEDS OF PROGRESS - LOOKING FORWARD**

Our vision continues with a number of garden projects for the coming years:

- **Create a Certified Wildlife Habitat:** Haldane can work toward gaining this status from the National Wildlife Federation.
- **Plant a Shad Tree Grove:** Shad trees provide shelter and food for birds. They also tie in with our river setting and local mythology.
- **Plant a Native Plant Garden:** An ideal project to partner with Stone Crop Gardens.
- **Develop an Internship Program:** High school students could help with the garden during the summer and gain community service credit. Activities might include harvesting produce and donating it to the local food pantry (always in need of fresh vegetables), creating a Community-Supported Agriculture plot (CSA), or selling produce at the farmer's market.

## **PLEASE BE IN TOUCH!**

We are here to listen and help. The garden is just steps from your classroom door, and every project, big or small, is welcome. Please be in touch!

Sincere thanks,

**Haldane Garden Committee**

*Melissa Angier and Beth Sigler, co-chairs*

*Diana Geller, Lourdes Laifer, Danielle Pack McCarthy, Carina Frantz and Kory Riesterer*

For more information, contact [info@growinghaldane.com](mailto:info@growinghaldane.com)