

# What's Growing On?



Hi friends,

Summer is here! This is a great time to be out in the garden. The garden is certainly a multisensory experience....the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures we experience can help us meet all of our learners. While there is always “work” to be done in the garden, I hope you do find the time to spend enjoying your garden and soaking up the beauty and peace you helped to create.

While we can tie our gardens, to academics it may be that summer is the perfect time, to allow students time to reflect and create in the garden. Whether it is a poem, a song, a painting, or a game, allow students to explore their creativity while in the garden.

Additionally, your garden classroom may be the perfect place, for practicing mindfulness and being present in the moment. Spending time in nature has been linked to several physical, mental, and emotional health benefits. It is a growing area of interest for researchers. See page 6 of this newsletter for some ideas!

Finally, it was brought to my attention that the sound was not working on some of the PowerPoints listed on the website....all have been fixed and should be working well. If not, please let me know.

Happy Planting!

Nancy

## If you haven't already done so,

.....here is a link for a google form so that you can let me know what you think about all the facets of the LTG program and how we can best support you, your committee, and your students!

<https://forms.gle/yhHtn7daRfFGxrAW7>

## Upcoming Events:

National Blueberry Month

National Bean Month

July 10<sup>th</sup> - Pick Blueberries Day!

August 3<sup>rd</sup> - Watermelon Day

August 8<sup>th</sup> - Zucchini Day

## Important Announcements:

- Best Practice Workshop dates: October 18 for South Jersey and October 20 for North Jersey
- Cool weather leafy vegetables will be delivered beginning the week of September 12<sup>th</sup>
- If you are eligible, please sign up to be an ambassador school so this is not your last delivery.
- There are two Google forms embedded in this newsletter! Please make sure you have completed both 😊  
Thank you, your responses are so very helpful when planning.

## How does your Garden Grow?

Thanks for sharing pictures from your spring harvests! These shots were taken at Franklin School and Van Holten School. Look at these awesome fruits and veggies! Share your pictures with me, please!



### Garden Tasks:

- Watering is vital during the summer months. Plants should be watered daily.
- Stay vigilant with weeds...don't let them take hold and try to remove them before they reseed!
- Harvesting ripe fruits and vegetables will keep your plants producing.
- Monitor plants for symptoms of fungus or insect damage.

### BEST PRACTICE WORKSHOP:

There will be two presentations of BPW held this year; one located in Northern NJ and one in Southern NJ. The Workshop will cover a variety of topics; the focus will be on Vermicomposting and participants will be building a vermicomposter to bring back to their school!

Tuesday, October 18 - Best Practice South will be held at Rowan College at Burlington County; 8:30-12:00

Thursday, October 20 - Best Practice North; time/place TBD

**Pollinator Garden Grant Opportunity:** [Little Seeds Pollinator Pals Grant - KidsGardening](#). The program is designed to support youth garden programs interested in preserving and creating pollinator habitats to help rebuild declining pollinator populations. Deadline: July 15

### Join Growing Together! as an Ambassador School

For our "graduate" schools and schools aging out of the program, don't forget to fill out the application to become a Growing Ambassador. This is a three-year affiliation to keep your school garden growing!

This can be applied for after your school has been a Growing Partner School or a Growing Associate School. The application is just an update for our records! All applicants are happily accepted!

[Click here for the application.](#)

Thank you to all our "graduates" who are now Ambassador Schools!

Come Grow with Us!

# Celebrate Blueberry Month!

Did you know the first blueberries grown to sell in markets were grown at Whitesbog, Burlington County, in 1916? New Jersey has a long history with this delicious berry!

## NJ and the Blueberry...A Brief History

Elizabeth Coleman White (1871-1954) of the Pine Barrens developed the nation's first cultivated blueberry. Her father was the sole executor and manager of a 600-acre cranberry farm now known as the 3,000-acre plantation of Whitesbog.



She assisted researcher Frederick Coville in his studies of blueberry propagation. White helped to locate wild blueberry bushes with the most desired traits: berry size, resistance to cold and disease, flavor, texture, and time of ripening. Coville cross-fertilized bushes by hand to create new berry varieties. By 1916, the pair had created the first commercial crop of blueberries.

White helped organize the New Jersey Blueberry Cooperative Association in 1927 and by 1986 the state's blueberry industry ranked second in the nation. She was the first female member of the American Cranberry Association and the first woman to receive the New Jersey Department of Agriculture

citation.

(Thank you to njwomenshistory.org for this information)

## Blueberries? Anyone?

I am looking into securing blueberry bushes for our school gardens....please let me know if you have an interest in planting blueberry bushes so I can prepare a count. Google form is here: [Blueberries?](#)

## What did one blueberry say to the other?

*If we weren't so sweet, we'd never get in a jam like this!*

# NJ Students campaign for the Blueberry!

In 2003, fourth graders at Veteran's Memorial Elementary School in Brick campaigned to make the blueberry the official state fruit. The students had their idea introduced as legislation and conducted a lobbying campaign to see its passage which included media interviews, a letter and petition drive, presentations to local governing bodies, and a trip to the state's blueberry festival in Whitesbog. In addition, the classes traveled to Trenton to make presentations before Senate and Assembly Committees. And now the blueberry is our official state fruit!

Learn more about state fruit, the blueberry, and other New Jersey State Symbols here: [The Official Web Site for The State of New Jersey | Symbols](#)

## Here are some ideas to incorporate blueberries in your classroom:

1. Visit a blueberry farm! Here is a link to a list of some of the best farms to pick blueberries: [The Best Blueberry Picking Farms in New Jersey \(njmom.com\)](#)
2. Visit Historic Whitesbog Village, the birthplace of the highbush blueberry and the historic center for cranberry innovation. Check out the website: <https://whitesbog.org>.
3. [Blueberries for Sal](#) is a classic children's book by Robert McCloskey. It tells the story of a mother and daughter blueberry picking, who encounter a mother bear and pair of cubs feasting on berries in the same patch.
  - For pre-k and k students: Here is a link for some activities that go with the book: [Preschool Lesson Plan on Blueberries for Sal - Includes Across the Curriculum Activities - BrightHub Education](#)
  - For GRADES 1-4: Follow this story with discussion of storage of berries through the winter. How is the human family different from the bear family in its needs, and ways to store this precious food?
4. Compare wild blueberries with cultivated blueberries. Discuss differences between wild and cultivated berries. Make a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the two varieties of berries.

Wild or lowbush blueberries (36% of total) grow low to the ground in bunches of 3-4 and the fruits are much smaller than the blueberries we find in stores. They look deep purple-blue, to almost blue-black. Wild blueberries grow in Canada and North America where soils are acidic and climate is cool. Wild blueberries can be found in Ocean and Burlington County in New Jersey.

Cultivated or domestic varieties of blueberries (64% of total) are called highbush plants. The berries are much larger than the wild ones, and the bushes can grow quite large. If not trimmed, the plants can grow to more than 10 feet tall. The berries are generally available at stores and the flavor is not as intense as the wild type. Cultivated fruits are deep blue in color.

# A Trip to the Blueberry Farm!

Can't go Blueberry Picking? Come with me to Champion Farm in Whiting!

[Click here](#)

## Meet the Farmer: Ron Champion



Champion Blueberry Farm is a 12-acre blueberry farm nestled on Cherry Street in Whiting, New Jersey. Ron Champion started this blueberry farm in 1962. The farm keeps him busy throughout the year; there is always work to be done, especially since he ran the farm along with having a full-time construction job.

Blue Crop, Duke and Elliot are the blueberry varieties that are grown at Champion's. These were popular choices when he began the farm. Now, there are many more varieties, but Ron sticks with these tried-and-true ones since he has grown from the beginning. They grow big berries which are one of the most appealing qualities for customers. Additionally, they vary from early to late blooming. When it is time to plant more bushes, he uses the bushes he has to propagate new ones.

One of the biggest challenges for the farm can be the weather. The weather conditions directly impact the ability of the bushes to produce fruit. Additionally, having enough pickers or customers come to harvest the berries can be a concern. The blueberry season lasts a mere six to eight weeks.

## One more reason to garden (as if we need another).....

A [2019 study](#) of 20,000 people found that those who spent two hours a week in a green space (such as a park or other natural area) were more likely to report higher levels of health and wellbeing compared to those who did not. What's also encouraging is that higher levels were still reported regardless of whether the two hours were spaced out over the week or all at once. Creating a daily habit of 20 minutes a day in nature could be just what you need to refresh your mind and body.

### Sample Garden Meditation:

Get into a comfortable seated position. You can close your eyes or keep them open. If you choose to keep your eyes open, find a point to focus on. Now, tune into the sounds of nature. The rustling of leaves. The chirping of birds. The wind. Silence. Let nature become the soundtrack to your meditation.

Breathe in deeply, take a long breath in, and breath out slowly, feel how your body is relaxing with the breath. Breath in long again through your nose and breath out slowly through your mouth. Take three more deep and silent in and out breaths and while doing so, let all the heaviness in your body sink into the ground.

Take in the scent of the outdoors, or the scent of the plants around you. Honor the beautiful life connection that we share with our plants: with every breath in, we take in oxygen. With every breath out, we expel carbon dioxide. Plants take in our carbon dioxide and provide us with oxygen in return. The cycle continues. Thank the nature around you for playing its part in sustaining our life.

The breath is connection. Our breathing in oxygen and releasing carbon dioxide; plants taking in carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen. Right now, we are all sharing the air as we connect. Give yourself a moment to really understand that and enjoy. Rest in this peaceful sense of gratitude for as long as you'd like.