

Phoenix School Farm and Learning Zone

Autumn/Winter Newsletter 2016



We had a bumper harvest of produce in the autumn. Highlights have included 90lbs of honey from our bee hive and also we sent some of our grapes to the Organic Lea community Vineyard project to ferment into wine, we should get 7 bottles back in September! Staff and volunteers attended the City Harvest Festival at Capel Manor College in September and won four prizes for our entries in produce and horticulture, with a first prize for our chilli plant.



The 'Pop Up' fruit and veg stall came to an end in September and we now pick produce every 2 weeks and it is collected for the Salt Yard restaurants. The chefs have given great feedback on the quality and flavour of our produce. At the beginning of September Salt Yard hosted their annual charity BBQ and auction on the farm for the third year running. It was a big success and a lovely evening.

Chef Director Ben Tish has been giving the farm fantastic high profile publicity. In November he featured on The BBC1 television programme 'Saturday Kitchen' and spoke with praise about Phoenix High School Farm and the successful partnership they have with us. In January he featured the project again in an article in the Sunday Independent national newspaper, with a great shot of the farm with him and 3 Yr.8 students harvesting produce. At the end of January Cath took a group of 6 farm volunteers to the Salt Yard Restaurant in Goodge Street. It was great to meet all the team and chat about how they run the restaurant and use Phoenix produce in their menus. They also gave us some lovely refreshments. Everyone really enjoyed it.



Farm volunteering sessions have continued to be very popular with up to 15 people attending the regular sessions on Tuesday and Friday mornings. The volunteers have had January off and started back at the farm on 2nd February for the new growing season. They are a great team of people and work really hard on keeping the farm looking so good and helping to grow all the tasty produce. The 4pm -7pm Thursday evening sessions finished in September, but will start again soon in April when the evenings become lighter. The Saturday sessions have been very popular too with volunteers and families.

The farm has hosted many sessions as part of the Big Green Local Project in Partnership with HCGA. At the end of August, with expert help we constructed a fantastic outdoor cob oven. Many local families were involved in the build, and came back to see it being used as part of the spooky activities at the farm Halloween party. We cooked some Phoenix farm potatoes in the embers, they were delicious. We also had a 10am -4pm session on the last Saturday in November which was well attended. At the same time Liz Clark from HCGA ran a Christmas wreath making session for families as part of the Big Green Local. Also in November a group of 15 health professionals, including one GP, came and volunteered their time for the day. They did a good job cleaning the greenhouses inside and out, building a section of path and making a scarecrow family.

In December Cath ran two 1.5hr student volunteering sessions on the Farm attended by 27 post 16 students from Phoenix. The students took part in making gifts for the elderly resident's community Christmas lunch at the end of term. They made 100 rolled beeswax candles, 100 bottles of chili flavoured oil, and 300 seed bombs, (using Phoenix Farm grown chilies and flower seeds collected from the farm, especially selected to attract pollinators) The students then helped package and label gifts and put them into goody bags. Cath also put

together a hamper as one of the raffle prizes containing a selection of Phoenix farm produce including honey, eggs, jam, chutney, cordial and seasonal vegetables.

Phoenix Students (Post 16 BTEC Horticulture and Yr. 10 BTEC Animal Care) taught by Mrs. Hodder have been using the farm regularly as part of their learning during the Autumn Term. The Horticulture students did two sessions with Cath on how crop rotation is used at the farm. The Yr. 10 BTEC Animal Care students have been visiting weekly to learn about how to look after the chickens, rabbits and guinea pigs.

Since January, Year 10 students from Cambridge Special Educational Needs School, (which is next door to Phoenix) have been attending weekly farm sessions as part of their of BTEC Land Based Studies course. 15 students attend each Tuesday working with school staff and Cath to look after some of the areas on the farm and learn about tool use and horticultural techniques.

Cath and staff from HCGA delivered more healthy eating sessions to 180 pupils from 3 West London Primary Schools as part of the Food Explorers Programme. Students from Fox, Barlby and St Mary's enjoyed their first visit to the farm throughout the autumn. The themes of the sessions were seasonality and eating a healthy breakfast. Other visits have included a farm visit and 'pick & eat' session with 30 young students from the Polish School (who use the school every Saturday). Small groups of toddlers from the Randolph Beresford Nursery on the White City Estate have been visiting the farm every other Thursday morning with nursery staff and lead by Zoe from HCGA. They adore feeding the animals especially the new Guinea pigs, and getting their welly boots as muddy as possible! Toddlers from 'Little Owls' nursery also visited in the autumn and helped to make bird feeders, and enjoyed stroking the rabbits.



One evening in November high winds blew down a section of the wooden pergola in the learning zone. The result being that we now have the opportunity for an exciting building project. The plan is to rebuild in a similar style, but with a green roof and to extend the section to cover area where we built the cob oven last summer. This work is scheduled for spring.

Cath has been spending time in January planning the growing for the year ahead, ordering seeds and equipment, managing farm resources and sorting out all the farm sheds!



Dates for your diary 2016

Friday 4th March –Salt Yard Cooking Demonstration at Phoenix Farm

Saturday 16th April – ‘The Big Dig’ at Phoenix Farm, Launch event in Partnership with Capital Growth

SALT YARD



Our thanks go to the Salt Yard Group for their continuing support, of our community based programmes. Written by Cath Knight–Community Food Grower
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