

January 2024

Even though Spring Term starts in winter, young gardeners are eagerly looking for possibilities to grow something. Sadly, it's mostly grass and weeds that grow in January! That is why the new members of our club need to learn to tell apart weeds from the plants we want to keep in our raised beds.

We can see some activity in a big pot with bulbs. First daffodils started growing leaves, so we hope for flowers before half term. To help them grow better, we will remove the weeds and add some straw as mulch.

There is a lot going on in our strawberry bed. Which ones are even strawberries? After careful examination, we have managed to identify specific strawberry leaves and pull out other plants, that started growing between them. Weeds take nutrients and space, so we don't want them around our berries.

We had a heated debate about the Calandulas (English Marigolds) that grow in the corner. Some pupils wanted to keep the bed for strawberries only, because the flowers take too much space. Others were enchanted by the sunshine-yellow flowers and voted for leaving them in the strawberry bed. Eventually, we have decided to prune the overgrown flowers a bit and leave the rest of them. The flowers add diversity to the mini ecosystem and they will help attracting pollinators, when strawberries are in bloom.



Other raised beds need our attention as well. Last month, we covered one of them with a thick layer of leaves, which have now decomposed. Some thick cardboards should protect the soil from erosion till spring, but we will have to keep an eye on them and not too many weeds to grow.

In other beds, we are pulling the weeds that grown in them and leave them as the soil cover. There are not enough of the weeds though, and we are looking for other organic matter to be used as mulch.

We have also noticed that it looks like there is less soil in the beds. It is because the bottom layer, which was sticks, dry leaves and weeds, have decomposed. Before we plant out new veggies in spring, we will have to top up the beds with compost.

The good news is the spring is coming! We have noticed flower buds on primroses and even some of our shrubs are in bloom. That's surprising in January!



As it is still getting dark soon, we need to do some of our gardening indoors. Also, young and fragile plants prefer a warmer place to grow. Nights are freezing these days!

In December, we pruned mint growing in a raised bed and put the cuttings in water, on the windowsill. Now, they have roots and it's a good time to plant them in pots. The young gardeners are discussing how best to plant them and what to do to make the plants thrive.



Our last task in checking the jobs for January, that are recommended by RHS in their calendar. It's too soon to start any seeds, but we could order first early potatoes and begin chitting. That's what we will do!

Please follow us for an update and consider becoming our patron- we are desperate for compost!

