

Cream of the Crop

A Harvest of Ideas for Educators

Vol. 20, No. 2

Spring, 2007

Inside

- 2 - 3 Ideas for quick classroom activities
- 4 Did You Know?
- 5 Resources!



Long Beach Teacher Keeps Agriculture Alive in the Big City

Dianne Swanson Named Teacher of the Year

A self-proclaimed city girl, Dianne Swanson didn't grow up on a farm or anywhere near the country. Her only exposure to agriculture was at a young age when she would spend summers visiting her grandparents in their small Iowa farming community. She believes those trips, and the small tomato patch in the backyard of her childhood home helped shape her appreciation for the farming way of life.

Having grown up and raised her own children in Long Beach, only 22 miles from downtown Los Angeles, Swanson recognizes that her community is not normally considered an environment conducive to agricultural awareness. Dianne has worked hard to change this perception by creating a dynamic and successful school garden program. For this, and many other accomplishments, she has been named CFAITC's 2007 Outstanding



Photo courtesy of Western Growers Charitable Foundation

Teacher of the Year.

"The reality is that agriculture is everywhere, even when fields and ranches and forests are not

a part of our daily surroundings," Swanson explains.

"Every one of us relies on agriculture at a fundamental level. We all eat food and wear clothes, so we all need to have an awareness of the subject. I am determined to show my students that 'city kids' do not have to be limited in their education or agricultural experiences."

Dianne was selected to receive Ag in the Classroom's highest honor not only for her dedication to incorporating agricultural themes into her second grade classroom at Los Cerritos Elementary School, but for her passion for school gardens

and her commitment to showing her school community that gardens contain living tools for **See Dianne Swanson... p. 4**



- Academic achievement
- A healthy lifestyle
- Environmental stewardship
- Community and social development in children



Common Ground: What's new at CSGN?

Agriculture in the Classroom is proud to be a founding member of the California School Garden Network (CSGN) and its ongoing efforts to promote school gardens as valuable teaching tools for students. In recent months we have had the opportunity to expand the awareness of school gardens at large-scale events, such as Governor Schwarzenegger's capitol inaugural festivities, as part of "Celebrating the Green Dream."

In conjunction with our annual conference in October, we joined CSGN at Locke High School in Watts, CA (LAUSD) for a garden transformation of "The Sanctuary" where, with the help of the school, community, and network organizations, a school garden was created for the Locke students. CSGN also released its long-awaited instructional book for teachers, "Gardens for Learning" in October (see Bookshelf on p. 5 for more details).

Going for Gold...



The *California Grown* campaign, with the assistance of CFAITC, recently distributed new educational activities to more than 300,000 K-5 students across the state.

This "Go for the Gold" program unit includes six activities designed to teach students the ideas behind the *California Grown* program. These ideas include pride in the state of California, support of local agricultural industries and California's economy, and the relationship between California residents and California land.

The activities include general infor-

mation and fun facts about California agriculture, plus you will find nutritional information, healthy meal suggestions, tips on cooking with kids, and recipes.

Shaun White, a gold medalist snowboarder and native Californian is the spokesman for the campaign.

The activities and teaching standards can be downloaded from the *CA Grown* Web site, www.californiagrown.org.

School Garden, in a Box!

In light of the growing school garden movement, an innovative alternative to traditional school gardens has surfaced! If you would like to experience the benefits of garden-based teaching, but have yet to establish your own outdoor school garden, the EarthBox may be a simple solution.



EarthBox Education Director, Molly Philbin recently presented a demonstration of this unique container gardening system to Ag in the Classroom and the California School Garden Network (CSGN), and explained how schools, civic programs, and families around the country have enjoyed growing a multitude of vegetables, flowers and herbs without having a traditional garden.



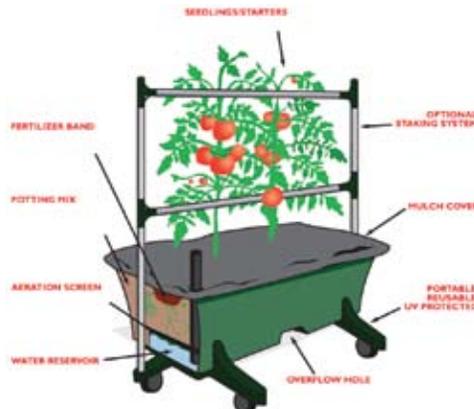
Michele Sutton's high school honor students mentor and instruct 5th graders in agriculture lessons.

CFAITC Executive Director, Judy Culbertson, who worked to set up a pair of EarthBoxes for a recent CSGN event, believes them to be a practical tool for teachers new to gardening, or for those who have limited outdoor space for traditional garden sites. Following the event, the EarthBoxes were donated to Robla Elementary School in Sacramento, for use in their after-school programs.

The EarthBox, its standards-based PreK-12th Grade Curriculum Support and Youth Garden Guide are correlated to teach the science behind plants, water, soil, light and nutrition, both in the garden and classroom. Students are engaged in the scientific process while growing healthy crops in an easy to use, environmentally friendly, sustainable, container garden system that facilitates their understanding and involvement in the scientific experiments presented in the curriculum.

The EarthBox Garden Packages are easily set up, maintained and sustained. Healthy crops grown in EarthBoxes produce high yields on balconies, decks, rooftops and backyards, on pavement and concrete—anywhere there is 6-8 hours of light. Anyone anywhere can have a sustainable food supply with an EarthBox!

To learn more about bringing an EarthBox in to your classroom, please contact Molly Philbin, EarthBox Education Director at 800-821-8839 or visit www.earthbox.com.



Lasting Connections

The forestry industry is a very important part of agriculture. California has more forestland than any state other than Alaska. Forests cover over one-third of California.

Timber!

Did you ever wonder why people shout "timber" when something's falling over? To the forest industry, timber refers to the trees standing in the forest that will be cut down for lumber. Lumber refers to the trees that have already been cut down and processed into pieces of wood that can be used to build things.



Activities

1. Interview with a tree.

Ask students to write up an "interview" with a tree or write a story from a tree's perspective. In the interview or story, the tree should reveal how different plants and animals depend on it and how they affect it.

2. Wood and paper products.

Ask students to write an essay and give an in-class presentation that addresses the following topics. Request that students cite their reference materials. What products have you used today that are made from wood, wood fiber or wood chemicals? What forest products are present in the classroom, at home?

From the *What's Growin' On?* Lasting Connections teacher's guide, produced by CFAITC.

Activities for your classroom!



Hogs on a Diet

Grades: 4-7

Swine were among the first of all animals to be **domesticated**—around 6,000 years ago. A domesticated animal is one that is trained to live in a human environment and be of use to humans.

Female swine are called **sows**. Sows give birth to litters of pigs twice a year. Each **litter** usually has eight to 12 baby pigs. Giving birth to baby pigs is called **farrowing**. Baby pigs appear very **greedy** when they are competing for food from their mothers. For this reason the words “pig” and “hog” have come to be associated with greedy behavior. Despite their reputation, pigs will never overeat. Once a pig is full, it stops eating.

Pigs are **weaned** when they are two to four weeks old. They are called “nursery pigs” until they reach 50 pounds and “growing/finishing pigs” from then until they reach about 240 pounds. After that they are called hogs. Hogs are usually taken to market when they weigh 240-280 pounds.

In the past hogs were fed table scraps and had a reputation for eating just about anything. The meat from hogs fed that way was very high in fat. Today some of the food fed to swine are corn, wheat and soybean meal. Vitamins and **minerals** are added to increase growth and improve health. Bacon, pork sausage, pork chops and ham all come from hogs. In addition, swine are used in the production of non-food products like fertilizer, glass, china, floor wax, chalk, crayons, and heart valves.



Pork provides protein, B-vitamins and thiamin to our diets. Thiamin changes carbohydrates into energy and promotes a healthy appetite.

Objective: Students will identify an assortment of feed grains and learn the importance of eating a variety of foods, both for themselves and for farm animals.

Science
 Before class, place a few grains of each type of feed in the shoe box. Place the shoe box on a table in the front of the room so students can see it, but don't let them move it or look inside.

- What it means to “hog” something. Where did that saying come from? How do hogs eat? What do they eat?
- Read and discuss background.
- Guess what is in the box.
- Shake the box. Is there any sound? What does it sound like?
- Open the box, and feel what is inside without seeing it. What does it feel like?
- Show students the feed grains, and ask them to identify each one. Explain that hogs and other kinds of animals eat these kinds of grains and

that, just like us, hogs need a variety of foods to help meet their nutritional needs.

Math
 Sort the grains and place them in piles, then graph the quantities.

Language Arts
 Students will make a list of common phrases associated with swine (living high on the hog, acting like a pig in a poke, being in hog heaven).

- Students will research the meaning of the phrases and their origins.

This activity is available from Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom at www.clover.okstate.edu/fourh/aitc/lessons/primary/hogs.pdf

Materials

- Shoebox
- An assortment of animal feed grains available from feed stores, like wheat, corn, soybeans, and grain sorghum. Ask for samples from broken bags.

Vocabulary

domesticated - adapted to living with human beings and to serving their purposes

farrowing - giving birth to pigs

greedy - having a keen appetite

litter - the young born to an animal at a single time

mineral - a solid chemical element or compound that occurs naturally in the form of crystals and results from processes not involving living or once-living matter

sow - an adult female hog

wean - to get a child or young animal used to food other than its mother's milk

Attend the Oct. 12-14, 2007

AITC Symposium

Asilomar Conference Grounds
 Pacific Grove, CA • Monterey County

Register online at www.cfaitc.org!

Registration Materials available June 2007.

Agricultural Tidbits

Did you know...



Orange juice prices have risen to their highest level in three years. Most American-made orange juice comes from Florida, where production has been hurt by hurricanes in recent years. California produces relatively little juice, and because of the January freeze will have even less than average this season. (CFBF's Food and Farm News, Vol. 10, No. 166; Mar. 5, 2007)

Rice farmers are draining their fields in preparation for the planting season. **Waterfowl**, which spend the winter on the flooded rice fields, are leaving for their summer homes. Once the soil dries farmers will prepare to flood them again to plant this year's crop. Estimates are that farmers will plant no more than 550,000 acres in rice this year. (CFBF's Food and Farm News, Vol. 10, No. 175; Mar. 16, 2007)

As California strives to become the top **cheese**-producing state, production from the Central Valley will lead the way. The CA Department of Food and Agriculture says Merced County led California in cheese production last year, followed by Tulare and Kings counties. Nearly half of the **milk** produced in California is made into cheese. (CFBF's Food and Farm News, Vol. 10, No. 189; Apr. 5, 2007)



Don't let their pale coloring fool you: **Artichokes** contain levels of **antioxidants** that meet or exceed those of more richly colored foods. A study by university researchers found artichokes with the highest antioxidant level of any **vegetable**. For more information about the study, visit www.oceanmist.com. (CFBF's Food and Farm News, Vol. 10, No. 191, Apr. 9, 2007)



Dianne Swanson...

Continued from page 1

teaching nearly every subject imaginable while meeting state content standards.

Dianne is credited for creating the productive and beautiful Los Cerritos Elementary School garden, The Urban Farmyard, an award-winning oasis of agricultural learning, visible from the 405 freeway.

Since 1999, when she began teaching, Dianne has worked to create the ultimate school garden. The Urban Farmyard consists of a 60' x 80' area that includes 22 raised beds for vegetables, flowers, herbs, California native plants, and a composting area.

Outdoor classroom seating, a tool barn, and a coop housing hens, rabbits, ducks, a rooster and a guinea fowl are also housed in the Farmyard. Dianne and many of her fellow teachers hold



Los Cerritos Elementary Urban Farmyard in Long Beach.

the years. As a result of a grant Swanson received, she has provided her school with a portable cooking cart supplied with equipment to prepare the produce grown in the Farmyard. She uses cooking to teach math and reading skills as well as sequencing and functional text. Her classes have donated food to their local food bank, and have implemented a school-wide lunch-waste composting program.

Dianne has been actively involved with Ag in the Classroom for over five years. She is a member of AITC's Educational Resource Committee, and a regular presenter at AITC conferences. In addition to her involvement with Ag in the Classroom, Swanson is also involved in many local and statewide organizations that promote agriculture, gardening and community support, including the California School Garden



Dianne with CDFA Secretary, AG Kawamura at AG DAY LA 2006, held at Los Cerritos Elementary.

their classes in the garden to illustrate examples of science, math, history, social studies and art.

"Our garden and the larger picture of agriculture are important in my classroom, school and community," said Swanson. "I use it as a springboard to teach others that agriculture is truly the basis for our society."

The most popular crops at Los Cerritos are salad crops, however, a variety of other items have been incorporated through

Network.

Among other awards and recognitions, as 2007 Outstanding Teacher, Swanson will receive an all expense paid trip to the National Ag in the Classroom Conference June 6-9 in New Orleans, where she will compete in the USDA's Excellence in Teaching About Agriculture Awards Program. Please join us in congratulating Dianne for her accomplishments, and wish her luck at the National Conference later this year!

2007 Outstanding California Teacher Honorees

Congratulations to the following teachers who have also been selected by Ag in the Classroom for their innovative and important work in bringing the gift of agriculture into their students' lives.

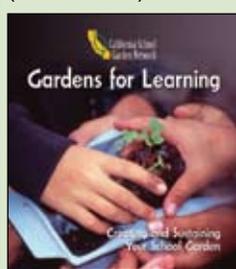
- **Debbi Hoy**, Grenada Elementary School, Siskiyou County, Teacher of Excellence for Language Arts
- **Bill Loveridge**, Loyalton High School, Sierra County, Vocational Ag Teacher of the Year
- **Kimberley Miller**, Mission Viejo High School, Orange County, Vocational Ag Teacher of the Year
- **Christina Wilkinson**, Lillian Larsen Elementary School, San Luis Obispo County, Teacher of Excellence for Special Education

Resources support ag literacy at all levels



The Bookshelf

■ Gardens for Learning: Creating and Sustaining Your School Garden (Educators)



Created by the California School Garden Network (CSGN). A comprehensive guidebook to support the growing school garden movement. This guidebook is a must-have for anyone looking to enhance learning

through the use of gardens in schools and other community settings. Free copies available to educators at www.csgn.org. ISBN 0-9788693-0-3 California School Garden Network, 2006.

■ **Leaf Man** (PreK-3) Collages made from leaves illustrate the journey that the leaf man takes as he goes where the wind blows. ISBN 0-15-205304-2 Lois Ehlert, Harcourt Children's Books, 2005.

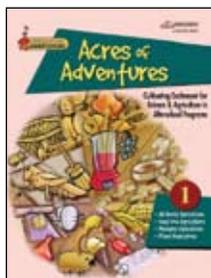


■ **The Sun, the Rain, and the Apple Seed** (4-6) Historical fiction about real-life American folk hero Johnny Appleseed. ISBN 0-618-23487-X Lynda Durrant, Clarion Books, 2003.

■ **Hello, Fruit Face!: The Paintings of Giuseppe Arcimboldo** (K-6) In the fantastic portraits by the 16th-century Italian painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo, compositions of fruit, vegetables, flowers, and books, animals, or garden tools magically turn into vivid depictions of beautiful young women, weathered old men, or the personifications of the seasons and the elements. ISBN 3-7913-2084-X Claudia Strand, Prestel Publishing, 1999.

■ **Understanding Photosynthesis with Max Axiom Super Scientist** (4-8) This graphic novel follows the adventures of Max Axiom as he explains the science behind photosynthesis. ISBN 0-7368-6841-0 Liam O'Donnell, Capstone Press, 2007.

■ **Acres of Adventures Activity Guides** (3-5) Cultivating excitement for science and agriculture in after-school programs, this resource was developed in partnership with CFAITC and other state AITC programs. Book 1: All About Agriculture, Fast Food Agriculture, Mystery Agriculture, and Plant Detectives. Book 2: Agriculture Gone Wild, Farm Physics, Frontier Living, and Insect Invasion. \$7.50 each plus shipping. National 4-H Cooperative Curriculum System www.n4hccs.org/afterschoolag



■ **Sensational Springtime** (K-2) A collection of hands-on math and science investigations centers on spring-related themes. The book is divided into five sections: Sowing and Growing, Parents and Their Offspring, Blowing in the Wind, Earth Day Every Day, and Data Collection and Organization. Experiences include growing seeds, caring for guppies, and exploring properties of eggs. \$21.95 plus s/h, tax; request item #1118. AIMS Education Foundation www.aimsedu.org

■ **Addressing Misconceptions About Agriculture** (9-12) This kit's 35 issues cover topics from DDT to global food issues, ethanol to environmental issues, and nutrition to animal production. The kit comes complete with an 11-page lesson plan, background information on each issue, three sets of student cards and a CD-ROM containing two PowerPoint presentations. \$15. American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture www.ageducate.org

■ **Fit for a Princess** (3-6) Created for after-school programs for girls 8-12, this resource focuses on nutrition and being physically active. Participants earn a patch by completing five activities from the booklet and performing a reader's theater skit with their group. Kit includes leader's guide with reproducible activity sheets, student workbooks with punch-out crown, and Princess ZIP patches. Free. www.calbeef.org



Web sites worth exploring

- **APSnet Education Center:** www.apsnet.org/education/K-12PlantPathways
- **California Garden Clubs:** www.cagardenclub.org
- **California Grown:** www.californiagrown.org
- **California School Garden Network:** www.csgn.org
- **Farmology:** www.farmology.com
- **National Biodiesel Board:** www.biodiesel.org
- **PlantingScience.org:** www.plantingscience.org



■ **2007 Teacher Resource Guide** Free! Newly updated guide is packed with data on ag literacy resources. Choose from interactive CD or 223-page book. Order by returning the enclosed postcard or requesting online at www.cfaitc.org/trg.

■ **Cantaloupe Fact Sheet** The 27th in a series of fact/activity sheets is now available and it's free! Learn about cantaloupe, its many uses, its history, and more.

■ **What's Growin' On? Lasting Connections** This year's NIE supplement will connect you and your students to the agriculture industry and invite you to learn more about agriculture's past and present-day practices. Many activities are aligned to the Content Standards for CA Public Schools. Free class sets of 35 will go fast; request yours now!



To order the above resources, contact CFAITC at 2300 River Plaza Drive, Sacramento, CA 95833-3293 800/700-AITC Fax: 916/561-5697 cfaitc@cfbf.com www.cfaitc.org

Imagine this... Writing Contest Brings Ag to Life for Students

From more than 10,000 stories submitted by California students, six young authors were chosen as statewide winners in the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom's annual *Imagine this...* story writing contest. The winning students, their parents, state legislators, teachers and ag literacy supporters gathered at the California Farm Bureau Federation building in Sacramento late last month for the awards ceremony.

The six winners received certificates, savings bonds and medals. They also watched their stories come to life on the screen. Art students at Sacramento's Inderkum High School spent several weeks composing digital animation for each of the winning agriculturally based stories, including the trials of rice harvesting, the life cycle of a water drop and an extraterrestrial taste-testing of California-grown commodities.

The student authors, their families and teachers were also recognized before a crowd of more than 100 supporters by CFAITC and CFBF President Doug Mosebar at Ag in the Classroom's National Ag Week Tribute Dinner on March 22.

Imagine this... statewide winners include: Andrew Moss, third grade, Apple Valley, San Bernardino County (Cow vs. Farmer); Brenna Gittins, fourth grade, Lincoln, Placer County (The Best Buffet Ever); Bo Cherry, fifth grade, Arbuckle, Colusa County (The Journey of Wallace Waterdrop); Samantha Coombs, sixth grade, Arbuckle, Colusa County (A Scarecrow's Diary); Cheyenne Rogers, seventh grade, Colusa, Colusa County (Rice Ready); and Amelia Clyatt, eighth grade, Mt. Shasta, Siskiyou County (Honey Bzzz).

CFAITC Executive Director Judy Culbertson calls this year's *Imagine this...* program a great success. "This contest is designed to reach the many students who have no idea how fundamental agriculture is in all of our lives. We hope that by writing about it, they will begin to understand and take an interest in agriculture as a whole," she said.



From left, Andrew Moss, Bo Cherry, Cheyenne Rogers, Amelia Clyatt and Brenna Gittins. (Not pictured, Samantha Coombs.)

Calendar

World Trade Week

May 20, 2007

How do agricultural imports and exports impact California's economy?

Dairy Month

June, 2007

Pay tribute to the hard work by America's dairy farmers, and to America's dairy cows. What foods fall into the dairy category?

AITC National Conference

June 6-9, 2007 New Orleans, LA

Workshops, make 'n' takes and field trips fill this conference with ag information developed for the classroom.

Details at www.agclassroom.org under National Conference.

First Day of Summer

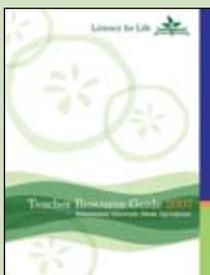
June 21, 2007

Plan a family reunion and get them all talking! How far back do you have to go to find a family member involved in agriculture?

AITC California Symposium

Oct 12-14, 2007

Asilomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove
Registration information available in June at www.cfaitc.org or by calling 800/700-AITC.



Order your copy of the newly-published 2007

Teacher Resource Guide

by filling out the self-addressed, postage-paid postcard inserted in this newsletter or by contacting the

California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom

800/700-AITC (2482) www.cfaitc.org

Please specify book or CD format.

Cream of the Crop



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