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FARM SMART welcomes Imperial High

1. Local high school students learned about agriculture and careers at FARM SMART.

In a collaboration with local USDA officials, over 50 high school students from Imperial High School recently visited FARM SMART. They learned about Imperial Valley agriculture, agriculture careers, irrigation, and sustainability. The students also picked vegetables and enjoyed a field tour where they learned about current research at the Desert Research and Extension Center.

HAVE A PHOTO TO SHARE? QUESTION? ARTICLE IDEA? SEND THEM TO US!

FARM SMART is an educational outreach program of the Desert Research and Extension Center in Holtville, CA. It began in 2001 and continues to grow and educate through the Winter Visitor and K-12 programs. Contact FARM SMART at 760-356-3067, surie@ucanr.edu, or 1004 E Holton Rd Holtville, CA.
As you may have noticed, our wonderful winter weather is drawing to a close and the inevitable hot weather has returned (it is currently 94 degrees Fahrenheit as I write this). In our “What’s Growin’ On” section, we will show pictures of our fields. Our hope is that you can see the progression of crops throughout the year to become more familiar with local growing practices.

Where there was broccoli, there is now Sudangrass.

After being disced 3-4 times, this spring mix field is ready to be planted with grass hay.

Leaf Lettuce gone to seed.

Alfalfa continues to be harvested.

Center staff Kay, Efrain, and Rogelio at work on irrigation pipe.

Burrowing Owl nesting season continues.
**Grilled Asparagus**

Cover with olive oil

Add salt, pepper to taste

Grill on high heat for 3 minutes, or place in 400 degree oven for 10 minutes (for a fun twist, wrap bacon around it!)

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FARM SMART NEWS

APRIL 2014

FARM SMART THANK YOU’s

Parent submission to the Imperial Valley Press

Also from a student in the ICOE special day class

Student "Thank You" from ICOE special day class

From a student in a Washington School. 

Also from a student in the ICOE special day class

From a parent submission to the Imperial Valley Press.

From a student in a Washington School.

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From a student in a Washington School.
On April 1, a group of 5th graders from Borrego Springs, along with high school seniors who tutor them, paid a visit to the Desert Research and Extension Center (DREC) and the FARM SMART program. Activities included making a bead bracelet (where each bead represents something a plant needs to grow), learning about soil and water conservation, and also about the differences between fruits and vegetables and where seeds come from. The students then made a salad that they were able to try during the “My Agrilicious Food Pyramid” portion. The students were invited outside to harvest some of the Desert winter crops such as daikon radishes, beets and carrots.

DREC director Sam Wang then spoke to the group about his research on Lesquerella (Lesquerella fendleri) as a potential biofuel. This mustard relative grows naturally in arid and semi-arid landscapes and is native to areas in the southwest United States and Mexico. It is very drought tolerant and because of its unique hydroxy fatty acids it has greater lubricity than many other oils, and unlike castor oil it is not toxic (castor has ricin). Lesquerella also has molecules that allow it to flow more easily at cold temperatures than petroleum. Seed oil is used in a wide array of products, including lithium greases, polymers in paints and coatings, base stocks as lubricants, and applications in the personal care industry.

- Text courtesy Alison Kent, UCANR
TEACHER’S CORNER: VERMICULTURE – A FANCY WORD FOR WORMS!

Ever wondered to do with all those kitchen scraps? Here’s a fun activity for the whole family: worm composting, also known as vermicomposting or vermiculture (there’s a vocabulary word for you, teachers!). FARM SMART has our own worm bin. It would be a good class project as well. All you need is a plastic container such as a Rubbermaid container, some soil, newspaper, and, of course, the worms! Red wigglers should be used as earthworms struggle in captivity.

For complete instructions, visit http://makezine.com/projects/make-your-own-worm-bin/
UCCE Day of Science and Service

Participate with us in the University of California’s “Day of Science and Service” May 8, 2014! This is a great opportunity for all ages. Teachers could do this as a class.

Visit www.beascientist.ucanr.edu to participate.

Everyone is a Scientist!

Pollinators

How many pollinators do you see? Bees, butterflies, beetles, bats—they are all important! Our food depends on them. Spend three minutes outside counting how many pollinators you see, and let us know by adding your count to our pollinator map.

Water

Why is conserving water important? Conserving water isn’t just important, it’s essential. Water is critical to all life. People, animals and plants all need water to survive. With an increasing population, there’s more demand on our water supplies and it’s more important to conserve than ever before.

Food

Why is it important to know where our food is grown? By knowing where our food is grown, we become healthier eaters and more aware of the resources that go into growing and producing our food. With the demand on our food supplies growing, it’s becoming more important to understand where our food comes from and to make sure everyone can access it.