

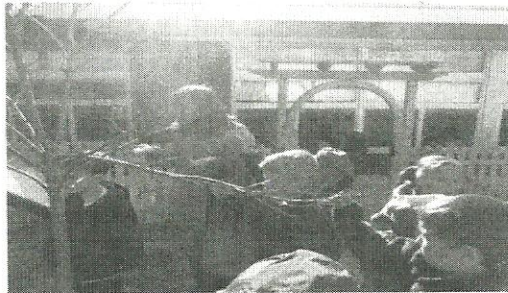
December 10, 2012

## Winter Is Coming / Happy Hanukkah!



We have been very busy with garden education this past week. This may be hard to believe given the onset of winter, but as the 4's and 5's learned, there is so much happening even if we cannot see it.

On Thursday, we met in the garden for the last time until spring. It was cold, and as one child observed, "everything looked bare." The trees have lost their leaves; the vegetables growing in the garden beds are gone; and the lilies that line the perimeter of the garden are brown and flowerless. With so little to distract our eyes, we were able to observe things we cannot see other times of year. First, we noticed that there are trees that have leaves, which fall in autumn (deciduous), and trees with needles that stay green all year round (coniferous). We learned that deciduous trees need to lose their leaves to protect their rigid branches during snowy winter weather. Coniferous trees, on the other hand, have flexible branches that can withstand snow. There is nothing more beautiful in winter than snow-covered evergreens!

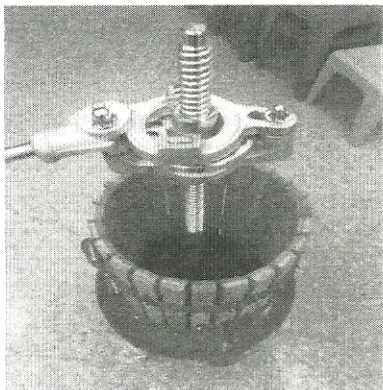


We also noticed that plants were preparing for spring in small ways. The cherry tree in our garden has begun to form buds that slowly will turn to new leaves. The bulbs we planted in October are growing underground, and the plants we composted last month are working their scientific magic and turning into rich soil for our spring planting season. The garden and the gardener work all year long!

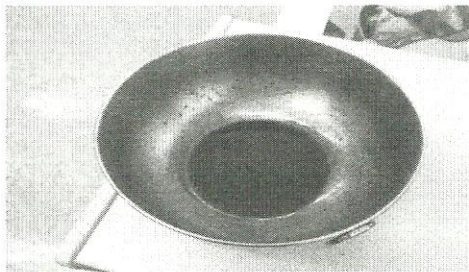
Yesterday was our first indoor garden session of the school year, and we started off with a most exciting project. Given that it is Hanukkah, the Festival of Light, we talked about the importance of oil. We discussed why Hanukkah is celebrated for

eight nights ("The oil lasted for eight days!"); why oil was needed to light the Temple in the days of the Macabees ("They didn't have light switches!"), and, the hardest question, how the Jewish people got their oil in the days of the Temple. Yes the oil came from olives, which came from trees, which grow in Israel.

We talked about the whole process of growing, harvesting and pressing olives and then . . . turned our classroom into an olive oil factory! With fresh olives just picked by farmers days ago, we made our own olive oil. The children handled the olives, searching for the oil hidden inside, and then placed them into our own olive press.



Each child helped to turn the handle to work our press. We really needed strong muscles as the press tightened and squeezed our olives. Soon we could see something dripping from the bottom of the press! Was this the olive oil?



The liquid from the press was a mixture of olive oil and olive juice. We would need to wait until the two separated. ("This is like science!" one boy exclaimed). We lit a special menorah with oil – just like in the days of the Macabees – and together sang the Hanukkah blessings. What a wonderful way to celebrate Hanukkah!