



El Monte Union High School District

Community Committed to College and Career

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 22, 2018

CONTACT: Juliette Funes, Maritza Fairfield

PHONE: (909) 445-1001

Rosemead High Receives \$3,000 Budding Botanist Grant to Explore Wisdom of Weeds

EL MONTE – Rosemead High School will add an unusual component to its student-run organic herb and vegetable gardens – a garden of weeds to examine how common intruders such as dandelions, clover and nettles can benefit the ecosystem.

The “Wisdom of Weeds” program will be developed with a \$3,000 Budding Botanist Grant, awarded to the school for its commitment to environmental sustainability and biodiversity. The grant – consisting of a \$2,500 check and books/materials valued at \$500 – was provided through a joint partnership between Klorane Botanical Foundation and KidsGardening.org. It was presented during a ceremony and garden tour on May 17.

“This is a tremendous honor for Rosemead students, who have worked so hard to develop our gardens,” Rosemead High English teacher Joseph Vasquez said. “Now they are studying how weeds have nutritional and medicinal properties and are a part of the natural landscape. Weeds can be useful in our efforts to reduce pesticides and produce a more sustainable ecosystem.”

Rosemead was one of just six schools in the United States to receive the grant package, which includes a grow light lab that will enable the school to grow seedlings in a professional and safe environment. A portion of the grant money has already been used to produce seedlings for the edible gardens.

After studying healthy eating and climate change in Vasquez’s English class, Wisdom of Weeds was conceived as a way to help students consider an ecologically informed approach to gardening. Using weed species to attract pollinators such as bees, students gain a new perspective on the benefits of weeds.

“The Wisdom of Weeds will have a big impact,” Rosemead High senior Kaitlyn Ly said. “Weeds are labeled as intruders, a species that we don’t want, but through their inclusion we show that we value all life and that diversity has benefits that go beyond the gardens.”

Rosemead’s Best of Thymes garden complex has more than a dozen garden beds that grow herbs, vegetables and edible flowers such as sage, mallow, artichoke, rainbow corn and nasturtium. The gardens provide fresh ingredients for the school’s Culinary Arts program.

– MORE –

Klorane Botanical Foundation and KidsGardening.org created the Budding Botanist Grant to encourage student gardening projects in urban areas, inspiring students to explore the world of plants and nurture the botanical life they discover in their local ecosystems. Rosemead's gardens are tended by student volunteers, who receive supervision from the nonprofit Eco Urban Gardens.

"El Monte Union students are learning the value of environmental sustainability in their daily lives, and what the benefits are for a community at risk for diseases caused by unhealthy habits," El Monte Union Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga said. "We are honored that Rosemead High has been recognized as a national leader of biodiversity by organizations who share our commitment to sustainability."

El Monte Union is a Green Ribbon School and Energy Star leader, recognized by the state and U.S. Department of Education for its pioneering efforts to maintain safe learning environments through environmental conservation efforts. The District is on tap to install solar powered carports at six District sites and has been recognized with a San Gabriel Valley Water Smart Award by the Upper San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District for reducing water waste through a landscape survey and retrofit program.

The District recently unveiled its newest green mural, "This is how blue and gold make green," created by South El Monte High School students.

PHOTO CAPTION:

052218_EMUHSB_BOTANIST: Rosemead High School was awarded a \$3,000 Budding Botanist Grant to develop a "Wisdom of Weeds" program and examine how weeds can be beneficial during a ceremony on May 17. The grant recognizes the school's commitment to environmental sustainability and biodiversity.

###

The vision of the El Monte Union High School District is to empower and motivate our students to be resilient, college and career ready, lifelong learners and contributing members of our global society.