

**“What Tarquinius Superbus said in the garden by means of the poppies,
the son understood but the messenger did not.” Hamann**

[Hamann](#) refers to an ancient story that teaches us that an act can have an entirely different meaning for someone who has special knowledge. The son understood the message because of his special relationship to his father; the messenger on the other hand did not. I believe that in Science what is of greatest importance is not the facts that we learn but rather our relationship to learning. Science teaches us a method for thinking and evaluating data; it provides us with a way for understanding the secret messages in our world. Constant inquiry is the price of intelligence.

**Where does one begin to describe the mysterious Mr. Otterspoor?
Science teacher? Volunteer? Lover of Food? Traveler? Bearded Man?**

The following excerpt has been reprinted with permission of the publisher from the book, [BeardedMANia](#).

What is known about the Bearded Man prior to his involvement with the Darien Public Schools has been pieced together from various sources. This account is far from exhaustive and even when people were found to corroborate this story they did so only on the basis of anonymity. This chapter does not deal with his birth and early childhood (to learn more turn to chapter 2 Creation Myths and Legends) but rather his post high school years. It is rumored that while in college he seized the presidency of the Sacred Heart University Habitat for Humanity Campus Chapter and soon thereafter declared himself Dictator for Life. At the same time he worked for the now closed Volunteer Center of Greater Bridgeport where he became Program Coordinator after completing a term of service with the Bridgeport InterRegional AmeriCorps program. While at The Center he oversaw the placement of hundreds of volunteers and he developed the Step By Step program which repaired the front stairs on over a dozen homes and was recognized by USA Today Weekend for work done on Make a Difference Day. It was his work with the Volunteer Center as well as Habitat for which he was recognized by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education, with a Leadership & Community Service Award. There are records of a BS in Biology and a Master’s degree in teaching bearing the mark of the Bearded One. It is at this point in his history that verifiable information becomes harder to find. Follicles of beard hair collected from more than two dozen Habitat houses around Greater Bridgeport demonstrate a similar DNA sequence. Frighteningly so do samples collected in Baltimore, Maryland and the Philippines. Partial size 16 footprints were found at Stonehenge and near the London Eye. Blurry camera phone footage appears to show a lumbering shape with a furry face crossing the Bern in Ireland. A year later a stub for passage on a sail boat headed to the coral coast in Fiji was found. Additional claims of sightings have come in from Pisa, Venice, Milan, Paris, Versailles, Athens, Tokyo and even Amsterdam... but who knows if you can trust anything a person has claimed to have seen in that city. Most upsettingly it is now confirmed that a mud pool in New Zealand bears the imprint of his posterior. What is known for sure is that in 2002 a man bearing a beard, and size 16 work boots, suddenly appeared at Darien High School. This man can still be found there today teaching Biology and Botany, leading the KGB club and advising the Class of 2008, all under what is thought to be an assumed name...Mr. Otterspoor.

Botany Course Description

Semester Course: ½ lab science credit: Grades 11 and 12

Teacher: Sean Otterspoor – sotterspoor@darienps.org

Science Room C-104

Course Description:

There are three main objectives in Botany:

- A] to teach basic botanical facts and principles
- B] to relate these facts and principles to familiar examples and human activities
- C] to enhance environmental understanding and awareness

The main focus of this course is to emphasize the continuous interaction of living plants with the environment and to stress how environmental factors affect growth and survival.

Major Learning Outcomes:

Students are expected to be able to accomplish the following:

- A] describe the reasons for studying and caring about plants
- B] reason why plants are intermediaries between sun and other life forms
- C] describe how plants transform solar energy into food and other complex molecules
- D] explain plant reproductive processes
- E] describe and give examples of basic growth requirements
- F] discuss plant growth regulation leading to horticultural applications
- G] recognize household problems of plants
- H] explain the requirements of seed germination
- I] understand the various physiologies of flowers, stems, roots, and leaves of plants
- J] to utilize technology to appropriately collect, analyze and present data

Evaluation:

Students will be able to do the following

- A] demonstrate how all forms of life directly and indirectly relate to plants
- B] list the characteristics that apply to living things
- C] recognize and explain propagation techniques for household plants
- D] demonstrate techniques for cultivating seedlings
- E] experiment to show variable effects of light, water and temperature
- F] understand the structure and function of the flower, leaf, stem and root

Grading Policy:

There are five major ways by which I assess student progress:

1. Tests/Quizzes, 2. Homework, 3. Laboratories, 4. Papers/Presentations and 5. Greenhouse Activities.

Marking period grades are determined by taking the total number of points accumulated during each marking period and dividing them by the total possible points offered.

I will post class grades weekly using the last few digits of your book bar code as your secret number. I will hand out individual grade reports once a month or after a major project. You will also receive weekly grade reports via email if you have supplied me with your email address. You may ask to see or discuss your grade at any time (just don't disrupt class to do so). The adult(s) responsible for you may also register to access your grades, attendance files and homework via the Darien Public Schools Parent Connect website. Ultimately it is your responsibility to keep track of your grade.

If you are absent (excused) from class on the day of a quiz you will be expected to take it on the day you return to class (extensions will be given to those with long term absences). If your absence is not excused you will receive a zero for that assignment.

Effort Points: I do not include a classroom participation grade each marking period because I cannot objectively measure your individual levels of daily participation (especially after the principal took away my effort detection devices claiming the electrodes posed a safety issue...). However I will give extra points on assignments that display extra effort (work beyond what is reasonably expected).

Quizzes will be based on readings, class notes, audio-visuais, guest speakers, field trips, and lab work. (if it took place in class it's fair game)

- Most quizzes will be announced ahead of time. I try not to give quizzes on Mondays or Fridays although it may occasionally be necessary to do so.
- Quizzes will usually be worth 40 – 60 points

Homework assignments will vary and may include everything from answering book questions to collecting biological samples. You may type or handwrite your homework but you must use the following format for turning in it in. In the top left corner write your:

Name – Period #

Assignment Name (if it's book work please write the page # and question #'s)

Date

I know that as upper level high school students you have many responsibilities outside of our classroom that may occasionally impact your ability to hand in homework. I believe that if homework is to have any value it must be thoughtfully completed, therefore I will accept most homework assignments up to three days after its official due date with no penalty. Work received after that time will receive half to no credit at my discretion. Any work not turned in before the chapter quiz/test will receive no credit. After the quiz/test all missing assignments will become zeros. Abuse of this policy will result in a more "traditional" approach to grading homework.

The 3 day rule does not apply to assignments that are "due by" a particular date.

Assignments like lab reports and large projects will not be accepted late without severe penalties. FYI: Severe (adjective) se-vere: defined as harsh or dangerous usually causing great discomfort.

The five points earned on a homework assignment are treated the same as five points earned on a test, there are just more points on a test. Completed homework that was turned in on time may be returned to you with partial credit (3/5) and suggestions for corrections. You may redo all on time homework assignments until they receive full credit.

Laboratories: Labs are an integral part of this course as the scheduling of two additional class periods every eight days indicates. Labs will not always fall on lab days. We may perform labs during any of periods we meet. During all labs you will be expected to follow all the rules outlined in the Safety Contract you will receive, sign and return. Noncompliance with the safety rules and/or lab procedures will result in your removal from the lab and NO CREDIT will be given for that assignment. Lab stations must be cleaned up before you leave class or you will not receive full credit.

Lab Reports can be either formal or informal. Formal lab reports will always be due one week after the completion of the lab activity. **Lab reports will not be accepted late.** Students are strongly encouraged to turn in their lab reports before the due date. (I will gladly review them with you)

Group Projects/Presentations: Throughout the year you will have the opportunity to work in groups on several projects. These projects will range from creating presentations to cooking and even a play performed in the auditorium. There are no excuses for not presenting your project on time, particularly when you have worked in a group. It is the responsibility of the group members to make sure all materials are ready on time.

Greenhouse and Planting Activities are an important part of this class. Each student will be graded on performance and participation on assigned activities, maintaining a clean and organized area and following directions. Students will be assigned planting areas to cultivate during class time. They may also work in their assigned areas during free periods.

www.otterspoor.com: Bonus questions are available online for selected units.

Cheating: Cheating is not accepted in any form and will result in the loss of that assignment to the botany compost pile. See the student handbook for the DHS policy on cheating.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the improper use of another person's writing or ideas. It can be as subtle as the inadvertent omission of quotes or proper references when citing a source or as blatant as knowingly copying an entire paper verbatim and claiming it as original work.

Submitting Papers Online: I will ask you to submit written assignments to www.TurnItIn.com from time to time. This website enables me to compare your paper to those of your classmates, students in other classes and schools, papers written in previous years and those available for download off the internet. Turn It In also automatically checks your paper against the internet to verify your sources.

Senior Exemption (Second Semester Only)

Seniors may be eligible for senior exemption from the final exam if they meet the following criteria:

1. No less than an A- average for the fourth quarter.
2. No unexcused absences for the fourth quarter.
3. Excused absences not to exceed 5 (including field trips and AP exams)

The final semester grade is computed according to the Science Department's policy as follows:

40% first marking period 40% second marking period 20% Final exam

Attendance Policy:

The botany attendance policy is in compliance with the Science Department policy as well as the DHS attendance policy

Absences exceeding 11 class periods for any one quarter will result in no credit for that quarter. A lab day counts as a two period day.

Each unexcused absence (cut) will result in lessening the quarter grade by 3%. The third unexcused absence will result in loss of credit for that quarter (X).

Every 3 unexcused tardies will accumulate into one unexcused absence. Each tardy can result in the loss of 1% of the quarter grade.

Lost Book Policy:

Textbooks or CD ROMs that are lost or damaged must be paid for with a check made out to the Science Department. It is the student's responsibility to secure the text and CD in order to prevent loss or damage.

Clothing:

As part of this class we will often find ourselves digging, touching, moving or otherwise coming in contact with dirt, compost, and plant matter. You may wish to keep a pair of gloves in your locker for use on these days. I would also recommend prudence when selecting your clothing and footwear on these days.

Extra Help:

I am available before school (I usually arrive around 7) and during my free periods. If you need to meet with me please talk to me before or after class to make sure that I know you are coming.

I will also answer questions when possible by email sotterspoor@darienps.org

Many class materials including homework assignment sheets, articles, laboratory worksheets and databases are available via my web site www.otterspoor.com

WWW.OTTERSPOOR.COM

(aka: www.darienps.org/teachers/otterspoor)



Class materials including copies of homework sheets, grading rubrics, key vocabulary, and One Page study guides.

Otterspoor.com offers exclusive online only review quizzes, podcasts, copies of selected board notes, lecture outlines and play lists.

BUT WAIT THERE'S MORE

[Otterspoor.com](http://www.otterspoor.com) is the exclusive distributor of the Otterspoor logo and the Danger BeardedMan line of apparel.

Want extra points? Why not watch me dance around a fire, climb the Eiffel tower or run after a bus in New Zealand?

The video questions can only help your grade and they contain vitamin C.



Laboratory Safety Agreement

I, _____, agree to abide by the following laboratory safety regulations whenever performing a biology investigation. I also understand that failure to do so will result in my removal from the lab during the remainder of the lab period and one hour of after-school detention. If I am removed from the lab I understand it is my responsibility to make-up any work that was missed.

I will

1. use the science laboratory for authorized work only.
2. remove contact lenses and wear safety goggles when instructed to do so.
3. know the four classes of chemicals (toxins, flammables, reactives and corrosives) and control measures.
4. study the laboratory investigation before coming to lab. (If in doubt of any procedure, I will ask my teacher.)
5. know how to use the safely equipment provided and know the location of the fire extinguisher, eyewash station, safety shower and safety blanket.
6. refrain from any pushing, shoving or other horse-play in the laboratory.
7. stow my backpack away from the aisles and bring only my data sheet and book into the laboratory area.
8. in case of fire, alert the teacher and leave the laboratory.
9. carefully check for the presence of any ignition source before using flammable materials such as alcohol or acetone.
10. notify the teacher if glass is broken. I will not attempt to pick it up myself
11. report any incident, accident, injury or unsafe procedure to the teacher at once.
12. never taste, touch or smell any substance unless directed specifically by the teacher to do so.
13. handle chemicals carefully. check the label of every bottle or jar before removing contents, and never return unused chemicals to reagent bottles.
14. when heating a substance in a test tube make sure that the mouth of the test tube points away from other people and myself
15. use proper equipment to handle hot glassware.
16. tie back long hair, remove dangling jewelry and hats, roll up loose sleeves, tuck in loose Clothing and wear closed toe shoes.
17. at the end of the lab clean the work area. Wash and store all materials and equipment, turn off all water, gas and electrical appliances.
18. wash my hands thoroughly with soap and water before leaving the laboratory.

Student's Signature

Date

Parent or Guardian's Signature

Date

Academic Updates Signup

I participate in Parent Connect. This web based utility allows you to track your student's attendance, academic progress, and view future assignments for all of the participating teachers classes. All information in Parent Connect is taken directly from my grade book and is shown on a 24 hour delay. You must register to receive a password in order to access parent connect. More information is available on the DHS website.

Additionally I use the electronic grade book, IGPro, which allows me to email student progress reports. The progress reports will display the individual grades for all assignments, due dates for upcoming assignments, as well as your child's current overall grade. Your child will be receiving the same updates through their email address. I would like to know if you would like to get updates via email. DHS will still send out progress reports in the middle of each quarter. My email reports will be sent about every 1 to 2 weeks (usually after big projects).

Please check the appropriate box and sign the bottom of the form as verification you have read this

Yes, I would like to be sent updates via email.

Email address: _____

Name to address email to: _____

No, I would not like to be sent updates via email

Parent Name: _____

If you would like to provide me with your email address to facilitate communication (but you do not want to receive grade reports) please do so here:

Email address : _____

Parent Signature: _____

Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Thank you,
Sean Otterspoor
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www.otterspoor.com