



Alfred State College Alfred, New York Farming/Garden

SCHOOL

Alfred State College, Public, 2-year and 4-year, 3,700 students, Alfred, New York.

ABSTRACT

Since its founding over 100 years ago, Alfred State has had a tradition of fostering and nurturing agriculture through local and regional partnerships. Consistent with this tradition, Alfred State started the Alfred Community Garden in fall 2010 to provide hands-on education in sustainable agriculture to students, faculty, staff, and community members. The garden, along with the associated composting area and greenhouse, also offers multiple opportunities for service learning projects and civic engagement. The garden also enables local production of healthy and affordable foods, thereby contributing to community food security. The first planting season was in the spring of 2011 and we are now completing our planting and harvest season for 2012.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

Our original goals were to:

- Provide students and community members with hands on experiences in sustainable agriculture techniques;
- Improve community food security by producing more food locally
- Reduce campus waste production by providing a site to compost food waste

To continue to advance these goals over the next two to three years, we aim to:

- Engage more local gardeners by working with professors to create service learning opportunities in the garden, encouraging student organizations to use the garden as a site for community service projects, raising the visibility of the garden in the community, and partnering with local schools
- Expand the size of the garden area to include undeveloped land nearby
- Increase the supply of tools to accommodate growing numbers of participants
- Maintain organic management practices
- Enhance the relationships with organic seed companies and providers
- Improve use and management of the compost area
- Develop a seed bank
- Upgrade our greenhouse
- Protect the 5 apiaries that were installed in 2012
- Identify grant opportunities so that we can sustain the garden in the years to come
- Build handicap accessible raised beds



Accomplishments and Outcomes

We have made great progress on our original goals. Approximately 1 acre of dedicated space has been allocated for the garden and it is providing food to the community. This year we hosted 20 active gardeners, up from 12 in our first year. We also welcomed over 30 student volunteers this year. Likewise, a compost area has been established nearby and we are taking about 30 gallons a week of pre-plate food waste from the dining hall to compost on an experimental basis.

The garden is having a positive impact on local wildlife. It's existence helps ensure that the area will be

maintained as a "green space" to be enjoyed by the Alfred community and local wildlife. Moreover, it is managed organically and the site has not been altered in a way that would harm wildlife or the natural environment. Indeed, all existing trees and ornamentals on the site were preserved when plotting the garden. The introduction of 5 apiaries in this area further serves to improve wildlife and habitat conditions.

Challenges and Responses

The proposal to create the garden was well received by the Alfred State community. Our primary challenge was lack of funding. To date, we have been able to overcome this challenge because of strong support from dedicated people who are willing to give their time and energy to make the project successful. We made a commitment to not charge a fee to participate in the garden, and we have been able to sustain the project through volunteer hours and donations. To continue to grow, we will be seeking grant support in future years.

Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint

By enabling community residents to produce food close to home and in a sustainable manner, the community garden indirectly contributed to reduced greenhouse gas emissions. We are unable to fully quantify these reductions due to uncertainties about the lifecycle impact of materials used in the creation and maintenance of the garden and the impact of the foods gardeners would have eaten instead were it not for the garden. However, we are confident that the garden is enabling real reductions in emissions. By building community experience with sustainable agriculture, the garden is also enhancing the adaptive capacity of the community and therefore our ability to respond to changing climate conditions.

Commentary and Reflection

The challenges that you will face can all be overcome. Once people come into a garden, a great peace comes over them. They feel the connection to the earth that growing plants enables. A garden also becomes a social gathering place. You learn a lot about people when they work with you in the soil. You also learn to listen to their voices, the voices of the birds and wind, and the laughter that is inevitable in this setting. While there are challenges, there are also great rewards.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

The Community Garden grew out of a planning session held by Alfred State's Green Team, a group of students, faculty, and staff that is responsible for coordinating and advancing sustainability on campus. The initial effort was led by Dr. Brian Baker, Director of the Sustainability Institute, Sandra Dennison, the Marketing Director for Auxiliary Campus Enterprises and Services (ACES), and Calista A. McBride, Associate Professor in English and Humanities. Sandra has served as the backbone of the community garden, working countless volunteer hours in the financial management of the garden and



coordinating significant events in support of the project. Dr. Terry Tucker, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and the Executive Director of the Center for Organic and Sustainable Agriculture, was also a key early supporter and has been integral in establishing the apiaries that join the garden. Barbara Pierce, Keyboard Specialist II, in the Office of Student Activities has also organized numerous events at the garden for Orientation Leaders, new students, and others. Together with Constance E. Pennisi, an Instructor in Digital Media and Animation, and Buffy Turner, a community volunteer, Sandra, Calista, Terry and Barbara make up the community garden's Board of Directors.

The original drawings for the garden came out of a class project that was done by students in one of Professor McBride's classes, COMP5703: Technical Writing II. Christopher T. Locke and Ariane E. Tanski, both Surveying Engineering Technology (BS) students, collaborated with Associate Professor Calista A. McBride, to plot and map the area needed for the garden by using state-of-the-art GPS systems. The students then translated their plotting to a topology map and a garden plot sequence map. The students took this idea through research, planning, proposal, and report stages, culminating in a multimedia presentation for the class. Their work allowed the identification of a potential 103 garden plots resulting in the creation of topographic and plot layout maps for continued use by the Alfred State community. This is an example of the kind of project-based learning that serves as the cornerstone of an Alfred State education.

Additionally, President John Anderson and his wife Vivien have supported the project from its inception.

Funding and Resources

The creation of the garden was largely supported through volunteer resources and generous donations from organic seed companies, including High Mowing, Seeds of Change, Peaceful Valley, Hudson Valley Seed Company, Park Seed, and others. In 2012, we received \$450 in grant money for potting soil and tools from Southern Tier West. In all, we have received less than \$600 in cash donations. In this context, the seed donations have been invaluable. They have even allowed us to supply seeds to support another local not-for-profit that created an entrepreneurial garden for [local children](#). We were not supported through a NWF Campus Ecology Fellowship.

Education and Community Outreach

The garden has made significant efforts to engage the community. For example, we partnered with individuals from Alfred State College, Alfred University, and the community to host Earth Week 2012 events. The local community has also involved us in the Alfred Sustainability Working Group as contributing members to events and educational workshops. In addition, some active community gardeners helped found the Farmer's Market in the Village of Alfred in 2012, building on the foundation provided by the garden to further spread the sustainability message in our rural community.

National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program

We have not been engaged with the Campus Ecology program, but we hope to participate more with it as we expand our horizons. Likewise, we have not taken advantage of any Campus Ecology / NWF resources to date, but we hope to do so in the future.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL **Campus Sustainability History**

Sustainability has become a major priority for Alfred State under the leadership of President John Anderson. President Anderson serves on the Steering Committee for the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment and created a Chief Sustainability Officer position to report directly to him. The Alfred State's Wellsville campus includes the Green Home, a net-zero energy model home built by students. Further, Alfred State's Center for Organic and Sustainable Agriculture (COSA) maintains a working organic farm and dairy for education and outreach purposes. Recently, Alfred State began shredding its cardboard and paper waste on the farm for use as bedding for the cows. All new buildings on campus are being built to at least LEED Silver standards and geothermal energy systems are planned for all major projects. The College is also working to infuse sustainability across the curriculum and has a goal of ensuring that students are empowered with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to be leaders in solving sustainability challenges. Learn more at www.alfredstate.edu/sustainability

Image Credit: ACES