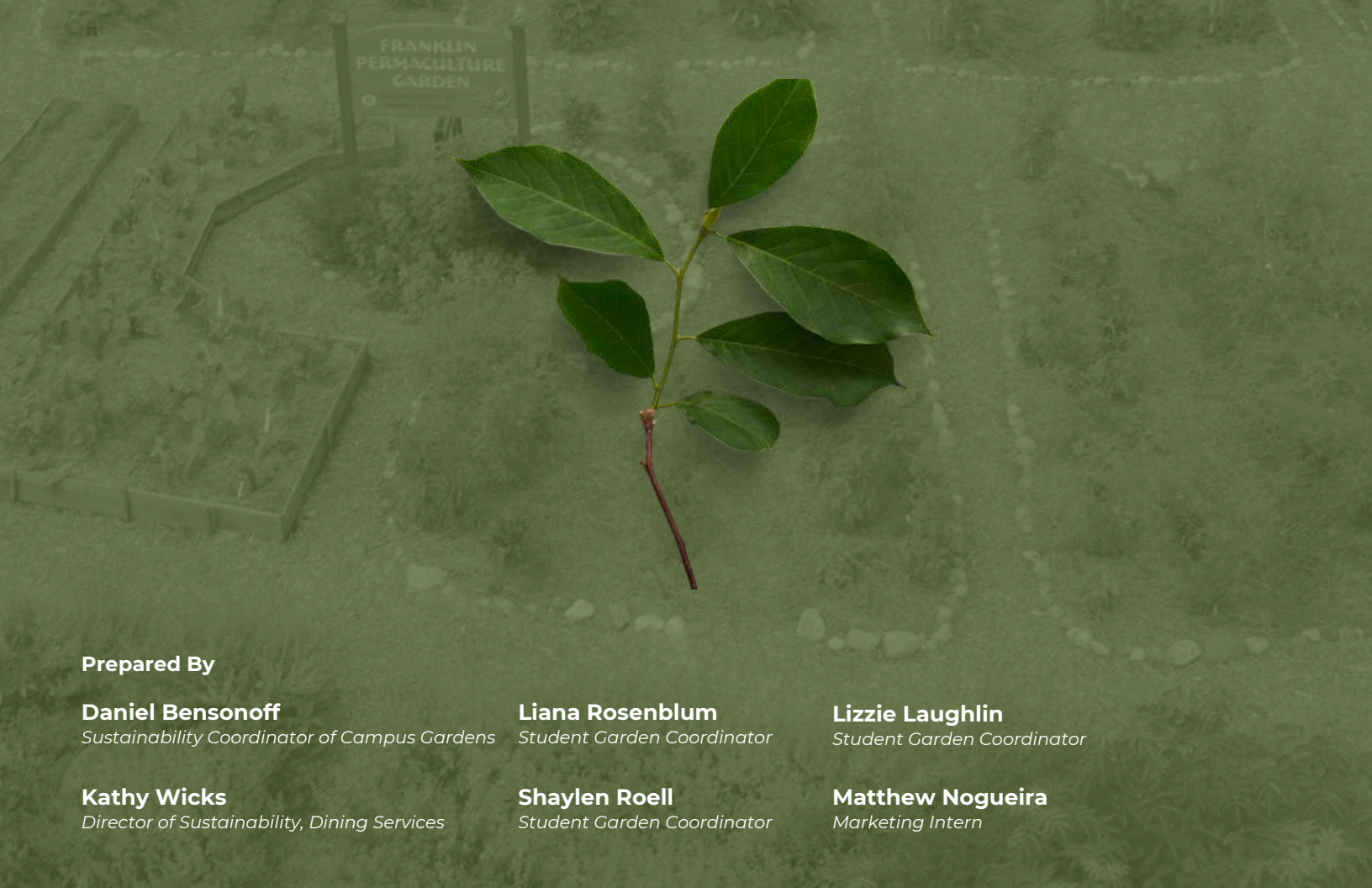


2024

UMASS PERMACULTURE

ANNUAL REPORT



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The Summer crew taking a moment to admire their handiwork

OUR MISSION

Our Mission is to create innovative and nationally renowned permaculture gardens that provide student education and leadership training, community engagement opportunities, and fresh, local, organic produce to the UMass campus and local community.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

As winter marks the end of our 14th season, we return to gratitude for the incredible community that enmeshes and holds us. Our unique little program seems a strange fit for such a large academic institution, but we feel right at home here at UMass-Amherst as we not just teach, but live our values of earth care, people care, and fair share.

Over this past season, we welcomed many new faces into our gardens, classes, and markets. It is clear that our collective hunger for connection to the earth and to each other is as strong as ever.

Perhaps even more so, as globalization and corporate forces alienate us from our basic human being.

Our gardens continue to be a refuge for those seeking a way back to simplicity. Scratching the Earth's skin, harvesting the gifts of the garden, and eating together: these are perennial sources of joy. They also happen to be the antidote to many of our most wicked problems. We'll continue to give breath to these old/new ways of being and we hope you'll be there to join us.

With great appreciation,
The UMass Permaculture Team



Plenty of smiles seen at our seasonal outdoor Farmers' Market



OUR GARDENS



In our **14th growing season**, we recorded a **harvest of 1,761 lbs.** harvested from our five campus gardens. We **harvested from 107 different species** of fruits, vegetables, nuts, mushrooms, and medicinal herbs.

Our most productive garden was the original Franklin garden (now dubbed “Frank West”) with a total yield of 901 lbs. Our harvest ended up at a wide variety of outlets this year including the Dining Commons, Amherst Survival Center, the annual Chef’s Conference and for various projects related to the practicum and our workshops (including our Salsa Con Salsa event and make-your-own kimchi!).



Permaculture student Emmie Luo showing off her tempeh that she made at her Food Science lab using fresh shelled black beans from the Franklin garden.



“The garden is poppin’! Compared to the end of last semester, there’s just so much more to see and be curious about!”

-Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal

In Fall 2024 we installed a biogas digester, which will allow us to turn garden scraps and kitchen scraps into methane, a gas that can replace the need for propane. This means less fossil fuels burned. It also means that the methane coming from landfilled organic waste isn't going into the atmosphere.

So, that's a double climate impact, all while offering practical use. Every year we seek to experiment with new crops, new methods, and new soil building strategies. This year we tried several new crops such including Spring wheat and Luffa gourds. Unfortunately, our Spring wheat looked great until mid-July when it became food for our local deer. On the bright side, we had our first decent harvest of fresh figs and schisandra berries, both of which were quite popular.



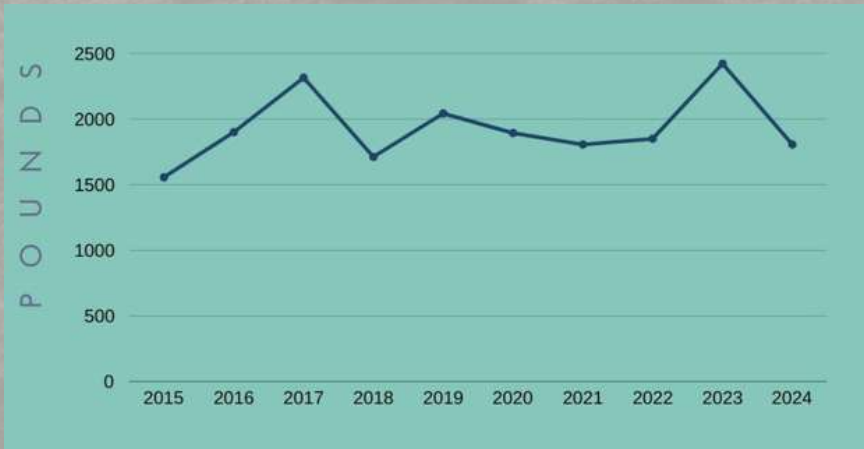
Free flowers!

"Oaxacan Green" corn yielded beautifully this year

"Thank you for this space to sit and breathe."

-Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal

HARVEST COMPARISONS



Fresh Figs!



This was our 4th season growing rice- still plenty to learn!



Volunteers adding their handprint to our shed, an end-of-season tradition

"I can't tell if I feel lost here at UMass or not. Thanks for bringing a community here for those searching for one!"

Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal

OUR FARMERS' MARKET

Running for over ten years right in the heart of campus, our seasonal market is one of the only student-centered markets of its kind within a higher education institution. Running for over ten years, the market continues to grow in popularity. Over the course of our nine Fall markets and four Spring markets, we had a total of 276 vendors join us, with an average of 75 vendors at each market.

UMass Permaculture added a variety of new products to our market offerings this year. We made our own salsa verde using our homegrown tomatillos, cilantro, chilis, and garlic. We also added shiitake salt, soap made with tallow from the Livestock program, and autumn olive juice made from foraged berries on campus.



A collaborative weaving project during Earth Day Extravaganza



A student vendor sells baby potted succulents at the market



Campus Sustainability Coordinator Ezra Small handing out bike-powered smoothies at the Earth Day Extravaganza

OUR EVENTS

Over the course of 2024 we hosted thirteen unique workshops and special events on campus. These included some seasonal favorites such as our “Handmade Holiday Gift-Making” event and our “Earth Day Extravaganza”.

One notable new event was our “Salsa con Salsa” workshop; this workshop, a collaboration with the UMass Ballroom Dance team, offered participants the opportunity to learn either/both salsa, the dance, and salsa, the dip. The salsa was made primarily with our own garden produce: tomatillos, garlic, cilantro, and chilis (yes, we did have to buy some limes).



Preparing herbal infusions for a workshop with Eureka Girls Inc.

“This garden is my new favorite place on campus”
- Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal

OUR CAMPUS & COMMUNITY IMPACT

We continue to open up the garden for tours throughout the growing season. In 2024 we offered 26 group tours of our gardens with a total of 427 participants. Tour groups come from classes on campus and further away such as local schools, summer youth programs, and interested community groups.

Every week from April through October we offer at least one open volunteer session in the garden. This year we had 78 different volunteers attending those sessions. These sessions provide students with a chance to get involved in all aspects of growing food and ecological stewardship, while fostering a precious community where students can meet others and connect.



Crimping down a buckwheat cover crop- a great low-tech strategy for building soil health with minimal effort



Gardener Tommy Sanders with his Cosmos crown



Blooming Nicotiana looking regal in the Franklin garden



Working with the Northeast Biogas Initiative to install a biogas digester for the Franklin Garden

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Much of the future is murky, but it's clear that there is plenty of work to be done. This upcoming season we will expand our offerings with new workshops, new crops, and new experiments.

This will be our first season utilizing our biogas digester. We're excited to learn about this powerful and simple bio-technology and how it can fit into our systems.

We'll also be expanding our growing space with an additional plot at the Agricultural Learning Center. We anticipate using this space to grow crops that can be used for full circle seed to fork experiences. We envision projects that would enable students to make tempeh from homegrown soybeans or to press oil from sunflower seeds. We've found that these types of experiences create real transformation, and we want to continue to explore them.



"Thank you for reminding me of my love of nature. You are a great educator and your passion is amazing!"

Anonymous, review of the Permaculture Practicum course