



2020

UMASS PERMACULTURE ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY

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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.

As the saying goes, “hindsight is 2020”. As we now look back at this strangest of years, what stands out is a year in which the guiding paradigms of permaculture- adaptation, resilience, and connection- were truly put to the test.

While we had to drastically reduce the scale of our in-person education work this year, we were able to creatively adapt to the needs of the times. We responded to the emerging hunger for gardening and food security by offering a virtual “Resiliency Series” with 17 online gatherings live from the garden and kitchen that led participants through essential skills and concepts relevant to ecological gardening, nature connections, and at home cooking. Our Spring practicum course also evolved into a virtual format, which created a variety of new opportunities: from collectively baking bread in our home kitchens to exploring the wild edibles of our backyards, students got to taste the joy of being producers and living closely to the land, even as we were miles apart.

Even without the presence of the majority of students on campus, we were astounded at the number of people visiting and interacting our gardens. One visitor reported in our public journal, “In a time of utter chaos and uncertainty- both within my own life and that of the world- I find peace, comfort, and solace in this ‘secret garden’ of mine. What a treasure it is.”

These moments of connection to the land, our food, and ourselves, continue to guide our path as we grow the permaculture initiative here on the UMass Campus. This is what the moment asks of us. This is what resilience look like.

A BIRD’S EYE VIEW



OUR GARDENS

In our 10th growing season, our gardens continue to provide nutrient-dense yields of a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, nuts, mushrooms, craft materials, and so much more. In 2020 we **harvested a total of 1,896 lbs. of produce** (vs. 1,999 lbs. in 2019). That yield consisted of 93 different species of plants and fungi including several crops that we have never harvested before such as chestnuts, persimmons, and leeks.

- The total value of all our produce was **\$11,191***. Our highest value products were arugula, garlic, honey and chives.
- Even though we lost one of our hives over the winter, we were able to capture several swarms, bringing our total amount of hives to five. Those hives yielded just **over 50 lbs. of honey** with plenty to spare for the bees themselves.
- The **majority of our food was used at Blue Wall**, which utilized 715 lbs (vs. 172 lbs. In 2019), and **Franklin DC**, which took 291 lbs (vs. 200 lbs. In 2019).
- We **donated 15%** of our harvest to two local food banks: Amherst Survival Center and Not Bread Alone.
- With our Napa Cabbage crop, UMass Executive Chef Tony Jung produced 6 gallons of kimchi.
- This year we said **goodbye to our Worcester courtyard garden** to make way for the new Worcester Dining Common.
- We continue to add more diversity and beauty to our garden plantings. This past year we planted an additional **peach tree in honor of Diane Redmond**, a long-time employee of UMass Dining who passed away in 2020.

**calculated based on cost of equivalent organic product*

"Love to visit this garden on evening walks. The growers are doing a terrific job! Looks great everytime I visit. Thanks for your hard work."

Anonymous, found in the Franklin garden journal 6/1/20



"I really enjoyed learning about mushroom cultivation and fermentation. I loved all of the other topics you covered in the class too but I think I got the most out of learning how to ferment food and grow mushrooms, since I plan to start doing both of these while in quarantine"

Anonymous, found in the Franklin garden journal Spring 2020

OUR CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- Although limited by public health concerns, we were still able to engage **16 student volunteers** throughout Fall of 2020 who collectively **contributed over 100 hours of garden service.**
- Along with the help of student volunteers, we were able to **glean over 1,800 lbs.** of tomatoes, eggplant, and peppers from the UMass Student Farm. This produce was directed towards several food banks including Kate's Kitchens in Holyoke, MA and points west in Pittsfield.
- Through the Dining Sustainability department's virtual "**Online Resilience and Sustainability Series**" we created 17 online gatherings with topics ranging from "Caring for Summer Crops" to "Baking with the Seasons."
- For the second year, we hosted a **staff orientation training** in the Franklin garden to assist staff members in utilizing the produce and becoming stakeholders in the program's evolution.
- Although ultimately delayed due to Covid-19, we launched a project called "**HeART of the Garden**" in collaboration with UMass Arts Extension to create thematically-aligned art work created by students to be displayed in the Franklin Garden. The winner of the first round is a multi-media project that focuses on poetry and ceramics. It will be hosted and displayed in Spring 2021.
- We hosted our 3rd annual **Diet for a Cooler Planet** event in Fall of 2020 with 2 virtual events. The first event, in partnership with Our Wicked Fish and the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, featured a panel of New England Seafood Industry experts discussing sustainability and regional impacts of global warming. The second event, supported by UMass Libraries and a Vermont Community Foundation funds, featured a panel of speakers from the iCollective, a collective of indigenous chefs, growers, and food systems workers from across the country in a discussion about "What can Indigenous Foodways teach us about Climate Action?."
 - Total reach for the 2 virtual events was **over 4,200 views**



"Thanks for a great experience! This was one of my favorite classes in college."

Anonymous Practicum student, Spring 2020

"Been feeling very lost, confused, and anxious lately so I have been trying to make time for myself instead of time to distract myself. This garden is very grounding and healing. I'm always amazed by what I find in it. Thank you for cultivating this beautiful garden and creating a space that feels welcoming when most places do no right now"

Anonymous, found in the Franklin garden journal 8/28/20



"I learned how to start a garden and to put more thought behind its design. I love the idea of companion planting and this class really gave me a deeper appreciation for how much time and effort can go into designing gardens."

Anonymous Practicum student, Spring 2020

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021

- As we enter our 11th growing season, we continue our commitment to make the UMass campus more food secure and ecologically rich. As our initial garden spaces mature, we seek to create further opportunities for more students to engage with the essential work of Earth repair. With this intention, we plan to continue expanding our garden spaces this year to include the East side of Franklin Dining Common. This space, measuring roughly 1/8 acre, will allow us to produce hundreds of pounds of additional food annually while adding biodiversity and beauty to the heart of campus.
- We will be back in the classroom this Spring to offer the "Permaculture Gardening" practicum. Now more than ever, such outdoor community spaces are an essential way for students to de-isolate and re-engage with their peers and the natural world.

