



2023



UMASS PERMACULTURE ANNUAL REPORT



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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.



A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

It seems hard to believe we've just completed our 13th season of growing food, medicine, and our connection to nature here on the UMass-Amherst campus. Now that we've aged out of adolescence and into teen-hood, we feel ever more determined to grow and proliferate the principles and ethics of permaculture.

If 2023 is any indication, there appears to be a growing hunger among students to engage with the work of regenerating land, soil, water, and community.

Whether it's making medicinal concoctions with our herbs, or bouquets with our cut flowers, or pressing apples foraged on campus, there seems to be an endless urge to be in connection with the land and the best of each other.

Students recognize these simple acts as both rewarding in and of themselves as well as a way of living a vision that moves us beyond colonial and corporate confines.

With great appreciation,
The UMass Permaculture Team



Filling one of the new raised beds in the Frank East Garden



OUR GARDENS



In our 13th growing season, our gardens saw their largest harvest to date, with 2,460 lbs. harvested from our five campus gardens. We harvested from 109 different species of fruits, vegetables, nuts, mushrooms, and medicinal herbs. Our most productive garden was the original Franklin garden with a total yield of 819 lbs.

Impressively, our newest garden, the “Frank East” garden, offered up a yield of 758 lbs.

This new garden was built to showcase small-plot high-intensity growing methods emphasizing accessibility.

We’re quite pleased with the results from this first growing season.

As always, we continue to experiment with new crops, new methods, and new soil-building strategies. Some notable new crops this past year include grain sorghum, yacon, sesame, and peanuts.



“My first time in the garden. The mint smells so good! Can’t wait to come again.”
- Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal



We also added in a new amendment to our soil fertility plan: waste wool from the UMass Livestock farm. This material, which is generally considered a waste by-product, was utilized in a trial in collaboration with Western Mass Fibershed.

HARVEST COMPARISONS



Peggy Hart, of Western Mass Fibershed, showing the pelletized waste wool that's now become part of our soil health plan



A peanut seedling struggling to crack its outer casing.



One of our volunteers bonding with a burly praying mantis

“My love and I explore the garden. It’s a quiet moment between us. We graduated from UMass four years ago this month. So much has changed since the last time we sat here. His love of gardening grew here. My love for him grew here too.”

- Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal

OUR FARMERS' MARKET

Our weekly seasonal farmers' market- located right in the heart of campus- continues to grow in popularity. This year saw more vendors- a total of 241 different students- showcasing their unique arts, crafts, and passions than ever before. Students offered up everything from crocheted clothing, handmade jewelry, freshly-baked bread, flower bouquets, and so much more. Our markets this past year also included free sustainability activities such as apple pressing, bicycle-powered smoothies, and collaborative art pieces.



A collaborative collage made at the Earth Day Extravaganza



Students from the Floral Design class showing off their floral wall made at the Fall Farmers Market



Students drill into their ornaments at the Handmade Holiday Gifts event

OUR EVENTS

In 2023 we continued to experiment with different workshops and events. Thanks to our incredibly talented student garden coordinators, we were able to organize several entirely new events including a three-part workshop on Herbal Medicine led by Jo Fuchs. This series offered students a foundation in different schools of herbalism, as well as basic skills in utilizing these herbs for their own health.

Another new offering was a workshop on Daylily weaving. Using plant material harvested from the gardens, students learned how to make miniature baskets. Yet another of our student garden coordinators, Juliana Green, led a forum called “Grounded Conversations” which focused on issues of land sovereignty and indigenous peoples.

We also continued our traditional annual event offerings which now includes foraging walks, “Handmade Holiday Gifts” and outdoor film screenings.

“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 2023 we offered **21 group tours** of our gardens with a total of **320 participants**. Several new organizations and groups came through for tours this year, including from Hartsbrook School, the UMass Disability Culture Club, the UMass Women of Color Leadership Network, and Greenfield Community College. Our weekly volunteer sessions continue to be a popular offering. We had an average of 20 participants show up for each session. Most of those participants were students, but we're proud that more and more faculty, staff, and off-campus enthusiasts are attending these sessions. Participants get to take care of the gardens and are even invited to take some of the harvest home with them on occasion.



The joy of summer tomatoes



Practicum students show off some of their creations



Dirty, dangerous, and driven to make the world better

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

We'll be launching several new events over the Spring semester, including one on effective campus activism focusing on useful and proven strategies for systems change advocacy. We also hope to create even more opportunities for practical skill-building, including our first ever maple sugaring demonstration.

One of our other big missions this year is to set the groundwork for the next garden installation on campus. As our gardens mature and our capacity for maintaining them grows, we see ample opportunity for additional edible ecosystems right on campus. We look forward to working with the campus community to assess and design ways to bring more life and food to UMass-Amherst.



"Touring campus and discovered this amazing garden. It will be my happy place if I choose UMass."

- Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal