WSU Gardener Community Seeded

Students plan, plant, and maintain campus gardens

On Saturday, April 18, more than 40 volunteers came out to build the St. Andrew’s Allotment Garden, SEED Wayne’s second garden on campus. A few of them continued over the following weeks to build two additional beds and move more compost. The garden now has 18 4’ x 8’ raised beds, and one half-size bed. Fourteen of these will be maintained by student organizations and groups of faculty and staff from across campus, while SEED Wayne will maintain four for research and demonstration purposes. This garden more than doubles SEED Wayne’s garden capacity over last summer.

Groups have agreed to maintain their garden beds, use sustainable gardening methods, and participate in volunteer events. The gardens will host a wide variety of plants from heirloom tomatoes to okra. A couple of groups have also come up with creative planting schemes for their beds, while we at SEED Wayne look on with pride, like brand new parents!

Many of the gardeners from the St. Andrew’s garden have volunteered at the Warrior Demonstration Garden as well, learning and exchanging knowledge and tips. Throughout the season participants will learn skills and techniques for growing and planning for specific crops, and SEED Wayne will provide the resources and assistance needed for the process.

SEED Wayne has always worked on the principle that it is people, not plants, that make a garden. As WSU student and employee groups take over their own beds, the focus of the project will move more systematically to cultivating a community of gardeners on campus. We welcome suggestions from gardeners and others on how we may build and sustain this community.

With growing interest and more resources available, Detroiter will be growing more produce this year than in the recent past. These gardens will provide fresh fruits and vegetables in underserved areas, build participants’ gardening capacity, and create communal gathering spaces.

The Detroit Agriculture Network’s Annual Garden Tour, which showcases community gardens across the city, is a highlight of the summer. This year’s tour is scheduled for the evening of August 5. For more information, call Ashley Atkinson at The Greening of Detroit at 313-237-8733.

Volunteer Hours for the Warrior and St. Andrews Gardens

Thursdays, 5-6 PM; Sundays, 10-11 AM. Meet at the Warrior Demonstration Garden.

For more information, contact Will Ahee at w.ahee@wayne.edu.

St. Andrew’s Allotment Garden. Credits: Below, Sarah Marolf; Right: Rick Bielaczyc

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Collecting Rainwater: Simple, Effective, and Inexpensive

On March 27, two WSU students led the third workshop offered by SEED Wayne in partnership with student organizations. Jordan Sinclair of SEAL and Will Ahee of SEED Wayne demonstrated how to build a simple, inexpensive rain barrel to a small group of interested university employees and students.

Rain barrels help capture rainwater that otherwise would run into storm water drains. This water can then be used to produce food. Rain barrels are key to building sustainable food systems in cities where water is expensive or hard to come by on vacant lots. Just ask anyone who has attempted to garden in Detroit without a reliable source of water!

Pre-assembled rain barrels available for purchase on the world wide web can cost upwards of $200. The workshop demonstrated how rain barrels can be built with commonly available tools, and parts obtained from local hardware stores for less than $25. The food-grade barrels were purchased from a local farmer.

Rain barrels are usually connected to a roof-gutter drainage system. Each barrel has an overflow spout to channel water away from the barrel in case of a heavy downpour. All that one needs to do is to hook a hose up to the connector pieces, and let gravity do the work of watering the garden.

The rain barrel workshop discussed the pros and cons of rainwater capture. Two key risks include the possibility of chemicals leaching from certain types of (infrequently used) roofing material from which water is collected, and mosquitoes breeding in the collected water. Participants were undeterred by these risks, however. Together, they purchased 13 barrels that were assembled by them or by the workshop’s leaders.

SEED Wayne is always looking for topics for future workshops, and welcomes readers’ input on these. All are also encouraged to check out related workshops offered by the Detroit Garden Resource Program at www.detroitagriculture.org.

SEED Wayne and SEAL: A Sustainable Partnership

The campus organization Student Environmental Action Leaders, or SEAL, has been a SEED Wayne campus partner since the latter’s inception. SEALs have been central participants in constructing both campus gardens and offering peer-training workshops on sustainable food system themes, and now have taken responsibility for 4 garden beds at the St. Andrew’s Garden. We are pleased that regular SEAL meetings this summer will take place at the St. Andrew’s Allotment Garden.

Although engaged in diverse disciplinary areas of study, SEALs have committed to the creation of a more environmentally friendly campus and city. The group has taken on a broad range of environmental issues including energy, materials recycling, transportation, and now food systems. SEALs appreciate also the interconnections among these topics. For example, a localized food system can also help create a less energy intensive future while mitigating climate change.

We at SEED Wayne firmly believe that partnerships such as the one with SEAL are key to building a sustainable future.

For more information about SEAL, contact Andy Maggetti at andy0314@wayne.edu.

Readers are invited to submit news on teaching, research, engagement, or operations of interest to SEED Wayne. To learn more, write to Kami Pothukuchi at k.pothukuchi@wayne.edu.

SEED Wayne Community Partners
Eastside Healthy Corner Stores Initiative: Next Steps

Readers of SEEDLING’s last issue were introduced to SEED Wayne’s Healthy Corner Stores Initiative on Detroit’s Eastside. Here’s an update: Along with community partners Capuchin Soup Kitchen and Eastern Market Corporation, SEED Wayne is seeking to improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables in three convenience stores in a pilot project that will also develop a social marketing campaign to encourage youth and adults to use fresh fruits and vegetables in meals and snacks.

The three stores range from a tiny African-American owned mom-and-pop at the corner of two mid-block streets, to a liquor store on a busy intersection, to a grocery store with a modest selection of fresh produce that sees brisk sales during the first two weeks. They were selected primarily because of their interest in participating in the project. “I would love to be able to sell things like onions, potatoes, peaches... You know, things that people in this community like to eat.” said Mr. Barden, the owner of a participating store.

Following a community forum held in February to obtain input from nearby residents, our next steps include assembling a community advisory group from among interested forum participants; developing plans for the distribution of produce to stores, management of inventory within stores, and the social marketing campaign; and preparing for overall project evaluation. We hope to start implementing the project in July. Eastern Market will set up arrangements for acquiring, transporting and managing produce, while SEED Wayne will coordinate the research and social marketing campaign. Capuchin Soup Kitchen will help us liaise with the neighborhood and offer a staging area and meeting space.

Nationwide, groups are implementing Healthy Corner Stores programs to increase low-income households’ access to healthy, affordable foods and fresh produce in neighborhood corner stores. These programs work with stores that already exist in low-income neighborhoods.

Detroit Food Policy Council being Convened

Many Detroiters lack access to healthy, affordable food in their neighborhoods. This lack of access is a sign of food insecurity; other signs show up when families run out of money with which to buy food; seek help from family, friends or food assistance programs for meals, or parents eat less so that their kids have enough. Conversely, community food security exists when all community members have neighborhood-based access to nutritionally adequate and culturally appropriate food from sources that are also environmentally responsible and socially just.

Community food security is the primary goal of the Detroit Food Policy Council, which is currently being convened to address the many food-, agriculture-, and diet-related problems faced by Detroiters.

The Detroit Food Policy Council was created by unanimous City Council vote on February 17, 2009. The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network is credited with much of the background work for the creation of the Council, in the writing of Detroit Food Policy, which was adopted by City Council last year. This Policy had input from diverse community food advocates, including SEED Wayne’s Kami Pothukuchi.

The Food Policy Council (FPC) is an advisory body that seeks to create holistic policies and programs to end hunger, create employment opportunities, remedy environmental problems, and improve the well-being of communities—all through a focus on community food issues. For example, it calls for policies to support neighborhood-based urban agriculture and composting, educating residents about agriculture and nutrition, and creating public bus routes that connect neighborhoods with full-service grocery stores without the need to transfer between routes.

For more information on the DFPC or the Detroit Food Policy, browse http://www.foodmed.org/.

Mark Your Calendars and Spread the Word

Farmers Markets in Detroit

| Wednesdays, June 3-October 28: 11 AM—4 PM, Wayne State Wednesday Farmers Market, 5201 Cass Ave. |
| Thursdays, June-September: 4-8 PM, Northwest Detroit Farmers’ Market, 15000 Southfield Fwy. |

Farmers Markets, cont’d.

| Saturdays, starting June 13: 10 AM-3PM, East Warren Farmers’ Market (NE corner of Bishop St. and E Warren Ave). |
| Saturdays: 5 AM-5 PM, Detroit Eastern Market, Russell St. and Gratiot Ave. |

June 18: Food System Economic Partnership, Annual Conference, Adrian, MI. Contact Jennifer Fike at fikej@ewashtenaw.org.


August 5, late afternoon: Detroit Agriculture Network Annual Garden Tour. For more information, contact Ashley Atkinson at 313-237-8733.
The program aims to match every SNAP dollar spent in the market with another from D-SNAP, so that low-income households effectively will be able to double their budget for fruits and vegetables, while also putting more money in the hands of Michigan farmers from whom they buy produce. The program also is a draw for farmers market managers such as SEED Wayne’s Kami Pothukuchi as they can expect more customers as a result.

We expect to pilot D-SNAP at our market August through October, when the market will be at its peak. The Fair Food Network is coordinating the effort and raising funds from public and private sources. Initially, the program expects to raise $500,000, most of which will be distributed to Detroit’s farmers markets in the form of special tokens that will be given to people who shop at these markets with their Bridge Card. In turn, these tokens may be spent at any farmers market in Detroit, creating a kind of local currency so that shoppers who use the Bridge Card will have more choices in the farm-fresh products they wish to buy, the market they wish to patronize, and the day of the week they wish to shop.

As exciting as these developments are for our first full market season, even more exciting is the prospect of doubling SNAP dollars spent at the Wayne State Wednesday Farmers Market this year, to benefit low-income families as well as participating Michigan farmers.

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