SEED Wayne has sizzling first summer!

Warrior Demonstration Garden, 4th Wednesday Farmers Market Take off! Other Projects Take Shape.

The Warrior Demonstration Garden is in full bloom, and the first day of 4th Wednesday Farmers Market was a sellout success! Other projects such as Cafeteria Composting, Farm to Cafeteria, and Policymaking at the Soup Kitchen Table are also taking shape. Overall, the fledgling SEED Wayne program had a banner inaugural summer. Who could ask for more!

The Warrior Demonstration Garden has become something of a campus destination. On a daily basis, you will see a student doing homework at the adjacent picnic table, or small groups taking lunch there, or curious passersby stopping to take a closer look. A far cry from its previous use as a shortcut from the nearby parking lot, the area has become a place where students can relax, connect, and enjoy urban gardening. As Kevin Griffin, Warrior Garden Team Leader, noted after one volunteer day, “It seems as if the garden is bringing life to campus.”

As the plants have grown, so has interest in the project. Students and staff, long-time gardeners and novices, all have earnestly dug into the dirt. At work sessions, volunteers trade tips and stories about plants and other things. In this way, a community has formed, in which people interact with each other and the earth in a profound way.

The garden also supplied several meals at Towers Cafe—in small quantities at a time, of course; it is, after all, a demonstration and not a production garden. Although this is what the garden was designed for, it is becoming clear that the garden’s harvests are many more than its herbs and vegetables!

Read about the garden build event on page 2.

The inaugural market of the 4th Wednesday Farmers Market was a sellout success! Since opening at 11 AM, the market had a steady stream of customers—WSU students and employees and others who lived and worked in midtown. We estimate that approximately 405 visitors stopped by during the noon lunch hour, and 1,224, the entire day.

The market featured regional farm products from Michigan and Ontario, Canada, with many growers selling Detroit-grown produce. All vendors expressed great interest in returning to sell at future markets at WSU.

According to Marilyn Barber of the Black Community Food Security Network, who sold produce from the D-Town Farm, “We saw a good concentration of customers. Everyone who bought from us was very appreciative and thanked us for being there. This market is every farmer’s dream!” Don Ridley of Ridley Orchards summed up his praise for the market organizing with, "you guys did a good job!"

Customers were equally positive. WSU employee Amy Cooper wrote us: “The deals were good, the produce looked beautiful, and everyone was very helpful!” Robin Mazhar, also from WSU, noted “almost everyone from my department went out, bought some items, and came back to work smiling. This was a wonderful event. Please continue it.”

In response to buyer feedback, we will feature more vendors and more diverse offerings of herbs, fruits, and vegetables at the market on September 24. We are also shooting for a weekly farmers market in 2009. Stay tuned!
11th Annual DAN Garden Tour a Great Success!

On August 6, hundreds of people gathered at Catherine Ferguson Academy for the 11th annual Detroit Agriculture Network Garden Tour. The tour visited gardens in the Eastside, Westside and Midtown sections of the city. All gardens had unique attributes, regardless of their size and organizational particulars.

The tour lasted a couple of hours as two buses and a few large groups of bicyclists made their way around the city. Tour participants returned to enjoy a locally sourced dinner and share experiences with others on a different itinerary. Many SEED Wayne participants attended the tour and came back with ideas and proposals for campus efforts. Overall, the tour was a great success.

Pencil your calendars: The Annual DAN Tour usually happens on the first Wednesday of August. To learn more about the Detroit Agriculture Network and the Garden Resource Program, visit www.detroitagriculture.org.

Warrior Demonstration Garden Built on Day of Heavy Rains

On Friday and Saturday, June 29-30, a group of 25 volunteers—18 students among them—successfully built the Warrior Demonstration Garden on WSU’s campus. They were tested on both days by heavy rains.

After long days spent cutting the timber and coating it with linseed oil at the Communication Arts Woodshop, the Garden Build Day—Saturday—was the climax of all the efforts. Volunteers carried the beds to the site, placed them on location, and secured them in the ground, and filled each bed with topsoil—heavy with water—and compost.

Despite the effort and the discomfort, spirits were high and most volunteers stayed until the job was done. They were from diverse academic backgrounds and organizations, all collaborating to make the day a great success.

Campus and community partners were also present. Campus-based partners who contributed money, effort and/or other forms of support include: Hilary Ratner, Vice President for Research; Nabelah Ghareeb, Associate VP for Business Operations; Jerry Herron, Dean of Honors College; Kent Bolt, Director of Grounds Maintenance; and Executive Chef, Giulio Fattore, AVI Food Systems, Inc. Lindsay Turpin, of The Greening of Detroit, a SEED Wayne community partner, also provided significant support in building the garden.

In the weeks following the Garden Build day, volunteers planted a variety of vegetable and herb crops. Currently the garden beds contain: tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, parsley, basil, eggplant, kale, collards, lettuce, chives, radishes, cabbage, broccoli and some beneficial flowers.

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Cafeteria Composting at WSU

Something is rotten on campus, and it’s being used to build healthy soil! SEED Wayne has started work on composting of cafeteria wastes. Composting provides a way of returning organic waste from cafeteria kitchens and plates back to the soil. When carbon and nitrogen sources are balanced, decomposition breaks down the waste into nutrient-dense compost. Composting will help build soil in the Warrior Demonstration Garden and also model, in a small way, a closed-loop food system in which nutrients cycle from garden to fork and back to the garden.

For campus composting to work, preventing odor and using space efficiently are key requirements. SEED Wayne has considered two methods: vermiculture and compost tumblers. In the first, earthworms are kept in bins and eat the organics to create a nutrient-dense manure. This method can be implemented indoors and can be odorless if done well. It needs little effort, and the turnover rate is rapid.

Compost tumblers, a second option, are drums filled with organic waste and rotated everyday, to hasten breakdown and prevent odor. Compost tumblers can produce compost in as little as a few weeks and are also space-efficient. A limitation of outdoor location is that composting slows down in the winter when temperatures plummet.

We have decided to start small, with two tumblers located behind McGregor Conference Center. These will first compost, in a pilot test case, only kitchen wastes (egg shells, coffee grounds, unusable vegetable parts, etc.). Additional locations and plate wastes will be added as we build capacity and knowledge. AVI Foodsystems, Inc., campus food service provider, is a key SEED Wayne partner in this initiative.

We are optimistic that the McGregor Center composters will be efficient despite their outdoor location because of their proximity to the HVAC towers nearby, which keep the area about 20 degrees warmer during winter months. SEED Wayne looks forward to returning organic “wastes” to their rightful place in healthy soil.

Warrior Demonstration Garden, cont’d from page 2

As for the harvest, most of the produce is designated for WSU’s dining halls and the McGregor Center, to be used in meals for students and guests. Based on input from core garden volunteers, a portion of the harvest will be donated to SEED Wayne partner organization, Capuchin Soup Kitchen.

As the year continues, SEED Wayne will seek out more sites for gardens on campus, so that more food consumed on campus will actually originate here, thereby creating a sustainable food system for WSU. Readers are invited to offer suggestions for additional campus sites on which they would like to see herb and vegetable gardens. Such sites should be large enough to contain a few 4’ x 8’ raised beds, receive abundant sunlight, be safe for students and others to work at, and have a water source (or the possibility of a rainwater collection system) nearby.

Fall volunteer Work Hours for the Warrior Garden are set for Wednesdays, from 5 PM to 6 PM, and Saturdays, 10 AM to 11 AM. Readers interested in participating in the garden should contact Kevin Griffin at kev.griffin@hotmail.com.

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

Mark your Calendars and Spread the Word!

GARDEN WORK HOURS
Wednesdays, 5 PM to 6 PM
Saturdays, 10 AM to 11 AM

4th WED. FARMERS MKT.
September 24 11 AM to 6 PM, 5201 Cass Ave (Prentis Hall)

September 18
Locally sourced lunch at WSU’s Towers Cafe. Details on website.

October 7, 8 AM to 3:30 PM.
The New Economy (Fees apply)  
http://www.events.wayne.edu/view/11567/data e/32911/

October 16
World Food Day. Check out local events.

TBD: Stay tuned for a public announcement of the Ford College Community Challenge award to WSU.
SEED Wayne is one of five winners of the first ever round of the Ford College Community Challenge Award supported by the Ford Motor Company Fund. Nineteen universities sent 22 applications for the “Ford C3” program, designed for communities with Ford Motor Company operations.

Sustainability was a key theme of the grant program’s request for proposals. Applicants were asked to demonstrate how their proposals would incorporate partnerships with community organizations; build student leadership; involve campus units in business, engineering, or design; and present solutions to urgent community problems in ways that also meet sustainability requirements.

Browse SEED Wayne’s website to see how the program addresses these criteria. The program’s mission is to collaboratively build sustainable food systems on campus and in Detroit area communities through activities in teaching, research, engagement, and campus operations.

SEED Wayne works in partnership with community-based organizations engaged promoting food security, urban agriculture, farm-to-institution, and food planning and policy development.

SEED Wayne embraces core university functions in teaching, research, engagement and operations. Student leadership is central to SEED Wayne’s success.

SEED Wayne projects include ‘Sustainable Cafeterias,’ ‘Warrior Gardens,’ ‘Recycle Food’ (Rescue and redistribution to food assistance sites of edible, excess foods and composting of food wastes), and ‘Policy-Making at the Soup Kitchen Table.’

SEED Wayne is housed in the Department of Geography and Urban Planning.

SEED Wayne Awarded Ford Challenge Grant

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Browse SEED Wayne’s website to see how the program addresses these criteria. The program’s mission is to collaboratively build sustainable food systems on WSU’s campus and in Detroit area communities. All activities are designed and implemented in partnership with community organizations engaged in promoting food security, urban agriculture, farm to cafeteria links, and food planning and policy making. SEED Wayne’s website is at www.clas.wayne.edu/seedwayne.

Mike Schmidt of the Ford Motor Company Fund visited campus recently; he toured the Warrior Demonstration Garden and was updated on other SEED Wayne activities to date. He was pleased with the program’s progress and offered to help us find additional resources as we scaled up current activities and forged new directions. Schmidt and his WSU hosts were treated to a fabulous, locally sourced meal at the Towers Café, overseen by Dan Kahn of AVI Foodsystems, Inc., SEED Wayne’s partner on campus. Kahn even shared with us the recipes used for the meal!

SEED Wayne is grateful for support from the Ford Motor Company Fund. We look forward to implementing, over the next few months, all the exciting things we proposed in our application to the Ford College Community Challenge program.