

The Goodness of Gardening: Community-Based Cultivation and Connections

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Abstract

The Luther Garden strengthens connections between students, staff, faculty, and community members. All of these people work together as a community to ensure that the college cafeteria has a local food source with diverse crops. Since its original creation, the operation of the Luther Garden has greatly expanded and has become a place of connection and learning for Luther College students.

Background of Farm

- Farm established in 2006.
- Location moved across Highway 52; surrounded by 40 acres of organically-farmed land.
- Growth: Couple hundred dollars during the first season to \$13,000 in 2018.
- 6,000 pounds of food sold during 2017 growing season.
- Two edible landscapes on campus now.



Related UN Sustainable Development Goals

Zero Hunger

- Locally-grown food for the cafeteria.

Good Health and Wellbeing

- Working outside, organic practices, positive connections.

“I love working in the gardens for many reasons; but I would say that it primarily gives me a way to form connections in ways that many college students don’t have an opportunity to.”

- Kira Dobberman ‘22



Luther College Campus Farm. 2132 Pole Line Rd Decorah, IA.

General Garden Information

- We farm 1 acre of land.
- Produce is sold to Luther’s Dining Services provider.
- 30 x 90 ft high tunnel extends growing season.
- **Produce currently grown:** lettuce, kale, spinach, beets, cherry and slicer tomatoes, watermelons.
- Different produce grown in past: butternut squash, rutabaga, asparagus, basil, fennel.
- **Management:** Student Farm Manager - Annelise Myers
- Contract Farmer - Clara Muggli-Toyloy.
- Oversight from Center for Sustainable Communities.
- **Funding:** Students paid with work study funding. Center for Sustainable Communities covers rest of garden budget.

Student Connections

- Garden crew workers connect to the land, the community, and to each other.
- Seasonal crews - approximately 5 students during summer, 10 during the school year.
- Students learn how to seed, water, harvest, process and deliver produce throughout the growing season.

Community/Campus Connections

- Crew uses Valders greenhouse to seed transplants.
- Crew uses a Facilities vehicle to carpool to garden.
- Facilities takes care of grounds and manages compost.
- We offer onsite community garden plots.
- Collaborate with River Root Farm.
- We provide food to our Dining Services Provider.
- Garden parties with food made from garden produce.



References

- Records of Food and Farm Fellow, Sarah Forsythe.
- Quote from Garden Crew Member, Kira Dobberman
- Help from Toby Cain, Sustainability Coordinator