



UMassAmherst | UMass Dining

2025

UMASS PERMACULTURE ANNUAL REPORT

FRANKLIN
PERMACULTURE
GARDEN



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One of the practicum groups from Fall 2025 bringing in a sunflower harvest that would later be pressed into oil

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

While global systems and technology become more precarious, complex, and dehumanizing, our work remains stubbornly simple: to build a sense of belonging while learning how to meet our most important needs through land stewardship. We remain committed to this as our daily work.

Over this past year, that has manifested in a widening of our community and our gardens. It's meant that we've grown more food and medicine than ever before and, while we don't measure our success by pounds alone, we're also proud to continue expanding and bringing more people into direct relationship with the earth below their feet.

Gardening, cooking, eating, gathering, sharing: these remain our constants. These ways of being human have never been as endangered or as necessary as they are today.

With great appreciation,
The UMass Permaculture Team



Chefs Alice Waters and Dan Barber having lunch in the garden with UMass Dining Sustainability staff during the 2025 Chef Conference



OUR GARDENS



In our 15th growing season, we recorded a harvest of 2.753 lbs., our largest harvest ever recorded.

This is in large part thanks to our newest garden parcel, located at the Agricultural Learning Center (ALC) on campus. The addition of this new $\frac{1}{4}$ acre plot gives us the opportunity to experiment with farm-scale no-till strategies such as solarization, cover crop integration, and permanent living mulches. These techniques allow us to enrich soil without needing any heavy machinery. These techniques are also part of our commitment to soil carbon sequestration- the process of reducing atmospheric carbon by capturing and holding it in the soil.

In this first year of our stewardship there, we grew successful crops of watermelon, beans, peppers, radishes, and more. We were thrilled with the results. In total, we harvested 1201 lbs. of food from this garden, which made it our most productive garden by weight in 2025.

We were honored to have honored chefs Alice Waters and Dan Barber visit our garden this past year. Alice Waters, a long-time spokesperson for local foods and school gardens, was delighted by our gardens, which for us is truly high praise.

“It’s lovely to see so much growing here that is real, sustaining, and beautiful!”

-Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal



This year was our first full season of running a biogas digester in the Franklin East garden. Thanks to our advisors at the Northeast Biogas Initiative, we learned how to feed, maintain, and use the biogas we created using food and garden waste. The methane gas that we captured was then used for cooking demos and social gatherings for our garden crew.

As always, we continue experimenting with new and unusual plants, crops, and varieties in our gardens. This past year we introduced passion fruit to one of our raised beds in the Franklin East garden. We didn't expect any fruit this first year, but the plant did, in fact, yield some mouth-watering fruits along with some of the most beautiful flowers we've ever seen. We also added a bed of Goumi berries at our Hillside garden, an unusual Nitrogen-fixing shrub that produces an early harvest of tart berries.



A mosaic of seeds collected from garden and forest



Our freshly harvested ginger matches perfectly with Student Garden Coordinator, Liana Rosenblum's shirts.

HARVEST COMPARISONS



Jenna Schwartz, a summer crew member, aerating our newest garden with a broadfork at the Agricultural Learning Center



First meal cooked with biogas in the Frank East garden was a hit! Pancake breakfast courtesy of summer gardener, Yonah Kalikow.



The joys of pulling radishes!

“Today I picked some spearmint from the garden & read a few journal entries. Feels so warm to be part of such a loving, inclusive, and emotionally intelligent community!”

Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal

OUR FARMERS' MARKET

One of our most popular offerings on campus continues to be the Student Farmer's Market. Having just completed its 14th year, the market shows no signs of slowing down. Over the 13 markets that we hosted throughout the Fall and Spring semesters, we had **over 200 different student vendors join us**. Vendors this year offered everything from fresh Challah bread to tarot readings to homemade soap.

Beyond the vendors, our markets offered special seasonal celebrations such as our apple cider pressing, chestnut roasting, and more. We also hosted the Stockbridge Floral Program for a second year at the markets; they continued to amaze everyone with their creative installations and beautiful fresh flowers.



The winner of our Farmers' Market Halloween costume contest



Student musicians, Denim at Dusk, performing at the market



Student vendors showing off their custom T-shirts

OUR EVENTS

Building on our previous years' offerings, we continued some of our favorite event traditions such as our popular Handmade Holiday Gift-Making, foraging walks, and our 2nd annual Salsa Con Salsa event.

We also offered several new workshops such as a Ginger Candying workshop with our homegrown rhizomes.

We've also deepened our interest in more social gatherings, such as our Tea Time in the Garden event for new students.



Our 2nd annual Salsa Con Salsa event, a collaboration with the UMass Ballroom Dance club

"Hello Franklin Permaculture Garden, you have been very good to me in my first year"

- Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal

OUR CAMPUS & COMMUNITY IMPACT

We continue to open up the garden for tours throughout the growing season. In 2025 we offered **22 group tours of our flagship Franklin Permaculture garden**. Groups included 2nd graders from nearby Wildwood Elementary School who had the opportunity to harvest and eat fresh carrots to nursing students learning about preventative therapies.

Additionally, we hosted weekly volunteer sessions throughout the growing season that brought out close to 80 students. We're particularly proud that many alumni of our garden program continue to come back regularly even after having graduated years ago.



Wreath creation during our Handmade Holiday Gift-Making event



A Permaculture Practicum student showing off her fresh flowers



Pumpkin Carving Day



A new welcome sign to entice more visitors in our
Berkshire Garden

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Thanks to the support from UMass Dining, the university and the wider community, we feel confident that the future remains bright. Permaculture continues to offer a unique opportunity that inspires students to think about how they interact with systems. Our gardens continue to offer a sensory symphony that balances the mind and awakens the spirit. For 2026 and beyond, we plan to lean in and offer yet more options for students and others to engage. What will that look like? Specifically, more collaborative workshops on topics as diverse as natural building and animal tracking, more culinary events, and more social events in the gardens.

Want to learn more about UMass Dining's other sustainability projects? Check out the QR link!

