



2022

UMASS PERMACULTURE ANNUAL REPORT



PREPARED BY

DANIEL BENSONOFF
SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR OF CAMPUS GARDENS

KATHY WICKS
DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABILITY, DINING SERVICES

JO FUCHS
STUDENT GARDEN COORDINATOR

ADAM FINKE
STUDENT GARDEN COORDINATOR

JENNA GOUVEIA
STUDENT GARDEN COORDINATOR



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.

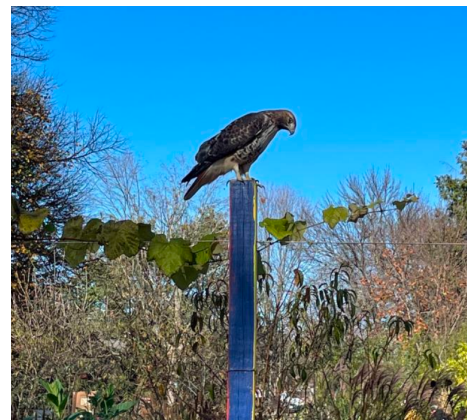
A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

It's hard to believe that our unique permaculture education program just completed our 12th season of growing food for our community. What started as just an ambitious student project is now a well-rooted and well-loved entity in the heart of UMass Amherst.

Twelve years have given us ample time to grow roots deep down into the sub-strata of our community soil. That means more connections, more resilience, and more growth. Those mycelial ties helped us bear many fruits this past year: our most successful farmer's market season yet, breaking ground on our newest garden, and new collaborations with campus and community partners.

Most importantly, we continued to give students space and tools to enact a new relationship to the land and her motley creatures. It's clear to us that students are hungry for practicing a new way of relating to our biosphere; by offering hands-on and community gatherings consistently, we feed into a necessary paradigm shift that, we hope, might ripple out to become a tidal wave of change.

With great appreciation and love,
The UMass Permaculture Team



A Red-Tailed hawk perched on our grape trellis



HARVEST COMPARISONS



In our 12th growing season, our gardens were challenged by a severe Summer drought. Despite the lack of water, we harvested 1,850 lbs. from 91 different species of fruits, vegetables, nuts, mushrooms, and medicinal herbs. The total value of our harvest exceeded \$13,000. Despite the weather and our animal kin, this is still amazing for our 1/2 acre of garden.



Our resident beekeeper, Simon Stevenson, checking on a new hive split

Even though we suffered total crop loss with our peaches, corn, rice, beans, and pears this year due to a combination of drought and animal pressure, we did have strong results with several new and unusual crops this year including grain amaranth, ashwagandha, and ginkgo nuts. We also began to grow out microgreens this year for a weekly distribution to supply Commonwealth Kitchen with tender, nutritious greens throughout the year.

Our food was utilized throughout UMass Dining and the greater community. The lion's share, 530 lbs., was sold through the farmers' market where we offer students our fresh and value-added products at reasonable prices. The new restaurant in Worcester DC, Commonwealth kitchen, received 120 lbs. of high-value baby greens and microgreens. We also donated 150 lbs. to the Amherst Survival Center.



Shed mural and new solar dehydrator

Beyond our crops, this year's gardens were notable for the new art and educational installations created by students in the practicum class and by the summer garden crew. The Franklin and Berkshire Garden sheds were both painted with murals. Other student-created installations included a recycled wood bench, a wattle fence made from willow, and a little library.

"Poppy and I picked Kale, chives, and Mint.
There is so much abundance!"
- Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal

OUR GARDENS

One of our proudest achievements of 2022 was officially breaking ground on the expansion of the Franklin Garden, colloquially called the “Frank East Garden”. Beginning in August 2022, we began turning an underutilized lawn into a handicap-accessible raised bed garden that will significantly expand our capacity to educate and grow food for the community.



Summer gardeners working on the new “Franklin East” Garden

“Sitting in the garden; the air is so warm. It’s been so long. Time squandered as I sit foolishly & ignorantly, just in nature’s bliss. I have so much to do and yet this simplicity takes precedence.”

- Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal



New mural painted by a student in the practicum course



Sunset in the Franklin Garden



A practicum student holding some oyster mushrooms grown on cardboard and coffee

OUR FARMERS' MARKET

One of the most notable shifts in 2022 was the increasing popularity and vitality of the Student Farmers Market. We started the Spring season off with an Earth Day Extravaganza market, which brought together the entire campus sustainability community to create a celebrational day full of workshops, yoga, clothing swaps, and much more.

That energy continued right into our Fall market season. We had **83 different** student vendors, organizations, and student groups table during our 8-week Fall season. That diversity led to our strongest attendance ever, with most markets seeing at least 300 visitors. Several local publications including the Daily Collegian and Amherst Wire took note of this interest and featured the market with headlines such as [“UMass Student Farmer’s Market Emphasizes Community and Sustainability”](#).



Organizers and participants at the 2022 Earth Day Extravaganza

“I am glad we get to share this place together. We’re strangers, but we each share the Earth.”
- Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal

“This garden is where I spend time with some of my most beloved friends.”
- Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal



Student Garden Coordinator Jo Fuchs showcasing our medicinal herbs at the market

“I eat lunch alone here every day and despite being alone, I feel alive. This is such a beautiful place. School is scary, so is being so far away from home. But having a garden here provides just a bit of solace.”
- Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal

OUR EVENTS

One of our primary goals for 2022 was to collaborate with other entities on campus to create diverse educational offerings to reach a wider audience. Aside from our well-known events such as “Handmade Holiday Gifts” and Wild Edible Plant walks we featured several new events in the garden including an outdoor film screening of mytho-ecological film, “Princess Mononoke” and an educational workshop for the Women of Color Leadership Network. As part of our Dining for a Cooler Planet campaign, and our project on “What Indigenous Foodways Can Teach Us About Climate Action” we partnered with our UMass Dining culinary team, to host Chef Neftali Duran for an event on “Seasonal and Place-Based Eating”. This included a walk, conversation, and cooking in the Franklin Garden. For a second year in a row, we also partnered with Hillel to host a Sukkot in the Garden during the High Holidays.



Participants from the Women of Color Leadership Network on a tour of the garden



Chef Neftali Duran from the I-Collective cooking up local produce in the Franklin Garden

In continuing our commitment to student empowerment, several of our workshops this year were entirely organized and facilitated by our student garden coordinators. Adam Finke led a workshop on mushroom cultivation, Jenna Gouveia led a full moon renewal event, and Jo Fuchs taught a workshop on herbal preparations.



Prickly Pear Cactus in bloom

OUR CAMPUS & COMMUNITY IMPACT



Our new solar dehydrator, built in collaboration with the Makerspace and an environmental conservation class

We offered **18 class and community tours** of our gardens with a total of **240 participants**.

Tours ranged from local school groups to UMass parents, alumni, and on-campus classes. We were particularly proud to host renowned chefs Alice Waters, Martin Yan and Jacques Pépin for a tour and garden luncheon during the 2022 Chef's Conference.

During Fall '22 we added additional weekly volunteer time on weekends to allow for more students to get involved in the garden. In total, we had **137 different students and campus employees volunteer in the garden**, many of them coming regularly throughout the season.

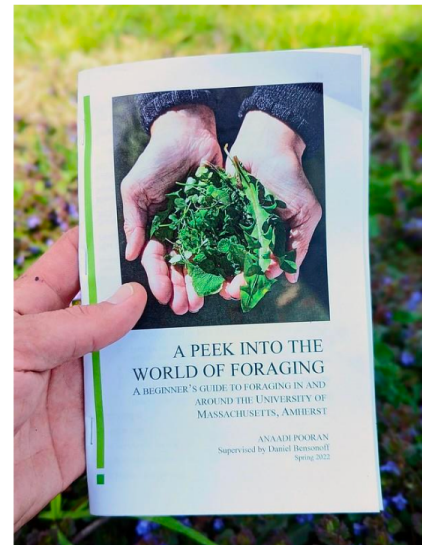
We're proud that our gardens also continue to be living classrooms for other campus classes and organizations. A class taught by Environmental Conservation Professor Charles Schweik built and installed a solar dehydrator, allowing us to increase our food preservation work. Currently, we are in conversation with an engineering team to build and site a biodigester in our garden, which would allow us to demonstrate this powerful green technology.



Alice Waters with UMass Permaculture Summer Gardeners during the Chef's Conference

Dan Bensonoff, manager for the UMass Dining Permaculture Initiative also led two independent studies in Spring '22 with UMass students seeking to further their knowledge of place-based eating. One of these independent studies, with student Anaadi Pooran, culminated in a field guide to foraging on campus. The other study, led by student Zoe Kaplan, focused on creating a recipe book and personal history of Jewish fermentation traditions.

“Just passing through with a wonderful friend.
I am so lucky to visit. Thanks for the
wonderful tomatoes!”
- Anonymous, found in the Garden Journal



Foraging field guide created by
Anaadi Pooran

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS



Gardener Aviva Gershman
bringing fresh garlic in to cure

We see so much space for growth and refinement as we enter into our 13th growing season. We'll be tending to more garden space than ever before, giving us more opportunities to try new crops, get more students involved, and feed more people. We also plan to offer students more seed-to-fork opportunities, meaning cooking classes and demos that equip students with the life-long tools needed to transform nature's bounty into vibrant and delicious foods.

We recognize the need to widen our doors and strengthen our mycelial web so that the entire campus ecosystem benefits from our work. With that in mind, we're also busy cultivating additional community partners who want to access our living laboratory of sustainability, regeneration, and resilience. We hope you'll come by for a visit, reach out with your ideas, and continue to support our growth.



Volunteers celebrate a great season with
some hand stamps