

Skidmore Community Garden Annual Report 2014
2014 Manager: Eliza Hollister, Class of 2015
November 6, 2014

General Season Overview

Because this was a new location for the garden with new soil and new plants, there were a lot of unknowns and a lot of guessing and checking. Many of the plants we grew did not grow as prolifically as we would have liked, and much of the summer was spent making major preparations and working on major projects like shaping beds, making the compost bins, constructing trellises, spreading wood chips, organizing the shed and installing gutters, etc. Most planting was later than it should have been due to the necessity of shaping the beds and getting everything ready for seeding and transplanting. Overall we had a great year; we sold a total of 545 pounds of produce, had numerous educational events at the garden, and put on a fabulous Harvest Dinner in November.

Successes and weakness of Crops

Generally, the plants did alright but were not extremely large or prolific (for example, chard, kale, and peppers did not grow as well as neighboring farms. Not sure why, could be due to pH level being too high, nutrient deficiencies, etc. For individual successes and weaknesses, see the comments on the [2014 Garden Planning Chart](#) in the far right column.

Produce Statistics

This year we sold 545 lbs of produce to the dining hall. Detailed invoices are available to see how much of each crop was grown and sold to the Dining Hall.

Crop/Pest Observations and Suggestions

For additional information about observations, see crop observations in Appendix A.

The following insects and mammals were found in the garden this year:

- 6/16/14 flea beetles found on kale
- 6/21/14 nest of baby bunnies found in the tomato/carrot bed
- 7/7/14 Colorado potato beetle on eggplant leaves
- 7/8/14 more flea beetles on kale and arugula and other greens
- 7/8/14 clavate tortoise beetle larvae found eating leaves of eggplant plants
- 7/7/2014 zucchini were found to have been nibbled by something
- peppers and tomato leaves were discolored and curling throughout season
- peas showed yellow discoloration in the stems, likely a nutrient deficiency

Companion Planting

It would be wise to do personal research to decide what kind of companion planting would be best, but some examples that were used this year were tomatoes with carrots, beans

with lettuces, and kale with peppers. The eggplants being next to the blueberries was not an intentional companion planting move, but both did well next to each other.

Soil problems

After doing a pH test, we found that our soil has an absurdly high pH (7.something). This is likely one reason for the curling/discoloration of the peppers and tomatoes. To remedy this, we bought sulfur soil acidifier from Hewitt's and spread it over all the soil. It would be excellent to take a pH test as soon as the snow melts to see where the pH level is at.

There are also a few assumed nutrient deficiency problems, exemplified by the peas developing a yellowish stalk. The small mature size of many of the plants may also be due to problematic nutrient availability limitations due to high pH.

Herb Garden

The herb garden did fairly well this year; though it is certainly difficult to get over there often enough to attend to it frequently. I would recommend keeping/planting some of the more long term/low maintenance herbs there such as thyme, oregano, rosemary, mint, marjoram, etc. in the herb garden and focusing on the shorter terms herbs like basil, cilantro, parsley, and dill in the Community Garden.

Work Parties

This school year, work parties were held on Sundays from 1-3pm. This is a great opportunity for students and other community members to get more involved and spend some time in the garden, and to get harvesting and any other tasks that need doing completed. This time frame worked very well, and work parties were attended by anywhere from 3-15 people. There were also numerous work parties held throughout the summer. Typically work parties are attended by only students, but over the summer there were more Skidmore faculty and staff attendees, as well as a handful of Saratoga community members.

Community Outreach/Garden Visits

- Visit from Camp North Woods
 - Camp North Woods visited mid-summer and we did two activities, bat and bug game and planting seeds in individual containers to take home.
- Camp North Woods with Chef Rose
 - Chef Rose came down to the garden to do a food awareness activity with the kids. He spoke about food sourcing in words they could understand, and then we all made blueberry smoothies together. Great day!
- Visit from Greenburg
 - Some of the students from Greenburg came by to see the garden, and I showed them around. Didn't have time for an activity.
- Visit from the Early Childhood Center

- Students and teachers from the ECC came to visit and I came up with a flower activity. I showed them around the garden, explaining pollination and the importance of flowers, then had them each pick their favorite flower and draw it at the picnic table. Some of them tried the nasturtiums, which was great!
- Visit from Apple Blossom Bunch with AJ's EE class
 - Students and teachers from the Apple Blossom bunch came by in October in conjunction with AJ's Environmental Education class. The EE class split into groups for different stations to do activities on air, water, soil, space, and sun.
- Visit from ES 100
 - AJ's ES 100 class came to visit the garden as a field trip, and I showed them around and invited them to come help out
- P.E.A.S involvement
 - I led the P.E.A.S. pre-o (Pre-Orientation Experience for Agricultural Sustainability) program this year, which was a ton of fun. We used the garden as our home base, and the students participated in work parties. Many of them returned throughout the semester to help out!

Service Learning

This year, students from Nurcan's Politics of Food class completed their service learning component by helping out at the garden. It was wonderful to have 6 helpers on hand! They were required to complete 15 hours throughout the semester. Very helpful for the Harvest Dinner, for work parties, and for general help.

Main Events:

Polo

We tabled at this event this summer. The Polo is one of the big events d-hall puts on every year, and it is located at the polo fields off of Daniels Road. We supplied greens for one of the salads. It was a good opportunity to get our name out there and talk with some influential people in the Skidmore and Saratoga communities. We planned our crops around this event so that we would have enough greens etc.

Founders Day

Skidmore brought back Founders Day this year, and we contributed a huge amount of produce for it! They used all that we gave them in a big 'ol salad, which was delicious. We planned our crops around this event so that we would have enough greens etc.

Garden Grand Opening

We held a grand opening ceremony/party at the garden at the beginning of the fall semester. There was music, food, and fun times all around!

Harvest Dinner

Our biggest event of the year! The Harvest Dinner is our annual fundraiser. This was the third year of the Harvest Dinner, and it was held in the Spa on November 2nd. We didn't get an

exact head count, but we think we served about 200 people. We raised \$446 in donations. Our musicians were John Kirk and Trish Miller; two Skidmore professors. They played last year as

General Suggestions for the Future

- This year, we did a fair amount of transplanting due to our late start. Things that DON'T work well as transplants are beets and other root crops. I would highly suggest direct seeding these plants, and being very conscious of which plants grow best as transplants, and which grow best direct seeded!
- Marigolds and Nasturtiums did very well, and were beautiful to have around! As a side note, Nasturtiums could be sold to the d-hall next year as a commodity crop.
- When trellising, use plastic reusable trellising twine. Regular fabric twine wears out very fast and becomes less taut quickly. To clip plants, use the tomato clips that are already in the shed (these work for cucumbers and any other climbing plant!)
- Create a garden map that will help organize where things have been planted in the past and where they should be planted in the future
- We have been trying to have someone design arbors/archways for the entrances of the garden. This would be an excellent service learning project or art project (or summer project if there is time to spare!).
- Right now, to prevent wood chips from getting in the drain, there are hay bales blocking the way. There has been talk of building a platform in that area of the garden for performances or for hanging out on, so perhaps if this is built we can line the edges with landscaping fabric or something similar and fix the drainage problem!

Appendix A

Crop Observations

6/16/2014

Peppers are curling and yellowing, some are turning purpleish. Likely a pH problem (see below under 7/8/2014 for further details)

Unidentified bugs were found on the first planting of kale this week. Likely some kind of flea beetle.

6/21/2014

A baby bunny nest was found in the tomato row. We let them grow up and hop away (took a couple weeks). Something is eating the zucchini, and its possible that one of the baby rabbits is still hanging around. Not good!

Observations 7/8/2014

There were flea beetles on the Kale this morning. This link <http://www.almanac.com/content/flea-beetles> was helpful in determining what they are and what can be done about them. Using an organic homemade spray may be the next step to get rid of these guys. They are also affecting the newly sprouted Kale, as well as the

arugula and the elegance greens mix that were planted on June 26th. If this problem is not solved, there shall be no kale or greens or arugula! Bah!

In the past two weeks, there have been clavate tortoise beetle larvae on the eggplant leaves. They look like [this](#). Squish them!!! They are very speedy in eating up leaves, and apparently they also eat tomato leaves and pepper leaves

This morning, I found that nearly all of the Zucchini and Yellow Squash have been considerably nibbled, likely by one of the remaining bunny rabbits from our recent nest in the tomato row. I looked for it but found nothing...this is going to need a solution soon. Maybe netting around the fence, or something similar.

Yesterday, 7/7/2014, one Colorado potato beetle was found on one of the eggplant leaves. They are evil, squish them! I found some of their eggs a few days ago. The beetles look like [this](#) and the eggs look like [this](#).

Ever since the peppers were transplanted, the leaves have been curling and yellowing and their growth has been stunted. I asked the people at the cornell booth at the farmers market (super helpful resource) and they said it was likely due to our high pH level. We used sulfur acidifier for all the beds, but we were informed by the cornell people that it takes about a year for the pH to be lowered significantly. Hopefully the peppers do better next year!

Many of the tomato transplants were not growing well for their first few weeks after transplanting. They showed the same signs as the peppers--yellowing and curling. Most of them are doing very well now, but still some are the same size they were when they were transplanted. Again, it is likely a pH problem.