

1.) How/who started the garden...who took the initiative?

A few UWSP students wanted to start a student garden, it was all student-driven.

2.) How/who manages the garden? Who sustains it?

The Sustainable Agriculture in Communities Society manages the garden through Student Government Association appropriated funds and dedicated student volunteerism. Several workshops during the school year help renovate and bring new people into to the garden. We determine what workshops and changes we'll be making based on the condition of the facilities and innovative ideas the students share. During the summer, the school pays two students each for a 20 hr/week Garden Manager position.

3.) What were the steps in getting one on campus?

The most important part was getting the land for the garden...this process took several months but eventually permission was granted to use our current space on Franklin St. The first year most of the efforts was on infrastructure- putting up a hoop house, building raised beds, etc. Since then we have focused on improving soil fertility and maintaining the current structures.

4.) Who are the gardens for?

The gardens are for students and community members alike to learn, explore, and volunteer in an organic agricultural setting.

5.) What are you growing?

We grow seasonal vegetables in several raised beds and a hoophouse. We gear our produce towards use at our annual Harvest Dinner. We choose organic seed varieties of everything from lettuce and beets to squash and potatoes. We are looking to expand to perennial plants as well, as we've integrated mushrooms, asparagus, raspberries, and grapes into the garden.

6.) How do you receive funding?

The UWSP Student Government Association.

7.) Do you have community support? If so, describe.

SACS has collaborated with UW-Extension and Central Rivers Farmshed to give simple garden tours and promote activities in the garden. All activities, such as renovating the hoophouse, composting, and building raised beds, are open to the public. SACS members also connect with local farmers, finding volunteer opportunities, sourcing food for the Harvest Dinner, obtaining donated supplies (hay, used garden tools), and gardening advice.

8.) Most important lesson learned?

How to cooperatively take care of a living, growing entity while learning life-long skills and building friendships.

9.) What are your future plans?

We hope to improve the soil in the garden, as it's very sandy, and continue composting efforts with the Waste Management Society on campus. Planting more perennial crops in the garden is another goal, saving money and producing efficient, delicious food with a permaculture twist. We also hope to continue drawing in students from several disciplines in the hope that our enthusiasm for gardening sticks with them.

10.) What do you feel was your best success?

Maintaining steady and dedicated members through the years.

11.) What warnings do you have those starting campus gardens?

It is a *lot* of work. It takes dedicated people, a lot of time and care, money, and significant planning to make a functioning garden a success. Versatility and outside expertise is key. There also must be a destination for the produce and the utilization of community resources to fill in gaps that funding doesn't cover, such as hay in a pinch or donated seedlings from a local farmer or member when the garden's have failed to sprout in time. Collaboration with other organizations and teachers is important as well.