

A Report on the New Student Garden Summer 2010

by Forest Purnell
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Introduction

I have no reservations in saying that the pilot project for the student garden has been a success. The garden is producing vegetables, dialogues have been opened with community organizations, and the infrastructure for blogging and journaling has been set in place. In short, the groundwork is now prepared for future years to build upon.

As a participant in the Bennington Sustainable Food Project (BSFP) in the Spring of 2010, I witnessed the first stages of design for the garden and its internships. I realized then that to complete the work of the garden in all of its outreach, record-keeping, and communications aspects would require a tremendous amount of ambition and willingness. I discovered through the summer that I was correct.

I harbor no illusions that the work was flawless. Many problems existed, some with the specific circumstances of this first year (late start and lack of planning in the garden, lack of plans with outreach organizations, poor cooperation between interns) and others with the design of the internship itself (inconsistent work schedule, unclear definitions of responsibility). While the past cannot be altered, it can be studied and understood to provide foresight.

I have tried in this report to separate out the specific problems of this year from those that will carry over to the next. In cases where this proved difficult, I have explained the precise details of the issue.

My points have been broken up into small sections. The report may be read straight through, or by skipping to specific areas of interest. See the table of contents on the next page.

It is not my intention here to provide a full image of the summer garden project. However, to carry on projects in an organization that people come to and leave from requires having records that don't. The danger of long reports is that they will not be read; here I have tried to strike a balance between succinctness and raising issues that will be vital for to future garden projects to bring into consideration.

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Executive Summary

The Bennington Sustainable Food Project (BSFP) proposed a new student garden in Spring 2010 as an initiative to promote sustainable food systems on campus and in the community. The plot was an area of thirty by sixty feet in the southwest corner of the community garden, which itself is next to the Stickney Observatory.

This year's garden interns were Forest Purnell and Emi Reyes. They were selected as interns on May 25, 2010 by a search committee comprised of four representatives from staff, faculty, and administration. The internship officially began on Monday, June 9th and ended on Friday, August 20th. During the summer, the interns were supervised by Assistant Director of Facilities Rich Smith and advised by groundskeeper Melissa Leland. Environmental studies faculty member Valerie Imbruce was also available to act as advisor and as a liaison between the interns and the faculty and administration.

The interns were responsible for three distinct projects: caring for the student garden, working with community organizations, and keeping records (including a blog). They were expected to complete these three projects in 20 hours a week for 12 weeks, paid at \$8.06 per hour. They were also offered an additional maximum of 20 hours of paid work at the Highland Hall Garden, a Victorian flower garden adjacent to the Park-McCullough property.

Seeds were started for transplants by the BSFP on May 2 and 9, grown in the Crosset Library, and planted by the interns in the garden around June 9. Because many of these starts were immature when set in the ground, and also received insufficient light and heat at their location, they soon died and had to be replaced by purchased starts.

By late June, the garden was prepared with over 60 varieties of edible plants. For the next two months, the work in the garden was tending to weeds, sowing ground cover, and finally harvesting. In mid-July weeds were allowed to proliferate to the point that they damaged the health of many of the plants. The effort to resolve this was much of the garden work during late July. By this time, some plants were beginning to become edible or bear fruits. Harvest at the start of the Fall term is being conducted on a pick-and-pay system involving a money jar placed at the entrance to the garden and a guestbook, although other possibilities such as a produce stand are being considered.

The interns had a tool and supplies budget of \$385, and spent \$305 of it; see Appendix A for more details. There was no fixed location for tool storage.

For record-keeping, I had a journal, maintained a blog, and began to draft a set of garden maps. The journal was used mostly for field notes and transcribing information run across during research. The blog – which as of September contains nearly 80 posts, half of which are logs --was at once a daily record of thought and activity surrounding the garden project, a public information resource, and an internal channel of communication. The maps were meant to represent the progress of the garden visually over the summer, but only two maps could be made.

The three community organizations the student garden was intended to involve were 6 Bank Street, Blooming Chefs, and DREAM. Interns did some work with Blooming Chefs working in the Mount Anthony Middle School Garden. My co-gardener taught cooking classes for Blooming Chefs. I was able to deliver produce to 6 Bank Street and begin the conversation with the director. Although DREAM was contacted, no events or actual cooperation between the garden project and that program took place this summer.

Although many problems existed, it has still been an extraordinary first year for this student garden. By keeping detailed records and analyzing them, it is likely that mistakes will be swiftly corrected and gaps in planning quickly filled. That is why I have written this report. In its pages you will find many recommendations, including:

- Interns should keep their own financial records and keep close track of the budget. Purchases should be planned in advance with the rest of the BSFP.
- Starts should be grown in a location other than the Crosset Library.
- The garden should be designed and planned before the first clod of soil is turned. Firm dates should be set for seed starting, potting on, planting dates, undersowing, etc.
- The work with community organizations should be scheduled before the summer. Visits to local farms, other college gardens, and elsewhere should be settled in advance.
- The selection process for interns should be restructured considering the extremely collaborative nature of this work. Interns should generally agree in their ideas and approaches before the work. A training/orientation process may further facilitate this.
- Volunteer work should be solicited at the same time that internships are offered, and official volunteers should be designated before the summer starts.
- The payment structure should reflect the nature of the work. A stipend system would perhaps be the least awkward for a position that includes such a versatile range of activities.
- It should be considered what projects are necessary and appropriate for the interns and volunteers to handle. While the stated goal of the project is not merely to produce food but to promote sustainable food systems in the local community, this goal needs to be defined in terms of concrete, feasible, projects that two interns can work together on over the period of one

summer.

Practices

a. Infrastructure

i. Financial Resources

We began with a budget of \$385.00 allotted by the Budget and Events Committee to the Bennington Sustainable Food Project in Spring 2010. These funds became available to us several weeks before the start of the internship on June 7, 2010. We had to spend the entire amount before the end of the fiscal year on July 1, 2010 when all the budgets turned over.

We had not made any arrangements for systematic bookkeeping, instead relying on Student Life's records of our expenditures. Every time we made a purchase, we gave the original receipt to Student Life in return for reimbursement one to two weeks later.

Because we did not track the budget ourselves, we had to consult Student Life each time before we made a purchase. The July 1 deadline passed with \$222.74 remaining. Backdated receipts for June 30, 2010 were made out by several kind store-owners on July 1 and 2 and graciously received by student life in order to recoup \$143.39 leaving us with \$79.35 that was lost as a result of the budget deadline passing.

An itemized budget report is included as Appendix A.

ii. Transportation

For traveling to and from the garden, the most used means of transport for me was walking. In cases where speed was required, a bicycle was employed.

My co-gardener had access to a car, owned by a house-mate. We used this in only a few instances: once to buy starts from Clearbrook Farm in Shaftsbury, for a visit to Saratoga Springs to see the Skidmore College student garden, and to travel into the town of Bennington and Mt. Anthony Middle School to work on the Blooming Chefs gardens.

Most of the locations we traveled to using the car were within walking or biking distance. There were few cases where we needed to move large objects, and even in these instances it would not have been out of the question to carry them.

In my view, this year the project was not greatly limited by not having unfettered access to a car or truck. In the future, however, there may be a valid need for such means of transport -- especially if the interns wish to travel long distances to see other student gardens and farms.

ii. Material Resources

1. Seeds and Starts

The 2010 student summer garden contained plants started by direct seeding, transplanting, successive

transplanting, and purchased starts.

Most seeds used in the project were provided by the High Mowing Organic Seed Company, which offers special crop varieties for the New England climate. A large portion of those were donated, and the remainder were purchased out of the BSFP budget. We received the seeds on April 24. The BSFP held seed-starting parties on May 2 and May 9. The plants listed in Appendix B as Crosset transplants were all grown in conventional plastic trays in front of the large south-east facing window on the second floor.

A number of other seeds came from Anzen Seed and Hardware, a small shop located in Los Angeles's Little Tokyo. I purchased the seeds for these Japanese root vegetables and herbs over Field Work Term 2009-10.

Yet another significant portion of our plants came from Clearbrook Farm in Shaftsbury, VT. These organic transplants were presumably started even earlier than ours. Many had root-bunching when we purchased them.

Most of the starts from the library died when set in. Some starts were also left in the garden while still in plastic cell trays and died from exposure to the elements. The brassicas (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, etc) and squash had the largest death rates in general. For possible reasons, please see the corresponding "recommendations" section.

The only plants that we "potted on" were the tomatoes and tomatillos. These were moved from the plastic cells to larger plastic cups on May 23, 2010, and then set on at an average height of about 5" on

June 9, 2010.

2. Tools

A number of tools were borrowed from/provided by facilities and kept in our possession throughout the summer. These included two row hoes, one garden rake, one garden hoe, and three pitchforks.

Facilities was able to lend us other tools for shorter periods upon request. A wheelbarrow found next to Dickinson was used and returned multiple times.

There was a roto-tiller available for our use stored in the tool shed across from the parking lot. I tilled the entire plot on May 16, 2010, and again in the particularly clumpy soil of the southern half on May 30, 2010.

We purchased, using the garden budget: one loop hoe, one pitchfork, two trowels, two weed diggers, and two cultivating claws.

Tools were kept variously against the tool shed, against the observatory, and in the garden at different points in the summer.

See appendix C for a full tool list.

3. Other

Many resources for the garden were available on campus at no cost. Dead-leaf mulch, dumped in the fall at the former site of the student composing project, was wheel-barrowed in significant quantity onto the garden. Potting soil was found near this site as well, and used as a medium for the clover seed sowing. A small amount of Kaolin Standard clay from the ceramics studio was used as an organic pest-repellent.

Other potential resources are numerous. Plant species found along the Blue Trail could be used to make different concoctions useful in the garden; H.C. Flores in *Food Not Lawns* provides the recipe for *jauche*, a weed-inhibiting tea made from stinging nettles. While this possibility was not exploited this summer, it nonetheless remains for the future.

iii. Facilities

The facilities that were most accessed during the course of the project were the Stickney Observatory and the tool shed across from the parking lot. The non-functioning refrigerator next to the tool shed was where we stored our seeds. Initially, we also stored our tools up against this refrigerator; but the location proved too far from the plot so we eventually moved them to the front of the observatory. The space inside the tool shed was rather cluttered and full as well. In the first couple weeks of June, Rich Smith provided a key to the observatory so that we could get drinking water from the tap, use the inside sitting area to rest, and access the Internet for research and blogging purposes.

The Crosset library was used as an ersatz greenhouse. We grew all of our starts on a sunny, south-eastern windowsill on the second floor.

iv. Work Schedule & Hours

The student garden internship was paid at 20 hours per week, \$8.06 per hour.

Many scheduling systems were attempted, but none stuck. Rich suggested that -- at least during the first two weeks -- my co-gardener and I try to arrive at the garden at 8:30 A.M. and work until lunch each weekday. This was not possible because of my co-gardener's busy schedule, which contained several on- and off- campus positions including late-night and all-night work. As a response we tried to stagger times to accommodate my co-gardener's schedule, with some time in which we would be in the garden together. This complex scheme was not adhered to by either of us, and soon was abandoned. Halfway through the summer I suggested we begin using Google Calendar so that our availability would be known to each other. However, this solution did not succeed in bringing us a regular and predictable schedule. Thus, the garden work times for most of the summer were quite amorphous

Toward late July, when I began to spend more time working in the garden on my own, I established a regular system of waking up at 6 AM, walking to the garden and arriving at around 7 AM, and then working until around 1 or 2 in the afternoon. These days, I took half an hour to sit in the grassy shade of the Observatory and eat a lunch packed the evening before.

Our times were initially kept on the digitized time-cards in facilities. For reasons including the fractured schedule and the hassle involved in walking to and from facilities to log each foray into the garden, by the end of July I simply emailed abridged and estimated hours to Rich at the end of each weekly work period.

Another reason for my discontinuation of the time-cards was the apparent "extra hours" I was putting into the project. In my view, the design and scope of the internship is qualitatively inconsistent with the compensation system; therefore to speak of "extra hours" is to perpetuate a concept that is flawed to begin with. The design of the internship implies a body of work that should be the primary concern of the intern throughout the summer; it is the work of a dedicated professional. Like any such work, it necessarily involves the whole capacity and, yes, "life" of the individual. Thus, instead of speaking of my working an extra 30, 40, or 50 hours "overtime" each week this summer, perhaps it would be better to speak of the difference between the implications that may be latent in punching a card and the reality of the ambitious work that a young and fragile initiative of the Bennington Sustainable Food Project warrants.

This is not to say a punch-card system could not be used, or even that the compensation needs to be changed in any significant way. It is only to say that an understanding needs be struck out among all parties as to the nature and scope of the work the garden intern is responsible for.

1. Communication

1. Channels

The garden internship requires communication between many different parties. First, there is the link between the two interns themselves. Second, there are the channels between the interns and the supervisor (Rich Smith), the faculty supervisor (Valerie Imbruce), and the advisor (Melissa Leland). Third, there are the links from the interns to contacts at the various organizations they cooperate with. Fourth, there are communications to the general public, which may take place through blogging, the

campus communications office, newspapers, mailing lists, fliers, and more. Finally, there is the relation back to the rest of the Bennington Sustainable Food Project, both past and present; this is any form of contact with present members through mailing list or by phone, and the passing of written journals through time.

This year, the primary means of communication between the interns was text messaging, face-to-face contact, and the blog. For our supporting staff and faculty, it was email, face-to-face, and the blog. With community organizations, it was phone, face-to-face and to some small extent the blog. Volunteers were reached through mass emailing lists, face-to-face contact, and the blog. For the general public, we used fliers posted around campus, an article published in the Bennington Banner, the piece published on the main page of the college website, and the blog.

So that a common set of tools, contacts, and promotional materials would be available to us and to future interns, I set up a dedicated Google account for the garden (benningtongarden@gmail.com) and a WordPress.Com blog (<http://benningtongarden.wordpress.com>). Within these accounts, records can be found of past email exchanges, contact lists, old fliers, and other internally confidential information that will aid future garden efforts.

2. Meetings

Throughout the summer, Rich Smith and Melissa Leland were the supporters who I spoke with most often. Rich was available in his office on most mornings to discuss any work or scheduling issues. Melissa was able to give valuable advice regarding plant care, point toward campus garden resources, and answer questions. She would often come to the garden or be elsewhere on campus. With both Melissa and Rich, the contact was at least weekly.

Valerie Imbruce was our faculty supervisor for the garden. My co-gardener and I met with Valerie once in late June to have a conversation about our work.

Casey Taylor, the new Environmental Studies Junior Fellow as of Summer 2010, also came to the garden for introduction and conversation on August 03. She has been in contact since then to help facilitate the final stages of the internship.

This year there were no official volunteers or structured garden volunteer meetings. Two garden work parties were held, one on July 03 and another on July 31. Invitations were submitted by email, word-of-mouth, and the blog.

b. Planning, Observation, and Design

i. Research

Agriculture is a constant process of observing, asking, and devising solutions. As Eliot Coleman describes in the *New Organic Grower*, it is more important to develop a basis for asking questions than to try absorbing all the answers. This is the way I approached research: to read the story of others' experiences and overlay them with contemplation regarding my own in order to gain the broadest and widest view within one single summer.

As part of the internship I read through two garden manuals and one novel. Other books -- theoretical, instructional, and narrative -- were consulted but not read entirely. I made minimal use of the Internet,

for no reason other than it did not become necessary. My deepest regret of the summer is not having been able visit local farms, though I was able to secure invitations and contacts.

The manuals I read were *Food Not Lawns* by H.C. Flores and *The New Organic Grower* by Eliot Coleman. The novel was *The Blithedale Romance* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Other books consulted included *Gaia's Garden* by Toby Hemenway, *The Machine in the Garden* by Leo Marx, *Farmers of Forty Centuries* by F.H. King, and *Edible Wild Plants* by Oliver Perry Medsger.

I used the Internet to look up a method for repelling cucumber beetles.

ii. Garden Design

The design of the garden began early in the spring term, when Joel Vall Thomas and Jacob Lepkoff, two students involved in the Bennington Sustainable Food Project, made a list of desired crop plants. Later, when the BSFP received a standard package of seed donations from High Mowing Seed Company, other seeds were purchased to complete the list.

At that point, Joel and I began to read the information on the seed packets to determine the correct spacing for each plant, which would be transplanted, and which would be direct sown. From this point, we would have proceeded to draft a visual layout for the garden, but for the end of term clamor.

In the end, the design of the garden was improvised. I would go to the plot, and after some thought, move a rock into place to imply a border. This would become elaborated as more seeds and starts were put in the ground. It was partly in order to record our ad-hoc design process that I advocated for keeping a series of maps.

iii. Record Keeping

Three modes of record-keeping were used this summer: paper journals, electronic records, and maps.

The tools I used for record-keeping were: a black, fine-pointed, ball-point Parker pen, a grid-ruled Moleskein pocket notebook, a Nikon D50 digital camera with standard 25-65mm lens attachment, a computer with an Internet connection, a WordPress.Com blog, a twitter account, a cell phone with text and picture messaging capability, a Micron felt pen set, and a large newsprint pad.

An early method of record keeping was the "running map." On the first day of the internship, I created a rough map showing the presently existing parts of the garden in black ink and the future parts in red ink. My co-gardener and I agreed to continue making maps throughout the period of the internship, with increasing accuracy and detail, to tell a visual story of the garden. A week later, after many plantings, I drafted another map. Two weeks later, after more changes, I left out a piece of newsprint in the observatory and suggested to my co-gardener that she might try drafting the third map revision. However, this proved infeasible.

I kept my journal on hand at all times in the garden and during my research, recording any important thoughts, frustrations, or observations the moment they came to me. Throughout the month of June and much of July, I would take observations of all the plants upon entering the garden. I would do this every day. This involved about 20 minutes of bending over, slow pacing, and even lying on the stomach -- all with pen and journal in hand. Doing this allowed me to notice the subtle changes in the garden; changes that, once observed, became valuable references for a deeper understanding of plant

care, both in the specific case of the garden, and the general case of gardening.

After recording the logs in my notebook, I would often wander around with camera in hand and seek out the most striking images. These would go onto the blog, along with a transcription of my handwritten observations. I would update the blog from the computer in the Stickney Observatory.

Initially, when writing garden logs, I made an attempt to integrate garden observations with accounts of the previous day's events. Because rendering accounts of conversations, places, and people can be a much more difficult kind of writing than the mere description of plants, I eventually decided to only do the latter in logs. The weaving subjective tales could be left to separate posts, carefully crafted and published from time to time.

Because of the time-consuming nature of the logs, I eventually decided to reduce the frequency from every weekday to only Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. I asked my co-gardener if she would be interested in writing the Monday logs. However, after these were missed in two adjacent weeks, I considered that perhaps another solution was needed. I scaled back the logs further, so updates about the state of the garden could be sent directly from our cell phones to Twitter. I would post a log with photos on the blog only once a week.

The result of moving the logs to Twitter for me was that I no longer felt the impetus to systematically observe the garden plant-by-plant, though nothing was technically preventing me from doing so.

Nonetheless, twittering garden observations did accomplish the same general goal as the long logs and saved time as well.

c. Soil Preparation

On Sunday May 23, a group of people from the BSFP turned the soil of the first student garden using plows and pitchforks. Soon after that time, on Wednesday May 26, I tilled the entire area with a rototiller. I did this once again on Wednesday June 9.

One of the first things noticed about the soil was that it was extremely rocky. As larger stones have been encountered, they have been set them aside in piles along the perimeter of the garden. This has made the soil much easier to work with; although it is a question whether future plowing might not just exhume a new collection.

The soil is also rich in clay, and retains moisture very well.

We did not ourselves add any fertilizers or other amendments to the soil this summer, other than dead-leaf mulch.

Soil preparation for the student garden plot actually began many years ago, when the community garden was first brought into existence. Each successive spring, that area has been plowed and manured by a local farmer who uses some fields around the campus.

As far as we know, no collective effort at crop rotation has taken place in the community garden, nor have there been planted -- up to now -- any cover crops or green manures.

I have begun discussions with others in the community garden about scything the weeds that have

grown out of control, tilling, and sowing a green manure to grow through late fall and winter.

e. Weeds

More than half of the work in the student garden this summer has been the pulling of weeds.

Our approach to weeds initially was to allow them to grow to a visible size, and then pull by hand. Because this was becoming quite tedious, I advocated for under-sowing clover seeds in all the unplanted areas. This cover would act as an "intentional weed" that would prevent other things from growing, fix nitrogen in the soil, and retain moisture as a "living mulch." This was an approach I had read about from multiple sources, so I consulted with my co-gardener and we agreed on a date to sow the clover. Most sources suggested July 4, so we agreed on July 10. By this date, the garden would have to be relatively weed-free.

For many reasons, including a garden work party on July 3rd that accomplished much less than anticipated, and perhaps a lack of understanding by my co-gardener as to the firm nature of the July 10 deadline, the garden was not by any measure prepared for clover sowing on that date. As a result, by the time I went to and returned from a conference in Manhattan over the weekend of the 16th, the garden was completely engulfed. It took constant work over the next three weeks in order to remove the large and thick weeds. Not only was this a vast sink of time, but also the weeds had attained such a size that they hindered the growth of many of the crops.

On August 03, 2010, once most of the large weeds were removed, the clover seeds were sown. Past this date, managing weeds was no longer so time consuming; however the summer was also nearly over.

f. Pests and Diseases

We encountered a number of pests from throughout the kingdom Animalia this summer. Slugs were a common sight on rainy days, but did no apparent damage to our plants. In late June, yellow-striped cucumber beetles appeared on our young zucchini and watermelon starts, devouring the leaves. The shiso attracted Japanese beetles. Black aphids ate at the kale and cabbage. Gophers, rabbits, or some other small mammal pruned back the bush beans and the lettuce.

The only visible signs of bacterial disease appeared in two of four watermelon starts, which wilted and died two weeks after being placed in the ground. This disease may have been brought by the cucumber beetles.

The primary means of active pest control we used in the garden was an electric fence, set up around the perimeter of the community garden. This was set up by Kerry Woods and paid for collectively by all the community gardeners. Our project paid \$100 into the fence fund. According to many of the community gardeners, the fence was extremely effective in keeping deer from eating crops compared to past years.

I used Kaolin standard clay mixed with water as a repellent for the cucumber beetles. This did not seem to prevent the insects from eating the smaller and weaker of the zucchini starts.

Companion planting was used to repel pests as well this summer. Nasturtium planted near the herb court seems to have kept the basil from succumbing to any damage at all.

In general, the damage wrought by pests was not great, quite natural, and acceptable. Most of the plants that were eaten were already unhealthy or not properly cared for.

g. Harvest

Harvest began on July 28, when the first young red onion was pulled from the soil and stuffed into dumplings along with parboiled edible weeds from the garden.

Over the course of the next month, I cooked for friends out of the garden using plants that were ready to be eaten. This began with the young onions, then slowly a succession of beet greens, cucumbers, summer squash, beans, basil, corn, broccoli coming into maturity.

It was a pressing matter all along as to what should be done with the harvested vegetables. To not eat a small number of the vegetables myself and to share them with others seemed irrational, because -- although I had been gardening for much more than the food itself -- there would have been something rather bizarre about a growing edible plants never to taste them. On one occasion I took some corn and squash up to 6 Bank Street. Mostly, I was waiting for the start of the fall term to put into motion any major harvesting.

The reason for waiting was simply that I did not want people to return to see a student garden that had been picked bare. However, the result of this was that much of the corn became over-ripe, and the lettuce went to seed before it could be eaten. Currently tomatoes are becoming ripe.

The solution I have devised to distributing the harvest is to set up a “pay jar” and a guestbook at the entrance to the garden. This will have allowed people to harvest their own vegetables and to pay as they like. They will also be asked to write a short note in the guestbook about who they are and what they will be making with the produce. URLs for the blog and twitter will also be posted.

Every time I used something from the garden, I made it a personal rule that I would at least take photographs of the vegetables and the process of cooking those vegetables. My reasoning was that this would extend the experience of eating from the garden beyond that of myself and my friends; thus it was a way of maximizing the value of the vegetables that I had picked, and the labor that I had previously invested in growing those vegetables.

Early in August, I was approached in the garden by staff from the dining hall and informed about an on-campus farmers' market that was being organized for Wednesday, August 18. Although I was not able to participate in that event myself because of a family reunion over the week, my co-gardener was able to manage the table herself. This experience was recorded on the blog.

h. Seed Saving

At the time of this report, no measures toward seed saving have yet been taken. No plants or fruits have been designated for seed collection.

Recommendations

I. Internship Structure

What is it that makes Bennington College's student garden unique? At this point, it is not the size, scale, productivity, or even environmental appropriateness. It is not the fact that the garden is part of a larger community program.

It is that the garden springs forth from a broader student initiative focused on the understanding and promotion of sustainable food, and the freedom provided to the interns to manage and explore the possibilities of gardening as they wish.

While the former qualities are important and should be improved upon in the subsequent years, it is the latter two that in my opinion should be emphasized and encouraged.

By placing practice and philosophy, local problems and global patterns, on an equal level the garden can be a center of cooperative work within the immediate community, and a node in the emerging global network of communities that Bill McKibben points to as a source of hope on an otherwise hot, hopeless, over-stretched 'Eearth.'

When I applied for the student garden internship, it was precisely with the thinking I have just outlined. Here was an opportunity to embark on a collaborative effort to consider ideas of global importance and act upon them locally. I rejected a paid position at a prestigious international NGO in order to remain in Bennington for this work.

My initial interest in the student garden was acquired from Joel Vall Thomas, who was actively involved in the BSFP's planning from the start of the spring. I had had many conversations with him about the possibilities for the garden, and that is when many of the ideas I have mentioned began to develop. Although my work had for the Project had circled around the composting initiative, I applied for the garden internship under the impression that -- were I in any event to be accepted for the garden position -- it was certain who I would be working in cooperation with.

When that turned out not to be the case, I was still eager to work with my co-gardener, Emi Reyes. However, a difference of perception on the garden and the internship, the fact that my co-gardener carried several other occupations on- and off- campus, and the resulting lack of time we had to interact as people, changed the nature of the summer for me entirely from my previous vision. We lacked not only the mutual understanding required for meaningful cooperation, but also the shared space and time for that understanding to grow. Specific cases of this have been recorded in the following pages, on the blog, and in my garden journal.

It would be a great responsibility for the the search committee to decide in the future who will work well together. There are options for refining the selection process. One is, the interns should mutually self-select their co-gardener and then apply as a unit. Alternatively, or in addition, an orientation or training process should give two otherwise unfamiliar interns the structured space and opportunity to speak about their ideas and approaches, and to perhaps ultimately reconcile them.

The interns should be asked about their other positions on and off of campus. For those who wish to

work on the student garden but have other positions, a special consideration should be made to give them official responsibilities as volunteers. It should be understood that the garden internship, despite its paid hours, is a full-time position requiring one's primary attention.

In this first year of the student garden, much has been accomplished. As the years pass, new potentialities will be actualized. The previous and following recommendations represent much of what I have learned in and around the garden this summer of 2010, and hope to relate for the sake of the project's continued benefit.

II. Practices

a. Infrastructure

i. Financial Resources

Stringent bookkeeping and budget planning will save time and hassle.

Interns should retain copies of their receipts. At one point a trowel was purchased from Whitman's feed store which broke the next day; we were unable to return it because we had already deposited the receipt with Student Life.

Other members of the BSFP should be involved in choosing tools and equipment. All purchases should be made before the growing season, and all transfers of currency should be backed by thoughtful research. Shopping lists should be made.

It goes without saying that deadlines should be kept in mind. With sufficient foresight, the July 1 budget deadline should provide a reasonable length of time in which weigh options and acquire supplies for the year.

This year we did not even scratch the surface when it comes to maximizing the value of our funds through effective spending. To do that requires experience, or research. The most valuable asset we have gained by our purchases this summer is the former.

ii. Material Resources

1. Seeds

Seed starting for most transplants should take place six to eight weeks before the last frost, when starts are ready to be set in the ground. Many of our seeds were started too close to the planting date, and as a result were put in the ground without having become sufficiently large. This probably is what caused a large number of our seedlings to die or take many weeks to adapt to being set out.

The southeast window of Crosset may not be the best location for growing starts, despite its value for promoting the Project. Many of the seedlings were quite leggy after some weeks; this is the result of insufficient light. The health of the plants were not improved by the the dry, air-conditioned environment. An ideal growing location for seed starting would provide a moist, warm atmosphere with full light from all directions. Finding an unheated plastic tunnel to share or purchase is advisable. Purchasing starts from area farms is also an option, however this would cut into the budget while also

denying the project's participants the experience of growing their own.

Some seedlings may need to be given more room to grow before being placed in their final site.

Moving a seedling from a smaller volume to a larger one is called "potting on," and we may need to do this for a number of our seedlings in order to give them a head start over weeds. This year we did this only for tomatillos and tomatoes, but it is recommended for a wide range of other plants, too.

Considerations should be made regarding next year's potting medium. This year, we used a variety of media, including that available in the Dickinson greenhouse and (for "potting on" the tomatoes and tomatillos) a Miracle-Gro substrate containing petroleum-based fertilizer. Eliot Coleman provides recipes for organic potting media in his *New Organic Grower*, which may or may not be used with his recommended soil block system.

Soil blocks are blocks of a soil medium pressed by molds into different sizes to accommodate seedlings at their various stages. The advantages over other methods are numerous: no plastic or disposable container is involved, root banding is impossible, and, as with biodegradable containers, potting on and setting out is just a matter of placing the block in the ground or larger block, Matroska-like. The drawback is that making soil blocks means mixing a soil medium, and purchasing soil-block molds; but these immediate expenses and labor should be justified by the advantages, especially for a collaborative garden.

There should be a plan for seed saving at the end of each growing season. How many seeds should be saved, of what plants? Could a portion of the seeds be sold? Will we need specialized equipment, such as drying racks.

The BSFP should suggest holding a seed swap with other school gardens. This would be a good chance to meet other student gardeners and exchange something of material value at the same time.

Finally, seed catalogs should be ordered from a wide variety of seed companies in order to provide the BSFP with a diverse view of what is available. A portion of purchased seeds in the future should represent untried varieties and species.

2. Tools

The only tools borrowed from facilities that we did not use much were the row hoes and the garden hoes. The most useful implements were the loop hoe, cultivating claws, and dandelion diggers.

Trowels were used for transplanting, but proved fairly unwieldy in that task. There may be a better tool for parting the soil in the right way to allow dropping in starts.

At this point, direct seeding can be done by hand. In the future, if the garden increases in size and/or production, a mechanical seeder may be desirable.

Shovels will also be of use. An extra loop hoe would make it possible for two people to cultivate the soil at the same time.

The roto-tiller was useful, though quite heavy-duty for our purposes. A simpler, human-powered tool called a broadfork might accomplish the same end with less hassle.

Throughout the summer, one source of constant worry was the lack of a designated area close to the garden where tools could be stored. We also lacked a set of guidelines for tool care. Should all tools be put away at the end of the day? Should all of the wooden tools have their handles oiled frequently? Should the hoes be sharpened? When? By whom? How often? These are all issues to consider.

We encountered many people asking to borrow tools for work in their own garden. There should be a system worked out, perhaps a kind of "tool library," that would be a resource for student, faculty, and staff gardeners, while also ensuring oversight and proper upkeep. This could be especially valuable as our collection expands to include more specialized instruments.

In the Google Docs of the BSFP is a recommended tool list from Nancy Higby of the Highland Hall Garden, a list provided to the BSFP in the Spring of 2010 that I became aware of only after we had purchased tools. I recommend the project continue to aim to fulfill it.

3. Other

Identifying and putting available resources to work is something that requires open eyes and knowledge, and perhaps also comes as a response to the sort of constraints that provide the impetus for creativity. All around us in plain sight are opportunities to improve. This is yet another reason I stress the importance of research when it comes to developing the student garden.

iii. Facilities

As I stressed in the section about tools, it is vital that a space be designated or created for storing all of the equipment used for the student garden. An ideal shed would have lighting, walking space, and a specific location for each implement. I would recommend considering whether the tool shed across from the parking lot could be re-purposed in this way.

Being able to use the Stickney Observatory for water and rest was a great boon to the project. Often I would have lunch in the shade behind the observatory. Having such nearby Internet access -- although I was surprised to find that the observatory does not as yet have any wireless access -- was a great help as well, both for research and for blog updating purposes.

The space in the Crosset Library does not provide enough light for growing vibrant starts. Perhaps research should be done to determine a new site on campus, or the possibility of constructing a simple, unheated plastic tunnel. We spent about \$150 of our total budget on buying starts from Clearbrook Farm this year. Perhaps it would be a worthy investment to put our funds toward creating a sustainable infrastructure for growing our own.

iv. Work Schedule, Hours

There were multiple overlapping challenges in the area of scheduling this summer. First, it was a question from the beginning how garden work would stand up to the digitized time-card system used by facilities. Second, my co-gardener's other positions put extra limitations on scheduling. Third, the scope of the internship included three distinct functions with very little transferable skills among them. These were: gardening in the student garden, community outreach, record-keeping and blogging. Balancing these three functions and fulfilling them within the 20 paid hours proved impossible for the

situation this summer.

As discussed in the corresponding "practices" section, it will be need to be discussed how to address the difference between the implications of the internship's stated requirements and those of the system of compensation.

A personal finding that came out of this summer is that packing lunch and eating in the garden is much more pleasurable and productive than eating elsewhere.

v. Channels of Communication

The effective use of the communications web outlined in the "practices" section is vital to the success of the student garden as a cooperative enterprise that functions internally and is permeable to external parties.

The first and most vital communications link to establish is the one between the two interns. This year, most of our contact took place through incidental crossing-of-paths, text messaging, or the blog.

Because there was no set work schedule, the fact that my co-gardener and I were living on and off campus respectively, and my co-gardener's full schedule, there were few opportunities for face-to-face conversation to arise without one of us going to great lengths to request it. My feeling is that this situation foreclosed the possibility of the kind of deep personal interaction that should be the very keystone of any deeply collaborative work. The lack of this led to misunderstandings.

In order to establish clear communications between the two interns, they should have at the very least

a couple hours a week to work at the same time in the same place. Also, the commonality of interns' outlook on the garden and its work should be considered within the search and selection process of the internship, as has been discussed above.

In the case of communications -- as much as in any other seemingly daunting aspect of the internship -- the work should not be unmanageable if it is facilitated by a well-designed system. I believe maintaining a complex communications web is vital; not only for the internal functioning of the project, but also for the project to attain the visibility it needs in order to promote thought about sustainable food and to have a presence in the community. Good communication also has a pragmatic end: it improves the possibility of bringing people together to do work, and to accomplish more as a group than one person ever could alone.

The highest value should be placed, of course, upon face-to-face contact -- all communications should be a beacon leading to that. Among the plethora of media choices available in our time, none can replace the sense of lived experience, of being physically present in the lives of others.

It is also important to realize that some types of media can potentially provide communication to all of the parties listed in the "practices" section at once. For example, an announcement on Twitter or other micro-blog that one intern is weeding lets the other intern and volunteers know where they might find her, informs all of the supervisors as to her present activity, leaves a record that can be referred to in the future, and communicates the moment to blog viewers all in 140 characters or less. A blog entry also does this in a less immediate way, but with more room for contemplation and explanation; the record of a day or a week, rather than an hour. It should be remembered that "the medium is the message," and that each medium has its own properties and appropriate uses.

The intern should, upon assumption of the position, be provided with a structure to facilitate all these types of communication. This is something that will evolve over time, and I believe that this year I have been able to provide a solid foundation for future interns to elaborate upon.

b. Planning, Observation, and Design

i. Research

The importance of deep and regular research cannot be stressed more. Research expands experience beyond immediate space and time, and multiplies by several fold the hands-on learning of the garden.

The resources available for research are almost endless. I prefer books that can be read cover-to-cover, poured over, and remembered in terms of the voice of the author and the stories told. The Crossett library has these, in addition to a variety of the usual compendiums of factoids and figures that can be gleaned for gems of information. I prefer the former simply because long prose is better for expressing complex ideas and new paradigms. Organic farming rests on the formation and practice of new paradigms; to understand and work with these takes more than glancing at an index.

The Internet is chock-full of written and recorded media regarding almost any topic in gardening. The quality of information, of course, varies. Both of the books I read contained resource directories full of links to web resources. Also see the resource section in the appendix of this report.

As the years pile up for the student garden project, all of the records that should and will be produced

will be an invaluable knowledge resource.

Finally, no student intern should fail to take advantage of the numerous organic farms within biking distance. Not only does the experience of working and observing different systems provide the intern with valuable knowledge to apply in the garden, it also has the potential to build lasting ties between the garden project, the college, and these local farms on a general level.

ii. Garden Design

While there are romantic aspects to the ad-hoc design process described in the "practices" section, it is not a good practice for a project that people have to cooperate on. For one, it makes it impossible to set milestones or goals when there is no preconceived notion of what the garden will basically look like. Additionally, it can be easy to overlook basic needs such as water delivery and flow. It also makes the material and budget needs of the project unpredictable.

Therefore, my first recommendation with regard to garden design is that it should be completed before the summer starts. The layout of the garden should be defined as specifically as possible before the soil is even broken. Firm planting dates for starts, direct seeds, and cover crops should be set ahead of time. Seeds should be purchased and known by beginning of the Spring term. The garden interns should be involved in the process of design, and that is another reason they should be selected sooner.

The design of the garden results from the needs and desires of the project participants, and the knowledge of the designers toward how to realize those sentiments. It will require an artistic vision to plan a space that feels good to be in and also encourages contemplation. Before asking how, planners

should refer to why. Many of the reasons behind the garden are explained in the student garden proposal, such as: promoting awareness of sustainable food, establishing ties with local organizations, and encouraging the more sustainable practices on campus. Here are some questions that might help in deciding on future garden designs:

How can the previously mentioned ideas be captured in a garden space?

What activities will take place in the garden?

If we are to have children in the garden, what design elements should be taken into consideration?

What to children like to eat, to pick, to prune, to plant?

How will any given layout accommodate weeding, harvesting, and all the other potential activities that might take place as the summer unfolds?

To what extent should companion plating be taken into consideration?

How will water flow through the garden? Will drip lines, reservoirs, or other elements be used?

What abstract or metaphysical ideas should be embedded in the layout of the garden? What is the relationship of the space to the surrounding landscape, to the world zeitgeist, to the passage of time, to Bennington College?

How will the garden be photographed or videoed, or otherwise have its spatial feeling preserved and broadcast across time and space?

How will the garden change from year to year? Will it be at all perennial and contain any permanent structures, or will it be plowed over and completely redesigned annually?

iii. Record Keeping

Keeping consistent records of each year's garden will be vital to learning from past mistakes and

providing continuity to a project that will pass through many different hands.

This year, we attempted to create a visual record of the garden in the form of a series of maps. I advocated this approach as a way to keep track of what we had planted where, and also to have striking visuals that would be useful for public relations and outreach. In the future, however, I recommend that the maps be drafted before the soil is even broken. H.C. Flores describes an intensive mapping process in *Food Not Lawns*, involving multiple layers corresponding to various types of plants and systems. At the college, there should be ample creativity and resources to put into the furnishing of clear and beautiful maps that will help guide the interns in their work. See the "design" section for more information.

I believe microblogging (i.e. "tweeting") directly from the cell phone offers the least hassle and the greatest benefit when it comes to keeping public logs of the garden. The interns should take turns closely scrutinizing the garden and updating for at least a few minutes each workday.

Paragraph-long logs with photographs, posted weekly to the blog are useful for giving more detailed information about the progress of the garden.

Paper journals are in my view the best medium for "passing notes" to future garden interns. If assiduously kept, with ink or graphite swept out at every important revelation and frustration, the journals could tell a deep and fascinating story of the passing summers. All of this, in addition to the practical information and contacts gleaned from the pages.

Photographs are essential to presenting the world with a view of the garden. I have found that even

cell phone photos sent to the blog are of satisfactory quality, though having access and the ability to use a Digital SLR or other high-quality camera are certainly a plus. Photography-interested interns should be encouraged to take advantage of the unique outdoor studio that a garden can be.

There are, of course, many media that we did not use this year that could be central in future years. One that leaps to mind is video; this could be video garden logs, or time-lapse videos of the garden growing through periods of days, weeks, or months. The great thing about the blog is that it is capable of presenting almost all of the aforementioned formats in one location, relating the arc of the summer in both its reflective, inner dimension and its observational, outer dimension.

c. Soil Preparation

Organic agriculture adopts a paradigm of "feed the soil" rather than "feed the plant." Instead of treating the soil as a mere substrate by which nutrients are transferred into the plant, the soil itself is understood as an ecosystem unto itself, the health of which is a prerequisite for the growth of wholesome crops.

Future gardeners and participants in the Bennington Sustainable Food Project should think of how the soil can be improved with each successive year. Beyond the manure that is added each Spring, many methods are available including crop rotation (this can be done with varying complexity -- refer to Chapter 4 of the *New Organic Grower*), green manures, mulches, and organic soil amendments should be brought into consideration.

e. Weeds

"Cultivate, don't weed" is a motto that Eliot Coleman suggests. Cultivation is the deliberate stirring of the soil in order to disturb weed seedlings and prevent them from ever taking hold. I think this is a sensible approach. If combined with undersowing, it could save tremendous amounts of time in contrast with this year's follies.

Interns should also make an effort to recognize varieties of weeds. Melissa was a great help to me in this respect. H.C. Flores makes the bold suggestion that one should never pick a plant that one doesn't recognize; while an extreme position, it is not unreasonable. A tremendous number of "weeds" are actually highly valuable if their properties are understood.

f. Pests

As mentioned in the "practices" section, pest damage was not great this year. I have nothing to suggest but to maintain the present system, and to ensure the health of the plants so that they can resist pests.

As for human visitors, more thought will have to be given as to how "renegade harvesting" should be accommodated.

g. Harvest

Deciding how to use the produce from the garden will depend to a great extent upon the yield. In the early stages, when demand will far exceed supply, produce will necessarily have to be sold or given away at a "loss" in terms of monetary compensation versus labor input. However, the value of the

vegetables can be maximized by the wise use of them. Eating vegetables from the Bennington College Student Garden is as direct as outreach can get, and keeping that in mind, the produce should be understood as having promotional value as well. This promotional value can be extended if the experience is rendered into a blog article, photographs, video, news article, or other media sent out across distances. Harvest should be treated as a vital time for public relations; it is a time when the garden is most succulent and striking to the outsider.

Thus, I recommend future interns understand that while the value of each individual vegetable may be high while yields are low, the compensation in attention to the garden from being generous with those vegetables could be more than adequate. The generosity will have to leave room for thought about effectiveness.

The more credibility and visibility the student garden gains, the greater ability it will have to -- in the long term -- sustain itself and reach toward those goals outlined in the original proposal. The use of the harvest toward that end, at this early stage especially, is vital.

This year, harvest will be on a pick-your-own basis, with a water-tight pay jar and guest book placed at the entrance. A sign will request that those using vegetables take photos of their harvesting, cooking, and eating and submit them to the garden blog.

H. Seed Saving

Seed saving could be great as an educational process, and as a pragmatic process that would spare the project the time and money needed to purchase new seeds each year. An added benefit would also be

the hardier strains uniquely suited to the garden. Research should be done into the methods and tool requirements, and in future gardens some plants and fruits should be designated as seed sources.

Saved seeds can also be sold, raising money for and promoting the project simultaneously. They could also be used for seed swaps with other area colleges, giving the opportunity to meet with other gardeners and also exchange unique plant varieties.

Outreach

II. Outreach

i. Community Organizations

1. 6 Bank Street

I was able to contact 6 Bank Street and begin discussions with them. We had made plans for some residents to come to the garden to help spread clover seeds on August 4th. Prior to that date, I brought a basket of corn and squash to the house in North Bennington. As the clover-sowing date came, I was informed that no residents signed up to come.

I offered in mid-July to help with the small 5' x 5' garden kept behind the house and to give them some of our extra starts, however no help was needed at that time, and no space was available for the starts.

Neither my co-gardener nor I had any interaction with the residents themselves. This contact is

something I think is vital if the student garden is truly to have a positive effect at 6 Bank Street.

As Linda, one of the main coordinators, mentioned to me, many of the shelter's residents are dependent on processed foods, and have very little experience with fresh vegetables. The original student garden proposal suggested that the interns cook and eat weekly harvest dinner at the house with vegetables from the garden. My feeling is that this would have been a great opportunity to go beyond charity and build meaningful relationships with people in dire need, promoting sustainable food on a very basic and personal level while also providing the interns with valuable experience.

However, due to a lack of correspondence and planning, this was not done during the summer of 2010. Fall dinners are still a possibility.

2. Blooming Chefs

In the first week of the internship, I contacted Carol Adinolfi who coordinates Blooming Chefs, an after-school cooking program for middle school students. On June 12, my co-gardener and I sat down with her and discussed projects for the summer.

Carol explained that she was starting two gardens to grow food for the program; one behind the apartment that she uses to teach her classes, and another within the larger middle school garden. She also would be holding small weekly cooking classes beginning mid-summer.

I went to do work in both of the gardens four or five times throughout the entire summer. I did not teach any cooking classes. My co-gardener taught some cooking classes and also set regular weekly

hours to help in the Blooming Chefs gardens.

3. DREAM

My co-gardener had planned to make garden benches with children in the DREAM program, however this never came to pass. I had also contacted DREAM mid-way through the summer about having a garden picnic, however plans for this were never worked into reality.

My recommendation is that, because DREAM seems to already run on a schedule, the BSFP and DREAM should agree in the spring on summer garden visit dates. This would make it more possible for programs to happen that if it was left for the interns to plan, coordinate, and facilitate events on their own.

4. Highland Hall Garden

This year, interns in the student garden were given the opportunity to also work a paid position at the Highland Hall Garden, a Victorian flower garden in North Bennington. The maximum hours were 20 per week, paid at \$8.06 per hour. Both my co-gardener and I initially agreed to work two days of the week from 8 A.M. to 2 P.M., however this was eventually scaled back for me to one day a week.

It seemed to me that, especially given the hectic nature of this pilot year in the student garden, the Highland Hall position conflicted with, and did not compliment, the primary internship. Its hours coincided with the best hours for working in the student garden. Also, the skills and methods of flower gardening did not prove transferable to those we used in the student garden.

The Highland Hall garden is nonetheless a valuable community resource, and an exquisite historical site. It was edifying to see how tasks in the garden were scheduled, and to view another approach to raising plants. This opportunity, while I am not sure it fits with the student garden internship, should remain open to interested Bennington students. Perhaps it would be a better arrangement if the college offered summer housing to students holding a paid position at Highland Hall and who also agreed to volunteer in the student garden. This could be a simple way of allowing more people to stay and help with the student garden over the summer.

ii. Garden Visits

Visits to other garden and farm projects both near and far should be a regular part of the internship. The garden proposal's requirement that the interns visit at least two local farms this summer was not fulfilled. However, I did establish contact with many local farms and received invitations for my co-gardener and I to spend a day working at each of them. We did not follow through with these for a lack of coordination.

I also contacted some other college garden interns: those at MCLA, Williams College, and Middlebury College. I extended invitations for the interns from MCLA and Williams College to visit the Bennington garden. Middlebury College replied to my email and welcomed us to take a tour of their garden. On Tuesday, August 10, my co-gardener and Melissa Leland were able to travel upstate and see their system. However, due to a miscommunication, my especially enthusiastic contact at Middlebury was not present to show them around.

Late in June, my co-gardener and I traveled to Skidmore College to view the student garden there.

Because of these sorts of visits not only foster personal connections between people with common causes and interests, but also provide pragmatic knowledge for the garden project, it is my hope the BSFP will continue to maintain ties to and visit other student gardens in the area.

While in New York City for a conference this summer, I spent one morning working on an urban organic farm in Brooklyn called the Added Value Community Farm. This project has been running for a decade and includes many of the same elements, or desired elements, of the student garden, including an outreach component, composting, and growing vegetables as much for eating as for education. While there, I spoke with Kristen Schafenacker, the farm manager, and others who were preparing for the next day's market. I continue to maintain contact with Kristen and others.

iii. Bennington Garden Blog

1. Intentions

The blog (a word that is an abbreviation of "web log") is a medium unique to our time; it is a form new to recent years as the book was new in past ages. What can be accomplished artistically on a blog, and what kinds of expression are possible in the medium, are still open to exploration.

The Bennington Sustainable Food Project's proposal for the student garden states, "garden interns will create a blog to chronicle their process and experiences of working in the garden and with community partners."

Upon seeing this requirement, I began to think of ways to meet it. I began to imagine how the story of the summer might look on a blog. The more I thought of this, the more I realized the potential in a blog as opposed to a mass email, or newsletter, or journal. While the story, the text, the crystallized experience would still lie at the center, the vehicle for delivering that story made it possible that the record could also act as an internal communication device (keeping gardeners and support in the loop), an external communication device (keeping the public informed of our work), a beacon or a billboard in cyberspace (every word written would be indexed by Google and other search engines), and finally the URL could be handed out to people that we encountered, acting as a kind of infinitely large business card.

In light of these purposes and potential benefits, the importance of editing a blog with a compelling material at its center became clear to me. I knew from the very beginning that this was something I could not do alone, something that required the voices of my co-gardener and others from the Bennington Sustainable Food Project.

However, difficulties arose when it came to soliciting help from others. I found that the best way to draw in help is through interviews, or asking simple questions in an email correspondence. In the future, certain students who love to write and are interested in the garden should be sought out and given responsibilities as volunteer co-editors on the blog.

2. Technologies

The Bennington Garden blog consists of one Wordpress.com blog and one Twitter account. Both of these were acquired for free.

Early attempts were made to host the blog on a college server, however time constraints did not allow enough time for IT to put us online.

Hardware tools used for the blog included a pen and a journal for field notes, a digital camera, a cell phone with text and picture message capability for Twitter, and a computer with Internet connection.

3. The Craft

The blog was officially launched on Monday, June 7; the first day of the internship. It has not officially closed as of August 21, 2010. It is my hope that it will continue as a way to communicate garden events and happenings throughout the term, and eventually into the growing season of 2011.

Throughout the course of the summer, 78 posts were made to the blog, 24 comments were added by viewers, and a total of 2,754 viewers came to the blog. 5 of the posts were interviews that I conducted through email or instant messaging. 38 were logs of garden activity, and 20 were links to related news articles, essays, stories or poems.

When I did not post about the garden itself, I posted items I found relevant to the process of the work. Because two people working in a garden may speak of things far from the soil at their feet, perhaps politics or philosophy, I felt the garden's record would be incomplete if it did not include things like short stories and science fiction TV shows. These inspire thought that stretches beyond and comes back

to the garden, expanding our work in new and exciting directions.

Reflection

I stood upon the soil early in the summer with almost no gardening experience, and even less formal knowledge of agriculture. Setting to the tasks of tilling, planting, weeding, and harvesting the first summer garden of the Bennington Sustainable Food Project, I found a guide in intuition. From whence some knowledge comes that I should have made one motion and not the other, it is hard to say for sure. The nature of gardening, as with the forging of any artwork, is that it involves the whole person and all past experience churning within. The unique opportunity and challenge of this internship -- one consistent with the rest of my experience at the college -- was that because there were no courses charted, no orders handed down, I was obliged to develop my own techniques and engage my own creativity.

It was clear to me even before I began this work that a conscious approach to the garden as form of public art was the most practical way to bring into life a space worthy to the stated intentions of the BSFP. Text, specifically The Bennington Garden Blog, became the auxiliary medium for recording both the physical and metaphysical arcs of the work. Outside writings I read included Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*, Eliot Coleman's *The New Organic Grower*, and H.C. Flores's *Food Not Lawns*. Visits to the Added Value urban farm in Red Hook, Brooklyn and the Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum in Long Island City, New York also expanded the horizon of my applicable experience beyond immediate space and time, and provided models of thinking to begin drawing from.

The garden-as-art is not, I believe, a concept unique to the mind of one bizarre character working on a

student garden at a modernist liberal arts college in the year 2010. By contrary, the analogy may hold through the ages. What is art but a deepening of given existence? Do not both agriculture and art evince the spirit and disposition of the era and society?

The Iowa landscape is a geometric vision wrought by a reductive, industrial agriculture. That it appears as if it might have come from the imagination of Sol Lewitt, rather than portrayed (or idealized) by a Romantic, or a practitioner of Chinese *guo hua*, is perhaps one idea worth considering.

A student garden at Bennington should be, to me, a "sensual and ethical, no less than an intellectual" project. It should remain self-determined, though with a maximum of outside support and resources. Most importantly, for a garden that is a work of art, the garden interns should be thought of as collaborative artists. This should not be an exclusive proviso, but rather a universally inclusive one, a call for all people to recognize themselves as agents in creating a deeper, more meaningful world.

Providing an institutional structure for more collaborative, socially-oriented work is an endeavor consistent with the stated development goals of the college. It is also vital for the success of the student garden as it has been envisioned by the Sustainable Food Project. With that said, I hope the facts I have provided and the opinions I have expressed will ensure -- not merely the continued development of the student garden project -- but a growth that is consistent with the bold philosophical ambitions implied in the phrase, "eating is a political act."

Appendix

A. Expense Report

Because no systematic expense report was kept by the interns this year, I had to request the information about our budget from student life. Kathy Simonds, the assistant to the Dean of Students, has graciously provided not only the information in the following email, but also scans of the receipts from our purchases. Those are available in the BSFP's Google Docs along with project-related email correspondences.

Hi,

I've attached images of the receipts that I was able to retrieve. Here is the history thus far:

Funds:

\$ 100.00	From Student Organization start-up fund
\$ 385.00	Amount you were awarded from the Budget & Events Committee
\$ 37.55	Initial Deposit into Asset Account
\$ 38.50	Deposit into Asset Account (Dana Wolfson)
\$ 561.05	Total Funds that were available last term

Expenses:

\$ 85.99	6/9/10 - Forest
\$ 35.25	6/9/10 - Claire
\$143.39	6/30/10 - Emi
\$ 26.04	7/28/10 - Emi
\$ 7.56	8/20/10 - Forest
\$ 7.42	8/26/10 - Forest

\$305.65	Total Expenses
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My understanding is that the remaining amount left from the \$385.00 had to be spent last term. Therefore the only available funds you have now total \$54.81, which is in your Asset Account and can roll over from year to year.

Take care,
Kathy Simonds

B. Seed Listing

The following list of all the plants planted in the garden was compiled on August 26 using information from a map drafted on June 2009 and from memory. In the future, interns should record this information as the plantings are made. In the future, not only planting dates and transplant information, but also germination and maturity dates should be recorded in table format.

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Plant Label	Method	Date Planted	Source	Note
Cosmos Flowers	Direct Seed	06/14/10	Unknown	Did not germinate
Bush Basil	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	Gift
Sunflowers	Direct Seed	05/16/10	High Mowing	
Cinnamon Basil	Direct Seed	06/14/10	High Mowing	
Red Opal Basil	Transplant	06/14/10	High Mowing	
Mitsuba	Transplant	06/14/10	Anzen Seed	
Shiso	Transplant	06/14/10	Anzen Seed	
Watercress	Direct Seed	06/14/10	High Mowing	
Corn	Transplant	05/16/10	High Mowing	
Lettuce (Emerald Oak)	Direct Seed	06/08/10	High Mowing	
Lettuce (Oak Red Splash)	Direct Seed	06/08/10	High Mowing	Did not germinate
Swiss Chard	Direct Seed	07/12/10	High Mowing	Planted when Oak Red Splash lettuce did not germinate
Kale (Purple)	Direct Seed	07/12/10	High Mowing	Planted when Oak Red Splash lettuce did not germinate
Beets	Direct Seed	05/30/10	High Mowing	
Kyoto Red Carrots	Direct Seed	06/15/10	Anzen Seed	Did not germinate
Daikon Radish	Direct Seed	06/15/10	Anzen Seed	Did not germinate
Bush Beans	Transplant	06/15/10	High Mowing	
Tomatoes (Brandywine)	Transplant	06/08/10	High Mowing	
Tomatoes (Red Pear)	Transplant	06/08/10	High Mowing	
Tomatillos (Green and Purple)	Transplant	06/08/10	High Mowing	
Cucumbers	Transplant	05/30/10	High Mowing	
Bush Beans	Direct Seed	06/08/10	High Mowing	
Kale (Purple)	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Kale (Green)	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Cabbage (Purple)	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Cabbage (Green)	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Brussels Sprouts	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Chinese Cabbage	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Sunburst Squash	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Zucchini	Direct Seed	06/09/10	High Mowing	
Okra	Transplant	06/20/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Acorn Squash	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Burdock	Direct Seed	06/09/10	Anzen Seed	Did not germinate
Classic Eggplant	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Kyoto Red Carrots	Direct Seed	06/09/10	Anzen Seed	Did not germinate
Finger Eggplant	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Cauliflower	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Red Gold Potatoes	Direct Seed	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Broccoli	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Yukon Gold Potatoes	Direct Seed	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	Did not germinate
Watermelon	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	Did not germinate
Onions (Spanish Yellow)	Transplant	06/20/10	Clearbrook Farm	Transplanted incorrectly as a bunch, separated a
Onions (Copra)	Transplant	06/20/10	Clearbrook Farm	Transplanted incorrectly as a bunch, separated a
Bell Peppers (King Arthur)	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Thai Dragon Chile Pepper	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Jalapeño Peppers	Transplant	06/20/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Serrano Peppers	Transplant	06/20/10	Clearbrook Farm	
Scallions	Direct Seed	06/09/10	High Mowing	
Red Onions	Transplant	05/30/10	Mighty Food Farm	
Thyme	Direct Seed	05/30/10	High Mowing	Did not germinate
Fennel	Direct Seed	06/09/10	High Mowing	
Parsley	Direct Seed	06/09/10	High Mowing	Did not germinate
Dill	Transplant	06/09/10	Melissa Leland	
Marble Arch Salvia	Direct Seed	06/09/10	High Mowing	
Bush Basil	Transplant	06/09/10	Clearbrook Farm	Gift
Nasturtium	Direct Seed	05/27/10	High Mowing	
Sacred Basil	Direct Seed	06/09/10	High Mowing	
Mitsuba	Direct Seed	06/09/10	Anzen Seed	Did not germinate
Red Opal Basil	Direct Seed	06/09/10	High Mowing	
Cinnamon Basil	Direct Seed	06/09/10	High Mowing	Did not germinate

C. Tool Inventory

From facilities:

- Row Hoe (2x)
- Garden Rake
- Garden Hoe
- Pitchforks (3x)
- Large Shovels (2x)

Purchased:

- Pitchfork
- Cultivating Claw, Plastic
- Cultivating Claw, Steel
- Trowel, Plastic
- Trowel, Steel
- Dandelion Digger (2x)
- Loop "Action" Hoe
- Spray Bottle (2x)

Found:

- Saw
- Branch Clipper

Borrowed:

- Wheelbarrow from Dickinson
- Roto-tiller

D. Information Resources

The New Organic Grower: A Master's Manual of Tools and Techniques for the Home and Market Gardener by Eliot Coleman

A general guide to Eliot Coleman's unique system of organic farming. Nuts-and-bolts information about planting, tools, marketing, soil fertility, combined with short essays regarding organic farming philosophy.

Food Not Lawns: How to Turn Your Yard into a Garden And Your Neighborhood into a Community by H.C. Flores

An activist's guide to permaculture gardening. Interesting as a look into one slice of the environmental movement. Also an interesting perspective on the world and philosophy of permaculture. Fantastic advice regarding community building.

The following websites are helpful for following current trends in sustainability and/or finding other interesting syndicated material for the garden blog:

- Civil Eats Blog (<http://civileats.com>)
- The Irresistible Fleet of Bicycles (<http://thegreenhorns.wordpress.com>)
- Shareable Blog (<http://shareable.net/blog>)
- Center for Ecoliteracy (<http://www.ecoliteracy.org>)
- Grist (<http://grist.org>)
- via Oceana: Archival Documents about Bennington College, incl. Farm period (http://wiki.bennington.edu/wiki/Bennington_College_History_Links)
- via Emi: Wiki for Valerie Imbruce's Production of Food Tutorial (http://wiki.bennington.edu/wiki/The_Production_of_Food_-_Group_Tutorial)
- via Tammy & Betsy: Field Work Term Essays (Documents section of Worklink <https://bennington-csm.symplicity.com/students>)
- Bennington Sustainable Food Project Document Archive (<http://docs.google.com> login supplied at request)