



PCC ROCK CREEK LEARNING GARDEN

sowing seeds, growing minds, cultivating community



2015 Annual Report

Introduction

We started 2015 with the mantra “we can do hard things,” and set out to accomplish audacious goals. Our team members offered passion, dedication and diverse skills that complemented each other well. The Sustainability Office was officially placed in the Social Science, Communication and Health Department. Elaine Cole continued to serve as the Sustainability Coordinator and Nora Lindsey, Learning Garden Coordinator, was hired on in a permanent position. We had excellent AmeriCorps members for 2014-15: Lindsey MacDonald, Learning Garden Educator and Dylan Johnstone, Sustainability and Garden Educator. Elaine Swanson supported our team by filling in to complete Lindsey’s term when she accepted another position. In September, Melia Chase and Meghan Feldmeier (Sept-Nov) came on as Learning Garden Educators. This talented staff team helped to bring about a bountiful year of growth. This report highlights our many accomplishments, as well as our hopes for 2016.



Mission and Vision

Mission: promoting interdisciplinary academic achievement, leadership development and sustainable food systems. The Garden provides experiential education and lifelong learning opportunities for PCC students, faculty, staff and community members.

Vision: The Learning Garden offers both informal and formal sustainable agriculture education opportunities that prepare students to be engaged citizens, conscious consumers, business professionals, small-scale farm managers, and leaders for food justice. The Garden programming addresses a growing need and desire for experiential learning spaces that allow students to gain hands on experience in a diversity of areas within the food system. Using a state of the art agriculture education facility and the abundance of land on the property, the Garden educates, trains leaders, builds community, and produces food and flowers.

Accomplishments

2015 was a dynamic, abundant, and exciting year for the Learning Garden. We implemented many grants, improving the infrastructure of the garden for long term food production. We doubled the amount of food harvested, developed new, more accessible and useful distribution channels for our produce, and were awarded national recognition for our work to address food insecurity. We expanded our outreach to local schools, PCC students and community members. We continue to grow the Learning Garden into its full potential with every action we take.

2014-15 The Green Initiative Fund (TGIF) grants awarded: \$39,887

Installation of 2014 TGIF grants:

- **Winter Production** - \$4,509

- Hydroponics*

- ❖ Worked with Jenn Peters to design, install and grow food in Nutrient Film Technique and Dutch Bucket Systems. Students helped in all aspects of installation and production.

- Hoophouse Production*

- ❖ Built 12 4'x10' raised beds in the existing hoophouse on campus, which provided us with over 1,300 lbs of food in its inaugural season of use.

- **Trees and Bees** - \$3,075

- ❖ Planted 34 new fruit trees (26 new varieties) in the Learning Garden orchard.
 - ❖ Installed 6 new beehives.
 - ❖ Installed 9 new varieties of grapes, raspberries, and kiwis in the Learning Garden.

- **Farm Stand** - \$1,748

- ❖ Successful launch of Portlandia Farm Stand and Volunteer Rewards starting April 21 and going through November 24. For the year, the farm stand sold \$7,224 and gave away \$2,799 worth of produce and flowers in volunteer rewards.
 - ❖ The Learning Garden became a certified vendor to accept SNAP benefits and we implemented a Double Dollars program to increase the amount of food dollars that SNAP members can use.

- **Welcome Kiosk** - \$670

- ❖ We worked with Bernhard Masterson and his Alternative Building Techniques class to design and build a welcoming entry point to the Learning Garden.



- **Designs in Learning: Building Capacity at PCC Rock Creek's Learning Garden** - \$29,885
 - ❖ A revised master plan for the garden, as well as an educational and food washing and packing structure were designed with the help of students and then completed by Lango Hansen Landscape Architects and Scott Edwards Architecture.

2015-16 TGIF grants awarded: Total \$38,951

- **Reusable Bag Initiative-Bag It** - \$6,355
 - ❖ Funding will cover the cost of reusable recycled plastic shopping bags from American company, ChicoBag, for sale at Portlandia FarmStandia. Sale of these bags will fund the purchase of future bag orders and reduce plastic waste at the farm stand.
- **Hoophouse** - \$19,234
 - ❖ We secured funds to build a 30'x90' passive solar hoophouse in the garden to expand our off-season production, improve educational opportunities, and model standard and beneficial sustainable agriculture practices on site.
- **Learning Garden Art and Improvements** - \$6,162
 - ❖ This grant will support the creative design, sculpture, plaster and painting of the Welcome Kiosk, as well as installing new signs with the revised learning garden logo.
- **Waste Stream Education Displays** - \$7,200
 - ❖ Briar Schoon and Elaine Cole teamed up to write a grant to design and purchase clear plastic boxes to visually display items that go in each waste and recycling stream in high use areas.



Awards

Nora and Elaine accepted an AASHE Sustainability Award for *Best Case Study from an Association Institution* for "Addressing Food Insecurity at Portland Community College, Rock Creek Campus" in October 2015 at the annual Association for Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Education

This year, our educational programming reached PCC community members through 10 term-long course collaborations, 49 sustainability tours highlighting our innovative closed-loop system, 19 garden workshops that ranged from hydroponic system construction to cob oven operation, and 1,632 contact hours during open volunteer hours. The courses we collaborated with included English Speakers of Other

2015 Community Based Learning Collaborations

Winter 2015

ESR Biology 213
HE 264 Health, Food, and
the Environment

Spring 2015

Biology 163 Organic Gardening
ESOL Reading 5
BCT 116 Alternative Building Design
FN 225 Nutrition

Summer 2015

HOR 285 Permaculture Design

Fall 2015

ESOL Communication 7
ESOL Reading 5
HE 264 Health, Food, and
the Environment

Languages (ESOL), which used work in the Garden as an avenue to practice English; Health, Food, and the Environment, for which students engaged in term-long community-based learning (10hrs/student); Organic Gardening, which used the Garden as a living laboratory; and many more. We facilitated sustainability and garden tours for elementary, middle, high school and college students and professional groups. We began a long-term partnership with neighboring Springville Middle School and hosted 120 Springville students for tours and work parties. Lastly, throughout the year, our AmeriCorps service members hosted ~15 open volunteer hours each week. During these hours, anyone from the community was welcome to drop in for educational activities. After the installation of the hydroponics in Winter term, we hosted weekly Hydroponic Hours to teach about growing plants without the use of soil. These workdays inspired fun conversations and provided hands-on experience for individuals interested in sustainable agriculture as career and/or hobby.

This year, introduction of a Volunteer Rewards program linked to Portlandia FarmStandia greatly bolstered our volunteer operations. We were able to reach potential volunteers from a wider array of socioeconomic backgrounds, and incentivize student involvement and learning opportunities in the garden.

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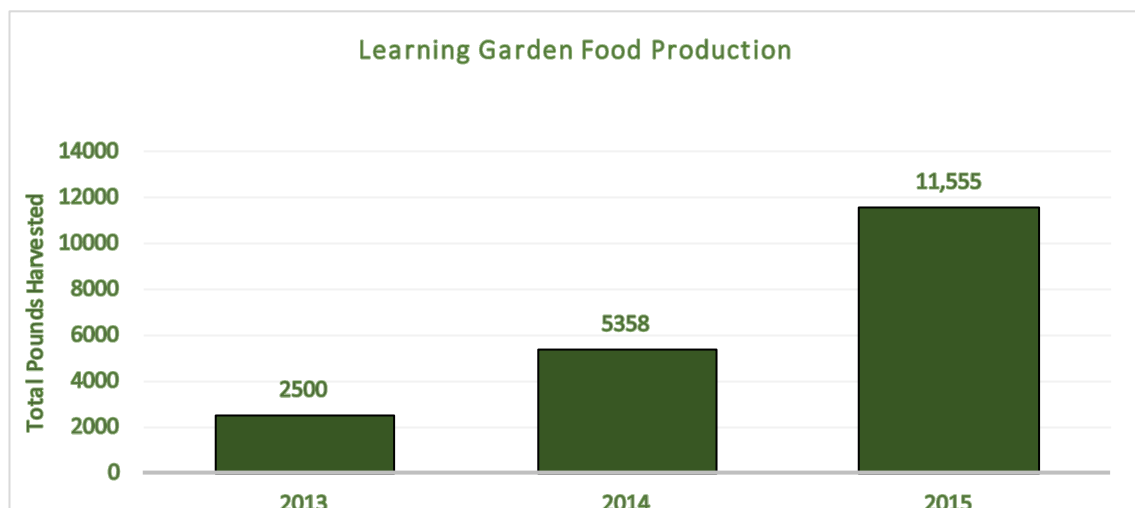
We continued to work with Oregon State University Extension colleagues to extend their Beginning Urban Farmer Apprenticeship program to the Rock Creek Campus. Although we learned that PCC would not be able to support a traditional BUFA partnership, conversations are ongoing between Learning Garden staff, the BUFA team, and PCC administrators. We have built critical partnerships and taken steps toward the development of formal farmer training and food systems education at Rock Creek. In 2015, Learning Garden staff also joined with a team of agriculture educators and leaders in the Portland Metro area to coordinate and expand on educational opportunities available in the field of sustainable agriculture.

Food Production and Distribution

2015 was a fantastic growing year, and we were able to more than double our production from 2014, reaching **11,555 lbs of food harvested** throughout the year, including 1,352 lbs from the hoop house and 180 lbs from our hydroponics systems. We grew over 111 crop varieties on 3.6 acres!



We delivered most of this produce to Portlandia FarmStandia via bike trailer and donated the surplus from the farm stand to three sites: Rock Creek Campus Women's Resource Center food canteen, with whom we formalized our partnership through weekly deliveries; St. Juan Diego Food Bank, across the street from Rock Creek Campus; and Rock Creek Dining Services for the district-wide fall in-service. During October and November of 2015, we donated over 530 lbs of food to the above three sites.



Compost

Compost is a key component for actualizing our food production and sustainability goals. This year, we harvested 13,650 pounds of pre-consumer food waste from the cafeteria - 100% of the pre-consumer food waste produced. We processed this food waste through our mechanical Rocket composter and worm bin, and were able to harvest 784 pounds of finished compost from the Rocket and 560 pounds of finished compost from the worm bin. This was made possible by dining services staff who collected pre-consumer food waste, custodial staff who picked up post-consumer waste, faculty and staff who participated in our compost program, and student staff who completed daily compost pick-ups and processing.

Community + Community Garden Beds

"I enjoyed getting out of the office and taking a break to tend to the garden. There is a satisfaction from seeing the garden grow and produce food. I also loved sharing the produce with my office and friends"
2015 community gardener.

The Learning Garden works to build community in ever-expanding ways. We use our earthen oven to

host baking parties, offer 16 free garden raised beds to staff, faculty and students, and lead volunteer service events. More than 38 people were directly involved in our community raised beds this year, and we hosted many classes that used the earthen oven for events, and the annual Harvest Festival in October which attracted more than 1000 people. The Welding Club and Terry Lookabill donated handcrafted metal fire rings for us to roast s'mores!!



Portlandia FarmStandia

"I love having the farm stand on campus and am so impressed with the great work everyone involved has done. The variety of produce and the quality are outstanding." - Farm stand customer and faculty member



First piloted in the fall of 2014, the Learning Garden Farm Stand officially launched on Earth Day, 2015. An all-campus competition allowed the Rock Creek community to name the farm stand, "Portlandia FarmStandia". It ran every Tuesday, April through November in its inaugural season, and raised \$7,224 in 2015, replacing cafeteria donations as the Learning Garden's primary means of providing food for the community. Running the weekly farm stand allowed us to launch our Volunteer Rewards program, through which Learning Garden volunteers earned \$5 in credit to

Portlandia FarmStandia for every hour they volunteered in the garden. This has culminated in an additional \$2,799 worth of produce donated directly to volunteers from our campus and community this year.

Portlandia FarmStandia is bike-powered. Food traveled $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the garden to the farm stand, and donations to the Women's Resource Center and St. Juan Diego Church travel less than a mile.

Staffing

In 2015, the Learning Garden and its associated programs were powered by one permanent .75 FTE Learning Garden Coordinator, one permanent .85 FTE Sustainability Coordinator, two full-time AmeriCorps Learning Garden Educators, three 11 hour/week work-study students, one international student ambassador (12.5 hours/week) through June, one seasonal casual farm assistants, and two ASPCC students who support sustainability work for the campus.

In 2015, the Learning Garden began a partnership with the Veteran's Resource Center on campus. Qualified veterans are able to receive up to 25 hours of work study per week through the VA. The Learning Garden hosted our first VRC work study student in fall of 2015 and looks forward to continuing this collaboration in the coming year.

Funding

In 2015, we began to think toward new revenue streams and building financial sustainability within our own programs. We view our launch of Portlandia FarmStandia not only as a way to get our food to the people who want to eat it, but as a way to raise money toward continuing to improve the garden, its programs, and the greater PCC campus. We also continued to solicit donations and reuse materials found on campus and in the community.

Funds Raised in 2015:

- \$566 - Flowergrams
Flowergrams sales have begun to decrease as we have made flowers available weekly at Portlandia FarmStandia
- \$7,224 - Farm stand sales
- \$1,993 - Approximated Value of Physical donations (gear, tools, etc)

Looking Forward

In 2016 we have our focus on a number of areas. We will be implementing projects that we were awarded funding for through the four Green Initiative Fund grants.

Other projects include:

- Supporting the PCC-wide effort as a **Bee Campus USA** (certified 2.2016).
- Continuing to develop and implement a sustainable food certificate program through our Social Science, Communication and Health Department
- Connecting within the Oregon Beginning Farmer network to get PCC on the farm and garden education and training map
- Supporting Pacific Northwest Cut Flower Farmer network development and education
- Attending and presenting at professional meetings and conferences when funding allows
- Strategizing fundraising sources for future Learning Garden structures
- As always, collaborate across campus and extending our outreach with businesses such as New Seasons Market
- Continuing to develop our partnership with Springville K-8 in a long term yearly exploration of "Food for Thought" with 55 7th graders