



Portland Community College Rock Creek Campus Learning Garden

2016 Annual Report



**Portland
Community
College**

A letter from our President

When I arrived at PCC's Rock Creek Campus almost three years ago, I looked out my office window and discovered a small garden patch that was filled with raised beds, artwork, and lots of activity. Today, the 3.6 acre site has 35 raised beds, a farm stand, 16 community beds, orchard, beehives, compost bins, earthen oven, worm nursery, sustainable designed cob tool shed and even more activity.

It has not only produced over 8,850 lbs of food this year, it has become a center for "learning by doing" for the campus community. The garden has been a catalyst for cross-disciplinary learning, a gathering place for celebrations, provided food for our students and community, and served as a special place for rest, creativity, and reflection. I am so proud of the hard work the Learning Garden Team has accomplished this year as evidenced by the expansion of programs and partnerships.

When a seed is planted and nurtured with love, a bountiful garden grows.

Sandra A. Fowler-Hill, Ed.D.
Campus President
Portland Community College -
Rock Creek

A word from the Sustainability Coordinator

It is with great excitement that I invite you to peruse a summary of our 2016 work. It has been a year full of expanding programming, hard working staff and yes, challenges.

Together we have cultivated a flourishing garden that produces a bounty of food and supports learning, community, wellness and joy. This report recaps the last 12 months and also sets the foundation for our next crop of produce and projects.

We look forward to another season of growing.

Elaine Cole, Ph.D.
Sustainability Coordinator
Portland Community College-
Rock Creek



Learning Garden

What we do



The Portland Community College (PCC) Rock Creek Learning Garden is a production-based educational farm promoting interdisciplinary academic achievement, leadership development, and sustainable food systems through experiential education and life-long learning opportunities. We support PCC students, employees and community members. The Garden is a vital hub for health, wellness and a connection to our environment.

We work the complete cycle of harvest to compost and back again. Growing year-round, the harvested food is featured in our cafeterias, sold at our weekly seasonal farm stand and donated to on- and off- campus food pantries.

In a nutshell

- 3.6 acres of pesticide, herbicide free land
- 60+ fruit tree orchard
- 50 blueberry plants
- 16 community garden beds
- Apiary—6 active bee hives
- Art walk
- Earthen oven
- Multi-component compost system
- Solar powered irrigation
- Water barrels and bioswale
-and more all the time!

What we are

The Learning Garden is a space for people from all walks of life, with different experiences, cultures, beliefs and lifestyles to work and grow together. It is a place to get your hands in the dirt and nurture something of nature, of beauty, alongside others to grow something that feeds us, mind, body and soul.

2016 Major Milestones

Volunteer rewards—Volunteers receive rewards, credit at Portlandia FarmStandia, in exchange for work in the Garden. This year, **\$3741 of rewards were redeemed**, an increase of approximately 33% over 2015.

Garden collaborations—We are all about working together. In 2016 we expanded our internal and external partnerships to include work with 40 PCC classes from nine disciplines and a 9-month integrated garden-based curriculum pilot program for sixty 5th graders from Springville K-8.

Academic inspiration—The diversity of our partners and their intentions has grown from previous years. This year, we provided inspiration for writing, welding, ethics, art, food & nutrition education, poetry, biology, environmental science and other disciplines.

How we do what we do

The Learning Garden is a lean organization, making good use of every dollar we receive. Most of our funding goes directly to staffing costs, allowing us to support the crop production, integrated garden practices and variety of educational programming supported in the Garden.

We are grateful to our partners and donors who enable our operations to run smoothly and allow us to expand our capacity and projects. With the passion, time and hard work of our staff and volunteers, we are able to transform the resources we have into a garden full of learning, laughter, inspiration and food for many.

Priorities

The Learning Garden and our related programs are grounded in the following priorities.

- Fostering a safe space
- Combatting food insecurity
- Environmental stewardship
- Community-based learning
- Respect the rights and needs of future generations
- Composting all organic waste

Organization

In 2016, we found our new organizational home in the Social Science, Communication and Health Division. This anchors us in an academic division, creates a stable funding portal and supports our community-based learning priority.

We look forward to growing here!

Funding

Our funding support comes from many sources including PCC general fund, grants, donations and in-kind contributions.

- 70% college general fund
- 10% in house special project support
- 10% grants
- 5% sales revenue
- 4% in kind donations
- 1% financial donations

Staffing

We have two permanent part-time staff positions: the Sustainability Coordinator and the Learning Garden Coordinator. Additional staffing comes to us via

- AmeriCorps—Garden Educators
- Interns—non-paid, from PCC and PSU
- Work Study—Financial aid funded student workers
- Veterans Administration (VA) work study students
- Volunteers—students and community members
- Other project specific support—short term grants and collaborations

Projects

Each year we strategize our annual project plan carefully, making the best use of our resources, engaging our partners, serving our community and of course, growing fresh, healthy nutritious food.

In 2016, our projects included

- Strengthen and expand the apiary
- Pursue the Bee Campus USA Certification
- Revise our Learning Garden logo
- Complete a welcome kiosk
- Increase our food donations
- Install new Garden signage

Community

The Learning Garden community is growing and includes long-time stakeholders and supporters, PCC students, faculty, staff and retirees, our campus neighbors, staff and students from Beaverton and Portland Schools, beekeepers, compost enthusiasts and people who are just learning about us.

We are delighted to learn how many people, from so many places, are interested and share our passion for the Learning Garden!



Education & Community

2016 was an exciting year for the Learning Garden's educational programs. We continued expanding our educational reach beyond the campus borders, engaging youth from Portland and Beaverton schools, and enriching the Garden as a greater community space.



Youth

- 641 K-12 students engaged
- 2 school districts
- 29 garden-based field trips

We built on a growing partnership with neighboring Springville K-8 School, hosting 7th and 8th grade students in the Garden every week, culminating with a DIY pizza celebration.

Beginning in September, we began a year-long exploration with 60 Springville 5th graders, and will be meeting twice monthly thru June 2017. So far, this is a rewarding experience for all involved. We also hosted 150 first graders and 125 Springville kindergarteners for field trips, full of hands-on garden-based education and fun!

PCC Students

- 865 PCC students in garden education
- 40 college course collaborations
- 40 Sustainability Loop tours
- 13 Free Lunch N' Learn workshops
- 11 term-long course collaborations
- 6 community education flower classes
- 9 academic program partnerships

Volunteers

- 201 volunteers
- 1649 volunteer hours
- \$3741 volunteer Rewards redeemed

Sharing the wealth

The Learning Garden staff is frequently called upon to share their expertise. We receive inquiries from throughout the US. We also serve as consultants more locally, including with our PCC colleagues. As PCC expands and establishes Learning Gardens at other campuses and centers, we provide information and mentoring regarding structure, funding, staffing and more.

Based on our experience, depth of programming and breadth of productivity, we serve as subject experts and our Learning Garden as a model for others.

Community Engagement

We hosted our annual Earth Week and Harvest Festival activities and events, both highlighting our Garden's 10th anniversary.

Through these events, our programs, workshops and other activities, in 2016 we connected with well over 5,000 community members!



"Last time I went to the garden I remember taking my baby plants and letting them into a wider open space, so they could grow bigger. Holding that life in my hands just made me feel happy. My hands feeling light and more careful, I really understood what it was like relaxing and how stressed out I was. It was cold but sunny at the same time and the ground was mushy and wet, a clammy feeling in my toes. But I felt like I saw all the good in the world in those moments. And I could feel myself beaming, that made me so happy holding a plant in my hands and moving it to it's next big step in life. For the rest of the day I just felt like I could really do anything. I was proud and happy about myself, the most important part was that I felt confident."

*~ Nicole, 7th Grade
Springville K-8*

Harvest

Harvest Distribution

In 2016, the Learning Garden harvested 8,855 pounds of fruits and vegetables, including 897 pounds from the season extending hoop house and 229 pounds from the greenhouse. In addition to row crops, we grow tree fruits, root vegetables, cane fruits, grapes, kiwis, herbs, blueberries and more. In 2016 we cultivated 107 unique varieties of vegetables and herbs, 47 of flowers and 54 of perennial fruits, our greatest variety so far.

Produce harvested is distributed via three primary outlets

- Portlandia FarmStandia
- PCC Cafeterias and Catering
- Food Pantries

Portlandia FarmStandia

Our on campus seasonal farm stand features produce and flowers grown in the Learning Garden and honey produced in our apiary. In 2016, we sold 6,898 pounds of food.

Portlandia FarmStandia continued to grow as our primary means of delivering fresh, healthy, sustainably grown produce to our community members. As we expand our loyal customer base, it is uplifting to see new faces each week.

Portlandia FarmStandia is the vehicle for our Volunteer Rewards program. Garden volunteers earn farm stand vouchers in exchange for hours worked. In 2016, volunteers redeemed vouchers worth \$3471, accessing what was often a critical resource for our students facing food insecurity.



"Great win win for students, planet, veggie buyers"
-2016 farm stand shopper

We expanded our payment options, including SNAP and EBT, and created the Double Dollars program for those paying with these options. This allowed greater buying power, transforming the purchases of \$285 into \$570 of garden fresh foods.

Cafeterias and Catering

In 2016, we expanded our developing partnership with PCC Food Services, the group that operates the college's cafeterias and catering system. We sold 495 pounds of produce to Food Services. This food was featured in catering jobs, at the college district-wide inservice, and in the cafeterias.



Food Pantries

We routinely donate food to three local food pantries: our neighbors the St. Juan Diego Parish Food Pantry, and two on campus resources, the Rock Creek Food Canteen and the Food Recovery Network Club. This club is a student led group that provides food donations to a family shelter in the Hillsboro area.

In 2016 we donated 1,462 pounds of fresh produce, more than double last year.

Hydroponics

We currently use two different hydroponics systems: a Dutch Bucket and a Nutrient Filament Technique (NFT). The NFT system hosted lettuce and leafy greens and a student project, **Bucket o' Pickles** produced 180 pounds of cucumbers from the Dutch bucket system.



Student Antonio Pirog harvesting cucumbers from his hydroponic project, Bucket o' Pickles

Harvest

Community Beds

Sixteen raised beds were offered to our on-campus community, with 36 students, faculty and staff taking advantage of the garden opportunity. After pledging to be full season gardeners (from planting through harvest and including bed maintenance), our community gardeners grew healthy, fresh food for their family and friends, with 137 individuals sharing the benefits of the community bed harvest.



The community garden provides free garden beds to students, staff and faculty. Not only is food grown, but community is cultivated and health & wellness are enhanced.
~Elaine J. Cole

Plant Sale

In 2016, we concentrated our efforts to grow plants for the Landscape Technology (LAT) department's Spring plant sale. Our plants generated \$1500 in sales, 10% of which we contributed to the LAT scholarship fund, with the remainder directed to support Garden operations.



Flowergrams

The Learning Garden dedicates space to flower production, supporting our commitment to pollinators and our Flowergram program. Flowers grown in the Garden are sold at Portlandia FarmStandia, used for educational purposes, community education classes, event décor, salads (edible flowers only) and sold via Flowergrams.

During the summer of 2016, 30 customers purchased 91 Flowergram arrangements, for over \$1000 revenue directed back into the Garden for future production.



Flowers

Flowers harvested from the Learning Garden are used as instructional tools as well, serving as material for classes including three new Community Education flower arranging classes.

Special Events

We host many events in the Garden featuring our systems and our crops. These events include the annual Harvest Festival, Earth Week activities, tours and open houses.

A highlight for many guests is the opportunity to sample our food baked in the earthen oven. Cookies, pizza and other delectable tidbits taste extra special when prepared this way.



Related projects

Supporting permanent Garden infrastructure, to improve the visitor experience, and to fulfill our annual project plan, we completed these additional projects in 2016

- Completed the welcome kiosk
- Redesigned our logo
- Installed permanent garden signage



Bees & Compost

When we get calls from outside PCC, they are frequently about two of our cool, unique systems: the Apiary (bees) and the Closed Loop (compost).

And they want to know, “How did you do that?”

Bees

PCC Rock Creek Campus is proud to be a designated Bee Campus USA, the 4th in the nation.



Our 2016 apiary consisted of six active bees hives, one being a Flow Hive (pictured) under the watchful eyes of our own Master Beekeeper.



Flow Hive and honey harvest

We are committed to ensuring a diverse pollinator habitat that supports our campus apiary and the bee colonies in our area. We are integrating bee education into our curriculum and events and engage with regional pollinator researchers and educators.



The excitement from students, community, and staff here at RC is contagious! Someone will stop and ask a question about bees, and the next thing you know I have a dozen people standing around listening and learning, and getting very excited about our fuzzy little friends.
~ Anne LeSenne

Honey

In 2016 we began harvesting honey from our hives. While our first harvest was a modest 42 gallons, we look forward to increased quantity in the future. Our honey is sold at Portlandia FarmStandia and used for special recognitions.

Compost

Composting is vital to our campus sustainability system as well as to the health of our Learning Garden.

We have a multi-component composting system that allows us to increase the educational benefit to our students and community. While our compostable material comes from many on campus sources, we measure the inputs from the pre- and post-consumer food waste collected from the our offices and cafeteria. We measure and analyze the output from two components of our compost systems, the macerator and the worm bin.

Loop

We transform our waste into resources, by collecting 99% of the pre-consumer food scraps, post-consumer waste from the campus cafeteria and offices and organic material from the Garden, diverting 13,580 pounds from the landfill this year. The material is fed to worms and micro-organisms, which transform it into nutrient-rich compost. This compost is then used in the Garden to help us grow healthy vegetables, fruit, and flowers for distribution to our farm stand, volunteers, and local donation centers.

The Loop, our on campus closed loop system, is an important component of our Garden, and is unique to our campus.



Donors & Supporters

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Fortis Construction
Great Harvest Bread Company
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Station
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RC Human Resources
RC Social Sciences,
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RC Biology
SY Grounds
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Individuals

Karen Cox
Anne LeSenne
Terry Lookabill

Partners

Community

Beaverton School District
Beginning Urban Farmer
Apprenticeship (BUFA),
OSU Grow Portland
Master Beekeepers of Portland
Springville K-8
Terra Nova High School

PCC Departments

PCC RC Art department
PCC RC Associated Students of PCC
(ASPCC)
PCC Food Services
PCC RC Graphic Design
PCC RC Landscape Technology
PCC RC Welding Department

Student staff

Jennifer Dougherty Swedan
Todd Elliot
Veronika Marushak
Antonio Pirog
Kyle Rose
Ashley Van Dick



Nora Lindsey

Learning Garden Coordinator

Thank you!

Without you we would not be able to do the amazing work that we do. Your interest fuels our passion and helps feed our community, both minds and bellies.

Are you interested in joining our team? There are many ways to get involved. Check out your opportunities [here](#).

What—you don't have time? That's ok! You can still help: Donate [here](#)

2016 Staff

Elaine Cole, PhD
Sustainability Coordinator

Nora Lindsey
Learning Garden
Coordinator

Erin Axelrod
AmeriCorps Educator

Blair Borax
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Jimena Galvez
Farmhand

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Thank you

We would like to thank the many organizations and individuals who have supported us through our 10 years.

You have helped create a thriving learning environment supporting best practices in resource conservation, environmental stewardship and interdisciplinary academic achievement. With your support, we are a growing, vital hub for health, wellness and connection to our environment.



Portland Community College
Rock Creek Campus
Sustainability & Learning Garden

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<https://www.pcc.edu/about/sustainability/rock-creek/>