The IU Campus Garden Initiative

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Executive Summary

By modeling different ways to produce food in a campus setting, the Bryan House gardens serves as a pilot for future gardening projects on campus, as well as a space for students, faculty, and staff to engage in the process of growing food.

The Designing An Edible Campus series addressed the larger issue of improving the connection with food on campus. It also served as a mechanism for connecting already existing initiatives on campus that relate to food, gardening, and land use.

Together, these projects form the IU Campus Garden Initiative, which aims to foster environmental and social sustainability by creating interactive, edible gardening spaces on the IU-Bloomington campus.

Motivation

The average meal leaves an industrial farm and travels 1500 miles over 7 to 14 days before it reaches our plates. As fuel prices rise and climates change, the current food system becomes increasingly unsustainable. As members of a college campus community, it is our responsibility to address these issues.

A college campus is a place where students create lifelong habits and form expectations for places they choose to reside in the future. By encouraging students to participate in a local food system by growing or purchasing local food on campus, we can create a generation of students that is concerned with where the food comes from and how it’s produced.
Fortunately, there is already interest on campus and in Bloomington in issues that relate to food. There are five student groups\(^1\) with missions that relate directly to food and countless others with interests relating to sustainability. In addition, several peer institutions have already begun to grow food on their campus providing IU with many great models for reference. For example, four of the eleven schools\(^2\) in the Big 10 have organic campus gardens recognized by the Association of the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

Following in these footsteps, the IU Garden Initiative was created. This initiative aims to foster environmental and social sustainability by creating interactive, edible gardening spaces on the IU-Bloomington campus. Thus far, the campus garden initiative has two elements: the Campus Garden Pilot, and the Designing An Edible Campus series.

Campus Garden Pilot

The purpose of the garden pilot plot is to create a space that serves as an educational opportunity for students to learn more about Indiana agriculture, local food on campus, and small-scale gardening initiatives.

First Lady Mrs. McRobbie kindly lent space at the historic president’s home, the Bryan House for use in creating a pilot campus garden. Located at heart of the Bloomington Campus, the Bryan House seemed the perfect location for the first campus garden.

By modeling different ways to produce food in a campus setting, the garden at the Bryan House will serve as a pilot for future gardening projects on campus, as well as a space for students, faculty, and staff to engage in the process of growing food even on a small scale.

Methods

\(^1\) Volunteers in Sustainability, Slow Food IU, SPROUTS, RAW, and E-Force.
\(^2\) Northwestern University, Pennsylvania State University, University of Iowa, and University of Wisconsin –Madison.
The first step in creating the pilot campus garden was the design of three garden plots. The half-circle plot, the rectangle plot, and the ellipse plot total to 900 square feet of gardening space.

The half-circle plot will contain common vegetables grown in arcs. This provides a space where the campus community can interact with the vegetables they most commonly consume and observe what they look like before they get to the grocery shelves. Beans, tomatoes, and chickpeas will be grown on vertical trellises and sunflowers and broom corn will be grown along the back row, demonstrating the ability of edible plants to be used as structural and aesthetically pleasing features.

The rectangle plot will be filled with six raised containers used to mimic raised beds that will be planted with heirloom peppers. Too keep the rabbits out that live under the nearby hedges the rectangle will be filled with marigolds, demonstrating the use of edible plants as pest control.

The ellipse plot is sectioned into six slices, each containing a different annual herb allowing for annual rotation. This provides an opportunity to measure changes in soil quality over time. This plot is also rather shady, demonstrating that edible crops can be grown in all light conditions.

Recently, collaboration with Volunteers in Sustainability and the Boys and Girls Club of Bloomington resulted in the addition of five wooden planters made from recycled wood and painted by the boys and girls club members to the campus garden. These planters will hold bush beans and be placed on the Bryan House front porch.

The next step in creating the campus garden pilot involved contacting local growers for heirloom seed donations and local businesses for donations of compost. Enough seeds were collected from several local growers that all vegetables and herbs grown at the Bryan House will be from community seeds. Most seeds have been grown and saved in Indiana for many years. For example, Michael Hicks donated Paledino Hot Pepper seeds that have been grown for 40 years in Bedford, Indiana by his grandfather, Stanley Hicks.

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3 A planting map for all three gardening plots can be found in Appendix B.
4 Michael Hicks, Stanley Hicks, Teresa Birtles, Victor Prather and Keith Johnson donated seeds.
This pepper’s seeds were given to Hicks by Mr. Paledino of Oolitic, Indiana, whose family brought the seeds to Indiana from their garden in Italy in the early 1900’s.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, students were engaged in the gardening process. This was achieved through outreach to various student organizations with food related interests as well as weekly volunteers sessions held at the garden. Hourly work sessions were held for eight consecutive weeks starting in March and allowed students to commit small but regular time increments to preparing the garden for planting at the end of April. The spring planting took place on April 23rd as part of a week of activities put on by the Student Sustainability Council.

Next Steps

To sustain this aspect of the garden initiative, it will be vital to maintaining the planted gardens as both visually appealing and educationally relevant spaces, record the amount of food produced by the garden plots as well as oversee a summer volunteer program to keep students engaged. Most of these activities will be coordinated through a blog, which will allow the campus community to track weekly garden activities even from afar.

Designing An Edible Campus

In an effort to begin thinking about how to expand the campus garden pilot and propel the garden initiative forward, the Designing An Edible Campus design series was created. This series aimed to achieve three goals. The series was designed to encourage communication and cooperation between existing entities interested in food and sustainability, collectively design creative ways to incorporate food production into institutional structures and activities, and formulate recommendations for making IUB more beautiful, sustainable and edible.

Methods

The process for creating this design series actually began with a fall lunch and discussion with writer, farmer, and activist, Wendell Berry. While gathered around Leah
Gauthier’s “Tending A Difficult Hope” art exhibit, students interested in food issues were able to communicate about their visions for integrating food production into campus activities for the first time. Inspired by this event, a comprehensive group of stakeholders in the campus community that included students, faculty, and staff was compiled.

Then a community forum and collective design process was created to increase communication and collaboration between these stakeholders. The process followed similar form to a design charrette⁵ that is commonly employed to design physical spaces.

Three design sessions were held each month in February, March, and April. The first session focused on an introduction to campus garden initiatives. Gardens and related programs at peer institutions were investigated and major themes were determined.

The second session included a brainstorming session in which stakeholders grappled with ways to structure a garden initiative at IU Bloomington. Participants were given a brainstorm outline⁶ and a list of contexts⁷ in which they should consider the garden initiative.

The third session involved a presentation of some of the ideas⁸ generated at the brainstorming session along with recommendations for the next steps in making growing food on campus a priority.

Next Steps

In order continue the momentum generated by the design series, a steering committee should be established. With the right group of faculty, staff, and students, the committee could bring knowledge of administrative frameworks and barriers as well as a sensitivity to the historic character of this campus to the implementation of some of the ideas generated from the Designing An Edible Campus series.

Conclusions

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⁵ http://www.charretteinstitute.org/charrette.html
⁶ Appendix C
⁷ Appendix D
⁸ Appendix E
Major themes were generated during the Designing An Edible Campus series and affirmed by events in the campus garden pilot. Any future endeavors that are a part of the campus garden initiative should strive to be sensitive to these themes.

First, both the academic and operational sides of IU should support a campus-wide initiative focused on creating and sustaining spaces for growing food on campus. Secondly, an integrated approach is necessary, allowing the campus community to participate in food production in both a curricular and extra-curricular manner. Lastly, an emphasis should be placed on educating the student body about the benefits of supporting a local food economy such that they can make more sustainable choices.
## Appendices

### Appendix A. Contacts

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Appendix B. Bryan House Planting Map
Appendix C. Brainstorming Outline

Designing An Edible Campus: Collective Brainstorm and Design Outline
March 23rd, 2011 CG 3059  6:00-8:00 pm

(6:00-6:05) Introduction

(6:05-6:20) Organization and Management
  Who is/are the governing body(ies)?
  How should a garden initiative be managed?
  How will records be kept and progress be shared?

(6:25-6:40) Site Design and Selection
  Who will design the garden sites?
  What sizes and types of sites should exist?
  How can gardens be used as borders/walls, social spaces, living labs, and/or creative outlets?

(6:45-7:00) Gardening Practices: Production and Labor
  Who or what will provide the seeds, soil, water, and tools?
  What will the standards for gardening be? (Think crop rotation, reduced till, etc)
  What type of work system would be required to support the gardens?
  Who would receive the garden harvest?

(7:05-7:20) Institutionalization
  How can the gardens facilitate connections between students, growers, professors, the food industry, and grounds/maintenance staff?
  How can academic initiatives be incorporated?
  How can campus enthusiasm and student involvement be maximized?

(7:25-7:30) Barriers
  Why hasn't this already occurred?

(7:35-7:50) Design Your Own Site!
  What is the physical location and layout of your site?
  How will your site be managed and maintained?
  Where will the produce from your site be used?
  How does your site help connect the campus and the community?
  What are the barriers to your site’s success?

(7:55-8:00) Closing Remarks
Appendix D. Brainstorming Context

**Indiana University Bloomington Mission**

Bloomington is the flagship residential, doctoral-extensive campus of Indiana University. Its mission is to create, disseminate, preserve, and apply knowledge. It does so through its commitments to cutting-edge research, scholarship, arts, and creative activity; to challenging and inspired undergraduate, graduate, professional, and life-long education; to culturally diverse and international educational programs and communities; to first-rate library and museum collections; to economic development in the state and region; and to meaningful experiences outside the classroom. The Bloomington campus is committed to full diversity, academic freedom, and meeting the changing educational and research needs of the state, the nation, and the world.

**IU Office of Sustainability Mission**

The mission of the Indiana University Office of Sustainability (IUOS) is to advance sustainable human-environment interactions within the Bloomington campus and community by facilitating collaborative academic and operational initiatives. IUOS defines sustainability as thriving within our means to achieve balance among environmental health, economic prosperity, and social equity.

**IU Campus Garden Initiative**

The Campus Garden Initiative is an IU Office of Sustainability project that aims to foster environmental and social sustainability by creating interactive, edible gardening spaces on the IU-Bloomington campus.

**Edible Campus Goals**

An "edible campus" demonstrates how sustainability, food security, and environmental quality can be linked through innovative urban design to produce food in a challenging urban setting, demonstrating ways to weave productive planting in urban spaces without diminishing their utility or functionality.

The Designing an Edible Campus Series aims to achieve three goals:
- Encourage communication and cooperation between existing entities interested in food and sustainability.
- Collectively design creative ways to incorporate food production into institutional structures and activities.
- Formulate a proposal for making IUB more beautiful, sustainable and edible.

**IUB Sustainability Report Food Recommendations**

The campus sustainable food model examines factors that affect food choices and food consumption on the IUB campus and considers food-related educational opportunities and
benefits offered to the student body. Drawing upon the experiences of university and college campuses across the country, the food model focuses on: 1) sustainable food production and delivery, and 2) reduction and recycling of packaging materials and food waste.

1. Short-term recommendations include efforts to (1) develop and support relationships with vendors of locally-produced foods; (2) appoint a Sustainable Food Coordinator; (3) create comprehensive plans to reduce packaging on foods ordered for campus dining halls, and to recycle all unusable packaging materials; and (4) create a comprehensive plan to reduce food waste and recycle remaining waste.

2. Long-term recommendations include: (1) support a farm-to-college initiative to produce food for campus dining halls and to create food production learning experiences for students; (2) establish a regular farmer’s market on campus that would accept student meal points; (3) establishment of an edible permaculture project on open areas of the campus; (4) instituting a series of cooking shows aimed at students to be distributed through the IUTV network and made available for podcast downloading; and (5) monitor campus dining halls’ food carbon footprint.

IUB Master Plan Vision Themes

Promote Bloomington’s Unique Natural Features
Natural assets must be respected, preserved, and restored with an environmentally sustainable sensibility. Future development must embrace the ecological character, celebrate natural features, and enhance environmental conditions.

Preserve and Reinvigorate the Core
The coherent iconic character of the historic core of campus must be preserved and maintained. Development initiatives in this area of campus must promote the continued relevance of the historic structures and distinguished open spaces.

Embrace the Jordan River
The Jordan River is Bloomington’s most prominent natural feature and represents a unifying common thread through much of the core campus. Its unifying quality and continuity must be leveraged both formally and functionally as the campus develops.

Commit to a Walkable Campus
Concentrating development and collocating functions around the core campus will promote a stronger campus community and lead to a sophisticated academic social environment that is more communal, interconnected, convenient, and intellectually engaging. Increased reliance on pedestrian circulation and public transit combined with discrete parking infrastructure improvements will further enhance the viability of this concentrated campus initiative.

Create Diverse Campus Neighborhoods
All campus neighborhoods must be instilled with a variety of distinctly different functions that promote diverse activities and support integrated living and learning environments. Deliberate mixes of academic, residential, social, and student life amenities will encourage interaction and
collaboration and promote complete environs that are socially dynamic and academically enlightening.
Appendix E. *Brainstorming Ideas*

**Organization and Management**

*Who is/are the governing body(ies)?*

- Central, stable, non-student based authority
- Hilltop and IUOS are major players in governance
- Emphasis should be on cooperation between academic and operation sectors

*How should a garden initiative be managed?*

- Steering Committee: Students, alumni, faculty, and staff members, academic and operation co-chairs (run similarly to IUOS working groups)
- Need representation from academic departments, university architects office, dining hall and food service staff
- Central Garden manager oversees central campus garden (Hilltop as a possible site)
- Edible Campus Coordinator oversees small-scale gardening across campus, edible landscaping, etc.
- Both Coordinator and Manager oversee education and outreach in their sector
- Manager and Coordinator can hire/oversee several interns (paid and unpaid)
- Manager, Coordinator, and Steering Committee create master plan that outlines goals, standards, and sites
- Plan is made accessible to campus community
- IUOS supports related projects including but not limited to composting, rainwater harvesting, community seed bank, inventory of already existing edibles, etc.
- IUOS Food Working Group Intern works to incorporating food into school cafeterias, farmers markets, etc.

*How will records be kept and progress be shared?*

- Once central database will be used to collect data on all edible projects (central garden and otherwise)
- Indicators will be determined by Steering Committee
- A website will be constructed to publish information about all aspects of garden initiative

**Site Design and Selection**

*Who will design the garden sites?*

- Steering Committee and Edible Campus Coordinator in conjunction with the campus division will approve and publish suggested gardening sites around campus
- Central Garden Manager will subdivide campus garden into sites of various sized
- Applications for a plot at the central garden will be approved by the central garden manager and renewed on an annual basis
- Applications for gardens outside of the central garden, changes to landscaping beds, tree plantings, etc will be approved by the Steering Committee and renewed on an annual basis.
- All applications will follow a general grant-writing process and must include planting methods, food distribution (bonus points if some food is donated to RPS) and a budget.
- Successful applicants will sign a year long contract and will suffer the loss of their gardening plot if contact is broken.
- Central Garden Manager and Edible Campus Coordinator will conduct regular reviewed to check garden progress and adherence to standards.

What sizes and types of sites should exist?

- The “central garden” will function as the primary area of food production and an education hub.
- Other garden initiative projects may include:
  - Neighborhood gardens that function like green teams and are linked to specific corridors of campus.
  - Off campus housing gardens.
  - Prairies and “freedom lawns” or no-mow zones.
  - Edible landscaping retrofits (utilize already existing landscape beds).
  - Rooftop gardens.
  - Jordan River/Wetland projects.
  - Living Walls Energy Challenge.
  - Small themed gardens.

How can gardens be used as borders/walls, social spaces, living labs, and/or creative outlets?

- Garden Initiative will focus on fostering diversity and sustainability rather than just the systematic production of food.
- Emphasis will be placed on integrating edible projects within the build structures of the campus as to not diminish their utility.

Gardening Practices: Production and Labor

Who or what will provide the seeds, soil, water, and tools?

- Tool Library and Seed Library will be constructed over time.
- The Central campus garden and satellite locations across campus will have tools and maintenance supplies that will be able to be checked out by students.
- Water will be provided by grounds until rain barrels are installed.
- Soil will be provided by grounds until composting system is in place.
- Seeds will be provided by local growers and purchased from reputable seed catalogues.
- Cost for all of these supplies must be factored into application budget until renewable sources are provided.

What will the standards for gardening be?
- Organic standard for whole campus would be ideal
- No pesticides/herbicides standards for select areas where gardening takes place would be good
- Crop rotations happen naturally with student turnover but should be confirmed by Manager and Coordinator

*What type of work system would be required to support the gardens?*

- Central garden manager could have faculty appointment and could have support of paid/unpaid interns
- Edible Campus Coordinator could also have the support of interns
- Summer work would be organized by Manager and Coordinator in conjunction with faculty teaching summer courses, summer camp supervisors, etc
- Campus Division/grounds should receive free landscaping and not be required to provide additional work for this initiative

*Who would receive the garden harvest?*

- Produce could be harvested and donated to RPS through a pre-agreed to process
- Small-scale farmers markets could be held on the periphery of campus near student housing equipped with housing
- A CSA could be run with discounted rates for students

**Institutionalization**

*How can the gardens facilitate connections between students, growers, professors, the food industry, and grounds/maintenance staff?*

- Campus garden could be incorporated into Freshman orientation or a Freshmen intensive seminar
- The Student Sustainability Council could assist in increasing communication between student groups interested in participating in garden events
- The Edible Campus Coordinator could run a mentorship program in which experienced gardeners could pair up with beginners, connecting students with local growers, retired professors, and other community members
- New or prospective students could participate in a tour of garden sites
- A logo could be used to label food grown in campus but consumed elsewhere
- Partnerships with non-profits and community organizations for educational events (ie: Bloomington Community Orchard, Local Growers Guild)

*How can academic initiatives be incorporated?*

- Themester on Food and Food Production
- Community summer camps
- Partnerships with primary and secondary schools
- Outreach to specific departments/schools: Education, HPER, Social Work, IMP, Biology, SPEA
- Allow for research projects
- Educational signage that emphasizes goals of edible campus
- Service-learning courses take place at central garden
- Monetary incentive for faculty that incorporate gardens into already existing courses
- Central Garden Manager could collaborate with the Bloomington Farm School in offering credit and non-credit courses

*How can campus enthusiasm and student involvement be maximized?*

- Welcome Festival
- Harvest Festival
- Student Organizations
- T-shirts: Hoosier Gardener? I am!
- Competitions between gardens, annual awards
- Wild forage treasure hunt
- Regular tutorial sessions that focus on gardening techniques

**Barriers**

- Not all players are interested or involved
- Norms associated with campus aesthetic
  - Manicured Campus vs. Edible Gardens
  - Requires that we choose plants that fit the aesthetics, historical character of campus
- There are often waves of involvement on campus and great ideas die when interest wanes
- Fear of what would happen if the project/initiative failed
- Vandalism and security
- Challenges associated with inviting nature back into human spaces (Deer, bees, etc)
- Challenges associated with urban cultivation, poor soil quality
- Funding
- Staff support