Penn Garden

Green Fund Grant Fall 2009
Completed Spring 2011
Amount $25,543

Project Overview

Penn garden is a project aimed at educating the Penn community about urban agriculture and advocating for environmentally responsible food systems. The project outcomes included the construction and cultivation of a small urban vegetable garden on Penn’s campus to be used for food production, student and community education, and to foster environmental stewardship.

The project team collaborated with various groups on campus and in Philadelphia during the design, construction and initial operation of the garden. For example, they procured seven large tree stumps from Fairmount Park for a seating area in the middle of the garden, which has proven useful for organizing volunteers and creating a sense of community and welcoming. Additionally, the Garden has attracted Penn student volunteers, alumni, students from other universities, students working on campus for the summer, as well as neighborhood residents. The Garden participated in Food Week and the Fall Festival and continues to foster this connection to the larger Philadelphia community.

The Garden incorporates several sustainable operational practices that encourage producing and using locally grown foods. Garden waste is composted in the solar composter on site and the resulting nutrient-rich soil is used in the garden beds. The Garden team also constructed a drip irrigation system using the water supply from Rodin College House to avoid excess water use.

View Penn Garden’s website – Here

Lessons Learned

The Garden organized a student leadership board with six positions to formalize the group, and seeks to hold more frequent meetings to further improve communication. As the Garden team members continue to learn from each growing season and become more knowledgeable in crop choices and general agriculture skills, the group is
confident that the garden will remain a valuable resource for members of the Penn community.

In 2011 the garden had successfully completed one full growing season, producing 150 pounds of produce. The produce was split among volunteer workers, reinforcing the co-operative method of distribution and allowing volunteers to enjoy the direct product of their hard work. The Penn Garden group hopes that this will inspire others to grow their own food and learn more about sustainable agriculture and food systems.

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