



Bennington Sustainable Food Project Logo from Spring 2010--Artist Unknown

2015 Annual Report

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Who We Are

“To encourage sustainability and foster a conscious food culture within our community.”

-The Bennington Sustainable Food Project Mission Statement

The Bennington Sustainable Food Project is a student organization that focuses on improving the food culture both on Bennington College's campus, and in the Town of Bennington itself. This report will give an idea of what we have accomplished in the last year, and our hopes looking forward. It includes some brief statistics and notes from the Purple Carrot Farm, the student-run farm on campus which the BSFP is closely related to in terms of founders, mission, and members.

The BSFP has been meeting weekly since 2009, for seven years, and in that time has grown from a handful of students, to a well-established group that gathers around 20 students together each Tuesday evening, and organizes well-attended campus events throughout the Fall and Spring terms. The Sustainable Food Group has close relationships with College Faculty and Administration, Dining Hall staff and Buildings & Grounds. Over the past few years we have also worked more with groups and individuals in Bennington and North Bennington, with hopes of continuing and increasing collaboration and relationships in the future.

Acknowledging the impact the Sustainable Food Project has had in the past, we have begun to look ahead in a more structured way in the hope that our forethought will help with record keeping and retention of members, so we can build upon the work we have already done. This Report is made in the same vein with the hope that it will aid in forming a narrative of what the BSFP has been in the past as well as a source of reflections and recommendations for our present future. Additionally, this report serves to provide a means to properly acknowledge, celebrate, and share our work with the world.

Highlights from 2015

- **Maple Syrup Harvesting**
--With help from the Bennington College community, we produced roughly 3 to 4 gallons of maple syrup. We shared it amongst those who boiled and volunteered time, gave it as a gifts, and sold it through Alumni Relations, Admissions and the Farm Cart.
- **Meat Mindful Monday**
--Rather than have a “Meatless Monday,” the BSFP in collaboration with the Dining Hall established Meat Mindful Monday for the duration of Fall 2014 and Spring 2015. Simply by switching the location of the vegetarian and meat options, meat consumption has decreased on these days. Above all, we want to provoke questions, mindfulness, and education regarding meat consumption.
- **Replacement of Coca Cola with Maine Root**
--Aware that our Coca Cola contract was up for renewal, the BSFP was determined to support a company that better reflected our values. With help and support from college administration, we were able to replace all Coca Cola products and vending machines with products from Maine Root, a company that makes fair trade certified organic sodas.



- **New Greenhouse**
--This year, the farm constructed its first greenhouse with help from Buildings and Grounds. This small hoophouse has allowed the farm to increase production in a short growing season.
- **Growing applicant pool for farm internship**
--The farm internship is becoming increasingly popular, with five to six applicants as compared to the usual three to four. With increased advertising and organization around the hiring process, we hope to see this trend continue.
- **Increased hours for farm interns**
--As the farm grows in potential, it also becomes necessary to increase its staffing and the educational opportunities available to students through this internship. For Summer 2016 we plan to give 3 interns each 30 hours a week of paid work, compared to summer 2014 in which 2 interns each received 20 hours a week.

- **Collaboration with McWaters Park Permaculture Gardeners**
--The MPPG is an organization in North Bennington that is transitioning McWaters Park into a public permaculture garden. This year, we volunteered for MPPG, attended some of their potlucks, and participated in a Plant Propagation workshop that they hosted.
- **New Perennial Sheet Mulch Garden**
--In an exploration of alternative forms of agriculture, this year a garden was designed for blueberries, raspberries, asparagus, and other perennials. Using waste products such as cardboard and wood chips as mulch, it is hoped that this will be a no-till permaculture design which functions as a miniature ecosystem.
- **Ice Cream machine at Sunfest**
--The antique ice cream machine, restored by Christopher Larsen, was once again showcased and used on campus. Using local milk and our own maple syrup, this was a great way to both fundraise for the BSFP and contribute to a fun campus-wide event.
- **Concert in the Rye**
--Last Spring, the BSFP's Concert in the Rye was a success. Featuring many campus musicians, this concert creates an outdoor acoustic venue and helps bring people to the farm.
- **Strengthening relationship with Dining Services**



--Over the past season, we have greatly strengthened communication with Dining Services staff and learned how to integrate farm produce into our meal program. Despite the unfortunate losses of our Head Chef, Mike Crane and Dining Services Director, John Tompkins, we are determined to continue this strong relationship.

- **Doubling of Farm Revenue from 2014 to 2015**

--With intentions of a production based season, Lauren Brady and Dane Whitman were able to grow and harvest enough produce to bring in \$4,641.39 of revenue. However, as we discuss in our "Farm

Recommendations" this was a great cost of energy devoted to helping the farm function as a classroom and community center.

- **New Deer Fence**
--Investing time and money into protection from deer pressure was a great move for the farm. Our new deer fence kept the farm free of deer for the entire season

for little cost.

- **Local Farming Pre-Orientation Trip**

--With collaboration from the Office of Student Life, the BSFP was able to organize a local farming pre-orientation trip for incoming freshman.

- **Apple Cider**

--With an excessively abundant apple crop, the BSFP milled apples into cider that was served at events such as Apple Fest and Harvest Fest.

- **Cart Sales**

--Our farm cart coop made an almost weekly appearance on campus this winter, serving to students, administrators, parents day weekend, and summer programs such as the Chamber Orchestra and MFA program.



- **Cobb Oven**

--After many years of anticipation, the BSFP finally was able to organize the construction of a Cobb Oven with help from Mike Rancourt. This earthen pizza oven made appearances at Beetzapalooza as well as other campus social events.

- **Apple Fest**

--As a means for celebrating our apple orchard, the BSFP organized Apple Fest, an event open to the entire Bennington Community. Located in the Secret Garden, this event had musicians, hot cider, games with prizes, and much more.



- **Beetzapalooza**

--This year, our fall farm concert, Beetzapalooza, was a huge success. With roughly one hundred students circulating through, at least ten dishes of food including home-made pizza were shared, and performances from great lineup of musicians and poets, we were able to bring the Bennington campus together to celebrate the farm and all of its work.



- **Local Food Mapping Tutorial**

--Approached by CAPA, the BSFP was asked to take on the project of creating a database of local farmers in the Bennington area. With great help from Alison and Chris Dennis, a 1 credit module was developed to pursue this project. This set a great precedent for project based classes that function as collaborating between the BSFP and CAPA. We hope that by continuing to collaborate with organizations such as Northshire Grows, we will continue to develop our local food systems.

- **Involvement in Executive Chef hiring process**

--With the unfortunate loss of our head chef Mike Crane, the BSFP has chose to participate in the hiring of our next chef. With great support from the Dining Hall, there is a recognition that a chef well versed in farm to plate dining will be necessary for this position.

- **Involvement in Environmental Faculty hiring process.**

--As the Sustainable Food Project continues to ask questions regarding food systems facing environmental issues, we hope to have a more academic, questioning mindset about our practices and actions. By being involved in the environmental faculty searches, we believe we are beginning to express our interest in food issues becoming a larger part of our academic experiences.

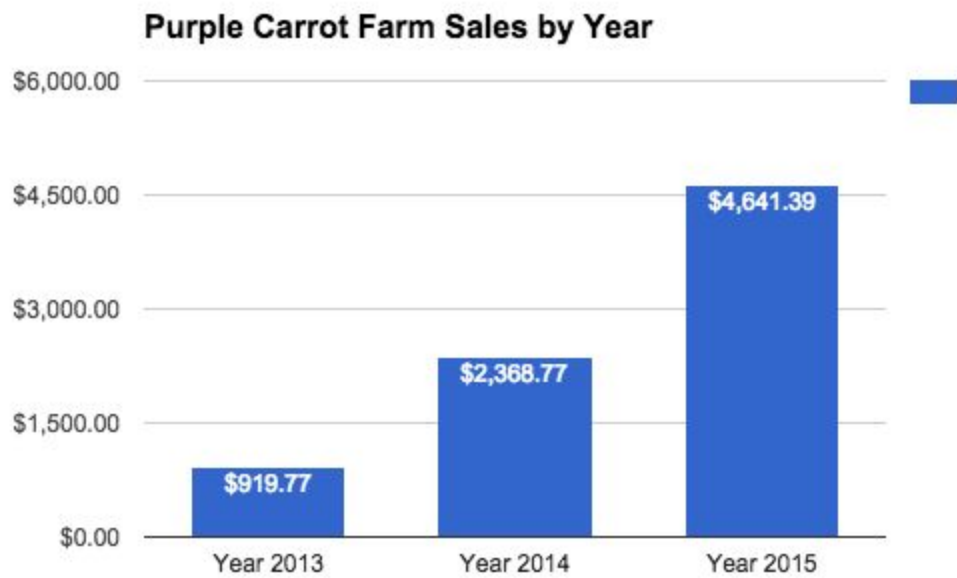
- **The beginnings of The Barn**

--Thanks to our astonishing and supportive relationship with the Buildings and Grounds staff, the BSFP has been confident in the pursuit of a small barn to be constructed on the farm. Serving as a tool and storage shed, wash station, and well as classroom and community gathering space, we hope that this barn will be a tangible representation of the college's commitment to establishing a program in Sustainable Food.

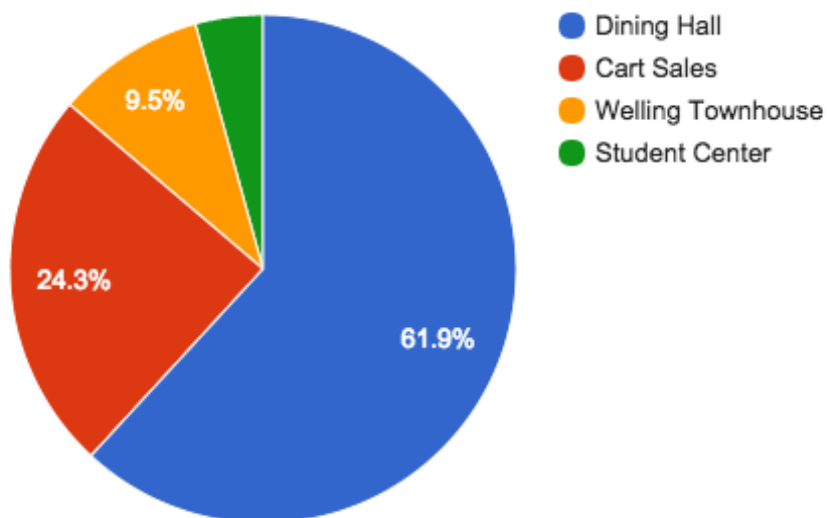
Bennington
Sustainable
Food Project



Financial Statistics on 2015 Season



Purple Carrot Farm Sales by Vendor



Notes From the Farm Interns

Dane Whitman and Lauren Brady about Farming on Purple Carrot Farm in 2015:

- We chose to focus on making the farm very productive this year, but this is not necessarily what the farm has to be. Focus could go more into education and community engagement, rather than pure yields and economic productivity.
- It is helpful to establish a relationship with the Dining Hall early on, make a clear system, have regular meetings and good communication. The Dining Hall staff are awesome.
- Overall, know your goals, go for it, but don't try to do everything; anticipate challenges in what you do try to do.
- Especially with three interns, communication will be critical to have a fun and functioning season. Be aware of power dynamics. We strongly suggest that you meet at the beginning and end of the week, to informally catch up, talk how the week went, and what you want for the next week, but outside of farm work.
- Trust the plants. Trust the people. Care about both.
- Don't break the tractor. Talk to Nate and Melissa often, get help when you need it.
- Get help from Michiel, keep him in the loop, especially the ugly stuff, he can take it.
- Do the things that you are interested in, not the things that have been done.
- Farm interns are not the heads of the BSFP, keep the meetings separate within reason.
- Serve as resources to everybody in Bennington.
- Be careful to wear tick repellent and check yourself every day. Also, wear sunscreen. Generally, take care of your body, it's important to your work and your coworkers.
- Kids are the best on the farm!
- There are millions of woodchucks. Get rid of them! Talk to Marshall Ogart.
- Make sure the business office is in the loop with invoices.
- Get the things you're going to need. Paper bags, rubber bands, tape. But check out the whole shed before going shopping.
- Know how food can/will be processed before planting, caring for, and especially harvesting produce. Cucumbers, basil, all rotted because we didn't prepare correctly. Learn your veggies' abilities to store.
- Don't be afraid to research, nothing is too time sensitive to learn more before acting.
- Take people on tours, especially the people you work with. Dining Hall, Admissions, etc.
- Be creative and strategic where you do choose to be productive, with all work, food, people, record keeping, curriculum, all projects.
- Know your weaknesses and talk about them so you can work with them.

First Five-Year-Plan

	This Year	2-3 Years	Beyond
Community	Concert in the Rye Bennington ACTS Pre-O 2016	Use Barn Increase event participation BSFP Meetings are fun, vital Clear partnership w/ Town Organizations	Farm Cart in Bennington Town We donate lots of food Every student feels connected to the BSFP Barn is a new icon of the College
Hands-On	Make and share maple syrup Seed Tutorial 2016 Build a barn	More for credit learning by doing reflecting Continue cidering, sugaring, etc More drop-in opportunities to learn/ get involved	Faculty added Classes in the Barn Lots of handmade food from us in the D-Hall
Farm	New interns! Make 2016-17 season plan Farm Club participation	More food More space More interns Community plots?	BC known for farm Every student has been to the farm We are a model for others
Policy	Get a student life position Meet/ build relationship w/ chef Dining Committee	More food in the D-Hall Commons Renovation Student life position launch	The D-Hall food reflects our vision Sustainable food culture is alive and well

This is our first attempt to put in an organized table the specific goals that we are working toward each semester in service of our overarching mission statement. We often end a term with a conversation about what we hope for next term, but with this new document, we are attempting to creating a living document that will change with time but will also show our progress and our next steps. A special thank you to Alison Dennis for leading the brainstorming sessions to create this plan.