

The Bennington Sustainable Food Project

Student Garden Proposal

Summer 2011

The Bennington Sustainable Food Project is an initiative started by Bennington College students to address the fact that eating is a political act. We are dedicated to the promotion of human health, humane animal husbandry, maintenance of ecosystems, and the support of local economies. Climate Change, food security, economic inequality, hunger, an increasingly industrialized food system, and human health are among today's most pressing issues. It is important that Bennington considers its actions more closely, and takes measures to reevaluate, change, and improve its interactions with the environment, the local and global communities. Our food choices affect the vitality and health of our environments, communities, and economies. We believe that we have both the opportunity and responsibility to make these choices from an educated position.

We work with students, faculty, staff, administrators, Bennington College alumni and members of the greater Bennington community in order to educate ourselves, and promote and initiate projects that will work to strengthen the connection between the College and the food system of which we are a part.

The Project Idea and Larger Impact:

A sustained garden at Bennington College necessitates a structured internship program led by committed student interns. The growth and future production of the garden will depend on the work done the summer, serving as a bridge between the spring and fall terms, during which the garden will be maintained by the Bennington Sustainable Food Project members and other student volunteers.

The Student Garden Summer Internship is part of the Bennington Sustainable Food Project, a student group dedicated to addressing issues of agriculture and sustainability. The Student Garden will be a resource for students, faculty, staff and Bennington community members. It will serve as an educational tool used to develop knowledge of sustainable garden practices, as well as an experiential and self-guided classroom. The Student Garden will also be an outlet for community outreach, connecting summer garden interns with youth programs and local non-profits, strengthening communication, collaboration, and education between Bennington College and the greater Bennington community.

Project Design and Implementation:

Application and Hiring Process:

The Garden Internship position will be for two Bennington College students for the summer of 2011. The Bennington Sustainable Food Project will start advertising the position at the start of spring term. Applications will be available by March 7 and due by March 18. The hired applicants will be notified by mid-April. Applicants will be informed that if hired, the Summer Garden Internship should be a focus. In order to fulfill the responsibilities of the internship, they will have to be able to work during the predetermined days/hours.

Spring Term Preparation:

Once the interns are hired, they will work in collaboration with the Bennington Sustainable Food Project to design and plan the garden. During this time, we will plan the garden (what we are going to plant, when, and how much) according to our predetermined end-uses for the food that will be grown. *Please see the Post Harvest section below for a full description of the planned end uses for the garden produce.

The interns will work with the BSFP to contact community organizations, and to plan the outreach portion of the garden internship. Community organizations include: Blooming Chefs, DREAM and Six Bank Street Homeless Shelter. Additionally, we will plan visits to local farms and student gardens at other colleges. Starting in the Spring term, the interns will solicit student volunteers, and will compile a list of interested students who are staying in Bennington over the summer who can help in the garden.

Due to the planning that is necessary in starting and maintaining a garden, as well as making direct contact with community organizations, it is integral that the interns are part of this initial preparation. To ensure their full commitment, the interns will be given a stipend for their work with the BSFP throughout the spring term. Being a part of this planning process will give the interns increased understanding and ownership of the project's structure and goals.

Internship Description:

Following the preparation in the spring, the interns will be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the garden during the summer. They will work 20 hours a week for 10 weeks, June 13th through August 22nd. Their tasks include preparation of soil, planting, fertilization, watering, weeding, pest management, harvesting, community outreach, and regular documentation of garden and community outreach activities through the blog and garden record/note book. Interns should be ready to address other gardening issues as they may arise.

The garden should be a space for experimentation and should express the interests of the garden interns. In the spring, the interns will discuss these interests and goals with the Bennington Sustainable Food Project and incorporate them into the planning of the garden and community outreach. The summer garden interns will be instrumental in designing and documenting the basic garden structure.

Clear and comprehensive documentation of garden activities is fundamental to the success of

the Student Garden. Summer garden interns will be required to keep a detailed record of garden processes, and community outreach activities, maintain a blog (<http://benningtongarden.wordpress.com/>), and submit two reports to the Sustainability Committee. Documentation will occur regularly throughout the summer, and in the Spring the interns will design a schedule for the number of hours that they will collectively spend on documentation each week.

Each day that the interns are working in the garden, they will check in with one of the supervisors. This check in will provide a time for the interns to clock their hours and for any issues or questions to be discussed between the interns and the supervisors. Last summer Rich Smith and Melissa Leland filled these positions, and if possible, our group is interested in them continuing to do so.

Throughout the summer, weekly emails will be sent to Tyler Abramson, and Emily Mikucki to ensure communication between the interns and the members of the Bennington Sustainable Food Project. They will discuss any issues, feedback and new ideas that may arise with the development of the internship. During the summer Tyler and Emily may be able to visit the interns.

The interns will send an email out once a week to the list of students staying in Bennington over the summer who expressed interest in volunteering in the garden. One day a week will be designated as a volunteer day, and interns will be responsible for guiding the volunteers and helping them to safely and productively work in the garden. When possible, a small harvest will be done with the volunteers at the end of the volunteer days, so that they can take a portion of the garden produce in exchange for their work.

Internship dates:

Start Date: June 13

End Date: August 22

Work Schedule:

The interns will work together in the garden four hours a day (8:30am-12:30am), four days a week weather permitting. Days/times will be adjusted each week when there is weather that is not suitable for working in the garden. Outreach programs will be one day a week for four hours. The days of the week will be determined during the spring term, once community outreach organizations have been contacted and incorporated into the summer schedule. There will also be five trips throughout the summer to local farms and student gardens at other colleges. If neither of the interns have a car, we will have to determine other available transportation options. These trips will be supplemental to the regular, paid hours that interns work.

Post Harvest:

The Bennington Sustainable Food Project and the interns will contact Six Bank Street and the Bennington Rutland Opportunities Council at the beginning of next term about the possibility of

donating some of the garden produce. Some of the produce will be used by the interns, volunteers and for the outreach activities. Outreach activities will include tastings with the kids from DREAM and Six Bank Street. Additionally, a portion of the garden produce will be grown in order to make and sell products to raise funds for the project in the fall (this fall we made tomatillo salsa and pesto). The harvesting and processing will be publicized activities open to the entire campus to spread awareness about the garden. Finally, we will plan to meet with Bill Scully in the spring to determine the feasibility of targeting a portion of the garden crops (like beets) to specific campus events during the fall term such as the Harvest Dinner.

Garden Location:

We plan to continue to use two plots of the faculty community garden, and would accept more space if possible.

Project Budget:**Intern Payment:**

Standard pay: \$8.06 an hour

10 weeks x 2 interns x 20 hours a week = \$3,224.00

Spring Term Stipend:

The stipend will be for the work and planning that the interns do during the spring term.

The stipend amount has not yet been determined. This payment system could be modeled off of other current student positions (like the Student Life Community Outreach leaders) that receive stipends.

Funds raised for garden supplies:

During this past summer and the fall, garden visitors donated money for the produce they took. This amounts to about \$50. Also, this fall, we sold salsa and pesto, made from produce grown in the garden. We did this three or four times and made over \$100. However, we are looking to extend this next fall and will plan the garden accordingly, so we can sell produce and value added products for the first 7 weeks of the term. This money will be used in the spring by the BSFP and the garden interns to purchase any needed supplies, plant starts and seeds.

Timeline:

Applications will be available by March 7 and due by March 18.

The hired applicants will be notified by mid-April.

Mid-April through the end of term: Interns will work with the BSFP to plan the garden and community outreach portion of the internship.

May: Interns will start soliciting student volunteers, and will compile a list of interested students who are staying in Bennington over the summer who can help with the garden.

Internship dates: June 13th through August 22nd.

August-November: Harvest and maintenance activities, for at least the first 7 weeks of the term weekly BSFP “farmstand” in/in front of Down Commons, and winter cover cropping.