

## **Purple Carrot Farm Proposes Construction of a Barn**

Proposal written by Dane Whitman Lauren Brady (12-07-15)

The Bennington Sustainable Food Project, in coordination with Buildings and Grounds, has started designing and planning the construction of a small barn to be located on the Purple Carrot Farm. The decision to devote time and energy to this project is a result of our reflections on our difficulties in prior seasons of expanded production. Two major components have become increasingly problematic: sanitation standards and storage. As our relationship with Dining Services grows, we view the barn as a step toward bringing our system of processing vegetables up to Aramark's health standards. Also, with the recent purchase of a tractor and the continual growth of the farm, our need for storage is encroaching on spaces otherwise used by the college; in addition, our tools are at risk of being damaged or stolen. Practicality and efficiency are critical parts of an agricultural operation; our shed fulfills neither.

There has also been a large amount of interest in incorporating the Purple Carrot Farm into Bennington's curriculum, and the barn has been designed to also serve as a classroom space. The farm is an excellent resource that many students have expressed interest in using as an educational tool, and the barn would make that more attainable. Prospective and admitted students have shown interest in our farm as well, and having a barn would help make Purple Carrot Farm a more established and impressive presence on campus.

Components of this proposed barn include a central building, an overhang for outdoor storage, and a sunroom for washing and curing produce. The barn will be located next to the hoop house, so that it is central to the farm, rather than across the Ohio Parking Lot. In the process of designing we have considered the longevity of materials as well as the opportunity to use reclaimed materials whenever appropriate. In our design, the barn enhances the college's simple and pastoral aesthetic.

The central building of the barn is 24' x 20'. In the interest of the structure's longevity, it will have a foundation of concrete slab and a salvaged slate roof for the central building. The roof of the sun room and tractor shed will be constructed of salvaged standing seam metal roofing. Other components of the design include electricity and basic plumbing. The central space will include an enclosed 8' x 10' tool shed and an overhead loft for storage. That space should be sufficient for irrigation, remay, fencing, soil amendments, and other bulky dry storage materials. The ground-level interior will be available as a classroom, workshop, and meeting space, with the potential to be augmented by future generations.

The overhang storage will be 24' x 14' and used for the tractor and it's implements as well as harvest bins and other items that do not mind weather. The western sunroom will be 12' x 20' and used for both a wash station and a sunny space that can be used to start plants or to dry and cure vegetables in the late season.

Buildings and Grounds has made a commitment to help in this project over the next season,

and a large number of students have shown a strong amount of interest in assisting with construction as well. The Purple Carrot Farm and the Bennington Sustainable Food Project both have an impressive amount of consistent and dedicated student involvement, with about 15 to 25 students attending every meeting, and a history of hosting events with impressive turnout. Even without yet garnering interest from the greater student community, there is already great enthusiasm within the Food Project and around 20 students have expressed the desire to be actively involved in the barn's construction. Many students have already assisted with the planning, salvaging materials, and collaborating with Buildings and Grounds. With the commitment of Buildings and Grounds, their time and expertise, has come a responsibility on our part to design for the long-term and ultimate use of the building. We hope that this barn proposal reflects and feeds into the growing momentum surrounding sustainable agriculture at Bennington College. While the barn's construction will be aided by the current revenue budget from the Purple Carrot Farm and support from Buildings and Grounds, administrative backing is necessary for the structure's completion.