

## The Evergreen Community Organic Farm

The Evergreen Community Organic Farm project was initiated in October by a group of students from Environmental Design and other programs. The students spent Fall Quarter organizing themselves, locating a suitable site on campus, and preparing a plan that presented their goals and proposed means of achieving these. During those early months, participation reached as high as 35 to 40 students; however, as students settled into different courses of study, this number stabilized at 8 to 12 regular workers.

An eleven-acre abandoned farmstead on Lewis Road was chosen for the organic farm site. The area included an old farmhouse and a relatively new, small barn. Several of the cleared acres were well-suited for cultivation.

During Winter Quarter the students spent their time gearing up for the action of Spring Quarter. They made contact with the Agricultural Extension Service and visited their offices. A series of lectures was also given by the area agronomist and representatives from the Puyallup Experimental Station. A number of books and articles were read, and discussions held about them. Time was also given to developing a scheme for rehabilitating the farmhouse.

As spring approached, the "doing" phase began. Seeds were ordered, and the field was plowed and rototilled. Irrigation lines were laid, the well pump was repaired, and work on the farmhouse was begun.

The students had agreed to practice companion planting. One test area was also to be set aside as a "disaster plot" in which improper combinations of plants would be used. Unfortunately, because of the large area under cultivation and the small number of workers, the disaster plot never became a reality.

The soil was enriched with chicken and horse manure. Bone meal and lime were also added based on soil test results. Planting was done during April and May. Straw mulching was used to minimize the weeding chores. Two hives of bees were also set up near the garden.

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Study emphasis during the Spring was on biological and organic control of pests and disease. Other faculty visited the farm and shared their knowledge with us. The only insect pest that proved unmanageable was the root maggot that bothered the turnips and radishes. However, the infestation affected only a small percentage of the plants.

Financial support for the farm was provided in part by the Environmental Design program. However, most of the funding was through the Student Activities monies. Several strategies were discussed by the project members to make the farm effort self-sustaining financially. Santa Cruz was used as the model and in accordance with their work, many flower bulbs and seeds were purchased with the intent of deriving a cash return through the sale of cut flowers. Another scheme was to sell the farm produce to employees and students at TESC and to organic food stores. Nothing has transpired along these lines to date. In the meanwhile, a proposed budget for 1972-73 has been submitted to the Student Activities Review Board.

A continuing problem for the farm project has centered on communications and decision-making. Various flyers and notices were posted in the Library throughout the year announcing meetings, need for help, tools, etc. A large TECOF calendar was maintained on the wall in the main lobby of the Library. In addition a farm log has been kept which records and dates all of the activities at the farm, especially those of Spring Quarter. This should serve as a guide for future participants by showing what worked and what resources and references were useful.

During Fall and Winter, meetings were held on an ad hoc basis, however this caused confusion and concern in terms of making binding decisions for the project. During Spring Quarter regular decision-making meetings were held once a week with the understanding that these would be the proper mechanisms for discussing issues

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and resolving any problems. Anyone who chose not to attend, in fact, forfeited his/her right to participate in any decisions made during the meetings.

The future of the farm is a question mark at the present. All of the core participants from this past year have been graduated or are leaving the area. Two caretakers have been attending to the farm chores this summer, but they, too, will be leaving in the Fall. Hopefully, a new group of students will move in to continue the effort and, ideally, an academic home will also be found for the project, either in a coordinated studies program or contracts.

In conclusion the farm project was generally successful and provided an extremely rich learning experience for the participants. In the future it should continue to provide a valuable focus for a wide range of specific areas of interest, especially in the natural sciences.





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