

HISTORY OF FARM AND ORGANIC GARDEN

Fall of 1971

In the Fall of 1971 a group of students in the Environmental Design Program discovered that the Lewis Road Farm was Evergreen College property and that it was available for use by interested students. A few of these students were very interested in studying farming and other related areas. These students, along with C. Dobbs, L. Eickstaedt, and P. Harding, Environmental Design faculty, arranged for a meeting with the two Deans familiar with the area. This was the first of many meetings concerning the Farm.

At that meeting were Merv Cadwallader, Don Humphrey, Phil Harding, Carolyn Dobbs, Larry Eickstaedt and about twenty students, most of whom were part of the Environmental Design Program, representing a wide range of interests. Dean Cadwallader had come from the University of California at Santa Cruz that has a University Garden that has achieved considerable attention because of its beauty and originality. It was decided that the farm here was to be modeled after the garden at Santa Cruz. It was also decided that the group present at the meeting should attempt to get all interested Evergreen people involved in the project and that it should come up with a cohesive plan for the management of the Farm.

A series of weekly meetings were set up to bring together all interested people to help out with the plan. Two Environmental Design students did a survey of the boundaries of the original Lewis Road farm while others worked on soil and water distribution studies. Due to the severe lack of laboratory facilities these latter studies were very restricted in scope.

Approximately fifty students attended these weekly meetings although only about fifteen made it to all of them. A general consensus of guidelines for the management of the Farm came from these meetings. The important ones were:

- 1) The Farm was to be a college project involving everybody at Evergreen, and not just one coordinated studies program.
- 2) The Farm would attempt to involve community help as much as possible.
- 3) The Farm was to be run in strict accordance with ecological principles. It was to be an organic garden.
- 4) The Farm was to be governed by general consensus of the entire group. There would be room for individual projects of any compatible sort, but the entire operation would not be run by any one person.
- 5) The Farm was to be run completely on human and animal power. No gasoline or electric machines were to be used at the Farm (as was the case at Santa Cruz). This last point was hotly debated at all of the meetings. Although it was finally agreed upon, it was eventually thrown out, due to the large size of the Farm.

Winter of 1972

Certain members of the farm group attempted to unify these suggestions into a cohesive proposal to be presented to the Board of Trustees. Much work went into this proposal, which was completed in early January. It was presented to the Board of Trustees by President McCann. For some reason none of the students in the farm

group attended that meeting, but afterwards they were informed that the Board of Trustees had liked the proposal and that work on the Farm could begin.

The Lewis Road farmhouse had been empty for some time, and it had been badly cared for before that. The farm group set out to clean the place up and to prepare a garden for the spring. The work for the first few weeks involved cleaning up garbage. Don Parry had a dumpster brought out to the farm, and it was filled a number of times. The farmhouse was swept, and the moldy plasterboard was removed. The annual garden location was chosen and marked out. Two of the stumps in the annual garden area were removed by hand and another two were removed by borrowed trucks.

During this time the farm group prepared a proposal asking for funds from the Student Activities Fee Board. The proposal asked for \$1,200 of which \$800 was actually allocated to the Farm. After this, the farm group had another series of meetings to plan the garden. These meetings were very successful and lots of fun. The group decided to have a rotovator go over the garden for the first year. After the garden was rotovated, it was heavily fertilized with animal manures (approximately 10 tons) from various sources, hops from the brewery, and with dolomite lime.

Spring of 1972

Sometime in early Spring of 1972 a group of students from the Political Ecology Program approached the farm group with a proposal for recycling the organic garbage from the food service and from the dormitories. The farm group thought that this was a fine idea, and the plan was implemented immediately. It was only continued until May due to the lack of cooperation of the food service and the students in completely separating their garbage. The farm continues to use the grass clippings and the leaves from other parts of campus and from A.S.H. in composting.

Also at this time the farmgroup developed a proposal for having caretakers at the farm for security and management reasons. The proposal was brought to President McCann, who thought that it was all right. He brought the matter up at the next Deans and Directors meeting, where it was postponed until the farmhouse could be made a safer place. So, the farm group began the remodeling of the farmhouse. A plan for the "new" farmhouse was made by an Environmental Design student working with Phil Harding. The actual construction was begun by the entire group. The Environmental Design Program had a group of students who had contracted within the program to work full time on the farm for Spring Quarter. These students spent many hours planting the garden, working on the house, and developing community interest in the Farm.

First Summer

The garden was mostly planted by the end of Spring Quarter. That first summer was a very interesting time for the Farm. Two students had contracted to work on the house and the garden during the Summer Quarter. Most of the other students who had been working on the farm left the area for the summer. The garden was very successful, and there were a large number of visitors from the community: neighbors,

gardeners, prospective students, and Evergreen faculty, all of whom helped in the management and the harvest of the garden. There were many more vegetables than the people working on the farm could use so visitors were offered samples to take with them. The garden turned out to be a little smaller than had been planned, but it was extremely beautiful.

The farmhouse construction was completed by the end of the summer (although the inside was still unfinished), and the house was at least waterproof. The house was also painted red to match the barn and the front part of the house reroofed. Because of the constant responsibility of taking care of the garden and of showing visitors around the Farm, the two students caretaking the farm for the summer moved in intending to complete the interior work as one of their duties. The farmhouse was brought up to Thurston County code standards thanks to material and labor supplied by Facilities Planning. During this time the well was certified by the Health Department, the pump was repaired, irrigation pipes were laid, and the septic tank was located by talking with a man who had put in the tank and drainfield tiles in 1969. The MacLane Fire Marshall visited the house and gave his approval.

Also at this time the Farm was offered a cow. A quick survey by the farm group showed that a cow was a marvelous animal for the Farm to have. The group felt that since the cow was a registered Guernsey, pregnant, and free this was a golden opportunity. So the Farm got a cow.

Fall of 1972

The second school year at Evergreen began with renewed student interest in the Farm. During orientation week there was a booth day. The Farm had two tables piled high with vegetables from the Farm's garden. Most people were very impressed with the quality of these vegetables, and many new students and members of the community became interested in the Farm. There were many visitors to the Farm. The student activity poll taken over the summer was compiled, and the Farm ranked fourth in the list of all student activities. In response to a new proposal, the Students Activities Fee Board gave the Farm \$850 for supplies for the coming year.

The farm group was enlarged to include all those new students who had an interest in the Farm. Throughout the late fall and winter the farm group had weekly meetings to discuss problems and policy. The last stump in the annual garden was removed and some students began working on clearing the orchard area. A little building in the back of the clearing was converted into a chicken coop, and other students began working on a plan for a low-cost greenhouse.

Winter of 1973

In January preparations for planning the garden were started. There was much enthusiasm and interest from the students and community in this planning, which took place in a series of four meetings. The attendance at these meetings was very good (ranging from twenty to thirty people). In the course of these meetings several things were decided on:

- 1) What types of plants should be grown and the quantity of each;
- 2) Where to order the seeds from;
- 3) A physical plan of the garden.

This is an extremely important aspect since the garden was to be planted using the bio-dynamic method. (These are raised beds planted very intensively and sometimes with mixed vegetables. This method supposedly provides more air to the roots and better drainage. However, the results did not seem to be markedly different from the regular planting methods.) It was also decided that the garden was to be enlarged and that a perennial flower garden was to be started along Lewis Road. The group had hoped to plant the orchard in the early spring, but it became extremely difficult to clear the orchard of a number of stumps so the orchard was postponed for another year.

Spring of 1973

Due to the large success of the farm group's meetings it was proposed that there be a group contract for the spring quarter on the Farm. The group contract was organized by Frida Habbick and Carolyn Dobbs, and it involved approximately twelve students. Aside from these twelve students another five students spent most all of their free time working on the Farm. It is difficult to explain how many others came out to work on the Farm for a day or two that spring, but there was seldom a day when there was not a new face helping out on the Farm. This year the garden was put in early. It was not fertilized as well as the first year (only five tons of manure), but it was better planned and executed. Early in the spring the Farm acquired a dozen laying hens (two Rhode Island Reds, ten Sex Linked) and a dog proof yard was built for them. So, by the end of that spring, Evergreen had quite an impressive little farm.

There were many visitors that spring, and the caretakers spent much of their time showing students, parents, and neighbors around the Farm, explaining techniques and methods of organic gardening. There were many students interested in caring for the animals, and the Farm would give milking lessons in the evening. Rhoda is such a gentle and well-behaved cow (at milking time) that the Elliots, who had owned her previously, used to let very young children practice milking on her. There were also many workshops at the Farm that spring. Some were on gardening, animal husbandry, and entomology; others were on spinning, dyeing and weaving.

At this time the administration began to take a renewed interest in the Farm. Due to the large amount of activity going on in the farmhouse some members of the administration were anxious as to the safety of the farmhouse. They felt that it was a possible fire hazard, and they also felt that it was unsightly and gave a bad impression of Evergreen. There were a series of meetings concerning the matter. It was obvious that the Farm could not exist without a farmhouse, and most people felt that the Farm was very beneficial for Evergreen. There were a number of appraisals as to what it would take to make the farmhouse satisfactory. At that time there seemed to be no other alternative. So, with the help of the administration and the Student Activities Fee Board, the farmhouse was remodeled. The final result was an amazing improvement over the farmhouse's original condition.

Summer of 1973

During the early summer months things slowed down a little at the Farm. Most of the students who had worked on the Farm had left the area for the summer, although

the constant stream of local visitors did not cease until the fall harvest was over. There were only about six students working on the Farm that summer, but since the garden was completed early, there was only maintenance work to be done. The greenhouse frame was put up and much of the glass also, but the student in charge left for the summer so it was quite some time before it was finished. There was a large abundance of vegetables again that summer. The Farm gave these to visitors although, due to the financial situation, donations were accepted. The house was still being worked on and the old compost shed was torn down in an attempt to beautify the grounds. The Farm's first summer attracted the attention and interest of many people in the community. This second summer established the Farm in a positive way for these people.

Fall of 1973

In the fall, even before school started there was a steady stream of visitors walking out to the Farm. Most of these visitors were students and some of their parents. Many of the students expressed an interest in the Farm and a desire to be involved with it. Information about the Farm was also presented to the students and the community during orientation week through a booth. Again nothing but positive feelings toward the Farm were expressed by those present.

In October the original caretakers handed over the responsibility to two new caretakers. During the fall these caretakers along with the rest of the farm group, were involved with the maintenance of the Farm, with showing visitors around, and with getting ready for the preparation and planning meetings upcoming this winter and spring.

ORIGINAL PROPOSAL FOR
THE EVERGREEN COMMUNITY FARM

A Proposal Submitted by
The Environmental Design Program
11/24/74

Members of the Evergreen community, particularly students and faculty in the Environmental Design Program, have shown a strong desire to create an organic farm. There have been several meetings held at which ideas have been generated and developed. At this point, we, "the farm group", are submitting a request for the use of the property and building facilities at the corner of Lewis and Simmons roads. This land was a small farm prior to the development of The Evergreen State College. A boundary survey, included in this proposal, has been completed.

The Evergreen community farm is to be an organic farm modeled after the Santa Cruz and the J. I. Rodale experimental farms. These are both classical examples of working experimental farms. Organic means that no chemical fertilizers or pesticides are used and that the machinery is muscle-powered (animal and/or human) and/or a non-polluting form of energy.

Scope

Because the production of food is the very basis of human existence and because any agricultural endeavor involves altering the natural environment, this farm is a vital experiment for our program that is concerned with designing in harmony with the environment. The prime consideration of organic farming is sound ecological planning, i.e. altering the natural environment constructively. For example, it is necessary to conserve proper soil fauna through composting to maintain the health and productivity of the soil. Environmental study and design will be one of the main responsibilities and learning experiences of the farm group.

Purpose

The farm is intended to serve as a learning resource area where new ideas and skills can be developed. Improved methods for farming organically, such as alternatives to chemical fertilizers and pesticides, can be explored. Initially, the farm project will be limited to basic research and building projects - soil and vegetation surveys, repairs to or removal of existing structures, land-use studies. As additional information is gathered and as skills develop, the farm and people and projects will expand beyond the basics of farming into areas such as new insect-resistant strains of crops. The farm has long range potentials for studies in future years when more land can be put into production, animals can be obtained, new structures can be erected and flowers can be grown.

Governance

Governance of the farm project will be by general consensus, or collective opinion, of the farm community. This form is adopted since the farm will be run as a community. The people, i.e. community, making the decisions will be those putting time and energy into the project and who have a working knowledge of the farm. This form of governance, rather than by committee, will facilitate the

involvement of all members of the farm community in the decision making process - a valuable learning experience - and consequently increase the knowledge base for these decisions. It will eliminate communication problems through group fragmentation; the knowledge isolation that results will be removed. All activities will be posted in order to insure that any interested member of the college community may participate. The Olympia community will serve as an important resource area. Since the farm is a part of the college, the farm group will be held directly accountable to The Evergreen State College administration, faculty and students.

Preliminary Schedule

I) Ecological Planning

Develop a land-use plan consisting of (a) soil survey, (b) land survey of boundaries and contours (one foot intervals), (c) location and condition of buildings and other structures, (d) water drainage, (3) catalog of plant life and wild-life habitat types. This information will be cataloged by overlay maps patterned after Ian McHarg's techniques described in Design with Nature. These studies will be used as our reference for land-use decisions, dovetailing into a planting plan for spring. This plan will include a map of how the farm will look after planting (size and location of fields, crop location, type of planting style used, where other farm functions will occur). Presently, there is a contour and boundary map of the farm (included in this proposal). Soil and drainage surveys are in progress as well as an evaluation of existing structures.

II) Composting

In order to build up an adequate supply of compost by spring, a winter composting method will be started the first week of December. This includes remodeling of one of the outbuildings as a compost shelter since composting must be done inside during the winter to maintain necessary heat. A garbage shredder must be constructed in order to break down large pieces of garbage to facilitate faster decomposition. Because it is already late in the year, it is imperative that we begin immediately to allow sufficient time for decomposition processes. Plans to gather organic refuse from the school are under way with Bill Kenworthy.

III) Building Improvements

During December and January, the buildings for agricultural and craft use, such as canning, storage, weaving, need to be repaired for use in the spring. These buildings will also serve as a meeting place for farm community planning and workshops this winter. (See supplement).

IV) Greenhouse

Develop a plan and construct a greenhouse or hothouse during winter quarter. This will be a low-cost, temporary structure, probably dome shaped and sided with plastic.

V) Animal Husbandry

This winter, the desirability and feasibility of animal husbandry on the farm for this year will be discussed and studied. An extensive study and evaluation of

what animals the farm can support and the desirability, benefits and and maintenance will be undertaken.

VI) Planting

The spring planting will be determined by the land-use and soil surveys and studies. The plan for this year is not to disturb any uncleared land.

VII) Summer Season

Suitable arrangements for handling the farm during the summer season will be made. People (such as Kagan and Habbick) will be available all summer to run the farm.