



# Cultivating Change

The Boston College Community Garden



2008 ANNUAL REPORT





Dedicated to the student workers  
of the 2008 growing season





This report was prepared by the leadership team of Real Food BC:  
Michael Cermak, Danielle Cortesa, Julia Gabbert & Jimmy Kaiser





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# Executive Summary

## **Welcome to the inaugural Boston College Community Garden Annual Report!**

We are very excited to share our report on the numerous ways the garden has become a hub of student activity over the past year. The Community Garden has become a key educational space on campus and a simple, powerful way to engage students in important issues of sustainability and community action. It is my hope that through this report detailing the accomplishments, food production, labor investment and future plans of the garden, you too can come to share in our vision of a thriving garden for years to come.

The community garden is an 1200 square foot space located on the Brighton Campus. The garden is a collaborative effort for sustainability at BC and our student group Real Food BC has pledged to be its primary stewards. As soon as we heard that BC allowed us to use the space we set out to raise money for our activities and pull together a diverse group of students to help us handle the tough, and labor-intensive, task of growing successfully.

When this project was first conceived by BC student Merrill Putnam A&S'08 in January 2008, the goals of the garden were as follows:

- **to create a garden that fosters educational and research opportunities**
- **to raise awareness and support of sustainable agriculture methods**
- **to provide, fresh, local vegetables**
- **to strengthen the sense of community**
- **to create a place where individuals can establish a connection with nature**
- **to set off the creation of future “green” projects**

Throughout this growing season, we have witnessed the garden achieve and exceed these goals. We have done our best to document the many activities and events we routinely held at the garden and will share our assessment of these in this report. This report is also meant to guide what will hopefully be a long line of future garden stewards at Boston College.



In the 2008 growing season we...

**WROTE** grants to external and internal groups and raised \$1800 dollars for the garden.

**GREW** over 500 pounds of organically grown produce with a market value of \$1695 dollars.

**MAINTAINED** the garden with over 600 volunteer hours including planting, weeding, watering, and harvesting.

**ORGANIZED** over 50 undergraduate and graduate students who were regular contributors to the garden, as well as a listserv of over 600 students.

**EDUCATED** over 70 students with hands-on organic gardening tours including free tastings of fresh produce.

**CONNECTED** with Boston community groups such as the West End Boys and Girls Club and the Hyde Square Task Force hosting at-risk youth and educating about food issues.

**SHARED** our work at student and professional conferences around New England.

**PUBLICIZED** the garden with articles on Real Food BC in the Heights, The Chronicle, on national websites and other newsletters.

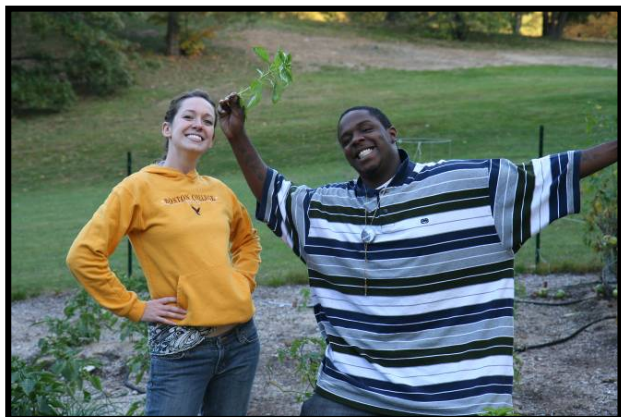
**PRESENTED** our work on the garden at regional conferences and numerous events on the BC campus.

And these are just our highlights. Our incredible success this year has us already anticipating the Spring. Our goals for next season, enumerated in greater detail at the close of this report, include focusing the garden layout on educational accessibility; increasing publicity, awareness, and educational signage; and completing the food system circle by serving fresh garden produce in The Loft @ Addie's, a new café Real Food BC has also helped establish this year. What could be more exciting than helping BC provide homegrown, fresh, sustainable and organic produce to the students!

It is our hope that through sharing our accomplishments and vision for the Boston College Community Garden, we can come together as a university to support and enjoy this wonderful project.

Sincerely,

Danielle Cortesa  
Head Grower, Real Food BC  
A&S 2009



# Grant Descriptions

The garden was funded by grants from outside and within Boston College.

## 1. CONSCIOUS LIFESTLYE GRANT (awarded \$650)

*Excerpts from Merrill Putnam's grant proposal*

Over 40 colleges and universities across the country now organically grow a large quantity of the food they eat. From large-scale farms such as Pennsylvania State's Center for Sustainability (8.5-acres), to "small" plots like Yale's Sustainable Food Project (1-acre), 18 schools across the northeast region embody a growing movement that puts local and sustainable at the forefront when it comes to making decisions about purchasing and consuming food.

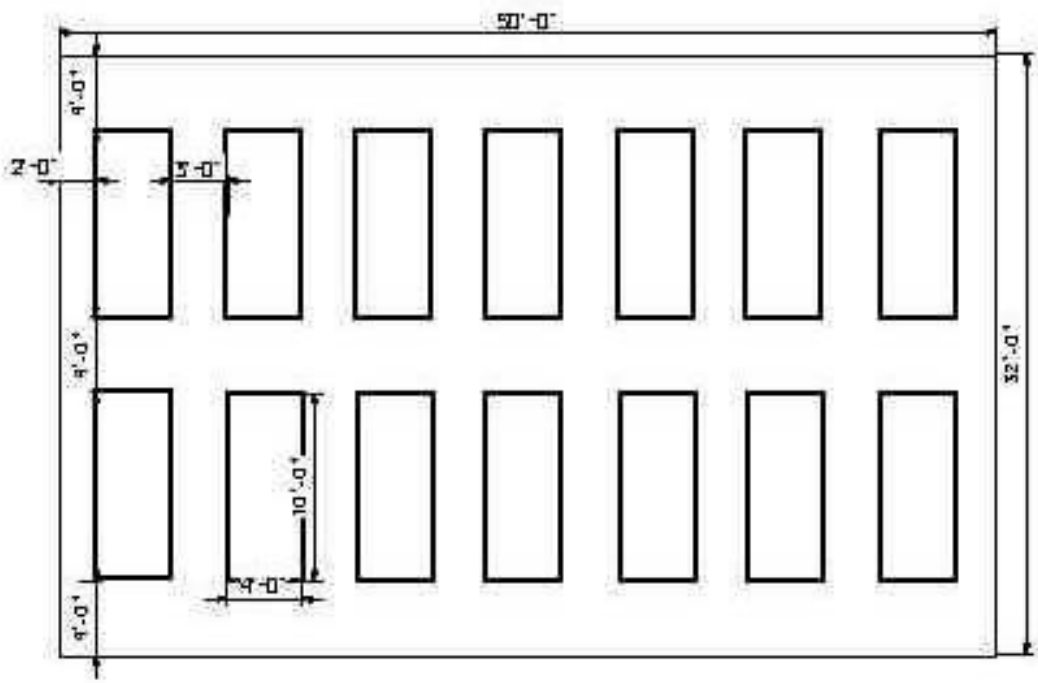
The goals of the garden are:

- to create a garden that fosters educational and research opportunities
- to raise awareness and support of sustainable agriculture methods
- to provide, fresh, local vegetables
- to strengthen the sense of community
- to create a place where individuals can establish a connection with nature
- to set off the creation of future "green" projects

## 2. NEWTON CONSERVATORS GRANT (awarded \$500) Submitted by Merrill Putnam A&S'08

## 3. GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT (awarded \$1228, \$650 allocated to garden) Submitted by Michael Cermak GSAS 2013

original plans for the garden





## INCOME 2008

Conscious Lifestyle Grant	\$650
Newton Conservators Grant	\$500
Graduate Student Association	\$650
<b>Total Garden Annual Budget</b>	<b>\$1800</b>

## EXPENDITURES (rounded to the nearest \$5)

Compost	\$240
Pine Mulch	\$190
Fence	\$260
Arbor	\$150
Supplies	\$270
Seeds	\$150
Rain Barrels	\$135
Soaker Hoses	\$150
<b>SOCIAL EVENTS &amp; FOOD</b>	<b>\$225</b>
<b>Total Garden Expenditure</b>	<b>\$1770</b>

## FALL 2008 PURCHASES

Compost Tumbler	\$400
(funds used from 2008-2009 activities budget)	

## PROJECTED 2008-2009 BUDGET INCOME

Funding from SOFC	\$785
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## MINIMUM EXPENDITURES

Seeds for Spring	\$100
Compost	\$240
Pine Mulch	\$50
Fence Repair	\$35
Soil Tests	\$30
Cover Crops, plants	\$75
Organic Fertilizer	\$50
Starter Soil	\$60
Compostable starter cups	\$40
<b>Total Garden Expenditure</b>	<b>\$680</b>

# THE BEGINNING

## Seedling Preparation

Seedlings were started in the early Spring, plantings were kept in storage areas, and in the offices of many garden supporters. The first seeds were planted in small starter cups.





# Digging Party

(\$130 for pizza and games)

In late April we used some funds from our grants to hold a breaking the Earth party with pizza, refreshments and games. Throughout the day close to 40 people, graduate, undergraduate and staff, showed up and helped prepare the land for planting, including setting up the beds of compost, desodding, and tilling the Earth.



# THE FENCE

(\$260.00)

The fence installation required a one foot deep trench to be dug around the perimeter of the garden. We found that the soil was tough and rocky underneath and even with almost 20 people helping the job took close to 4 hours. We left a small opened part to serve as the initial door.



# Planting

(\$150 total seed and tray cost)

When the danger of frost was past, the sprouted seedlings were transplanted into the freshly composted soil in the garden. Some of the vegetables, such as the carrots and beans, were grown from seeds sown directly in the garden. In late August a second group of radishes and beets, two late-season plants, were added to beds whose other crops had already been harvested.



# The Arbor

(\$150.00 Home Depot and Loews)

The Arbor was built by hand and from scratch by Michael Cermak and Diana Baldelomar. Materials such as wood, screws, and gate latch were purchased from Home Depot and Loews. The arbor is designed to provide a welcoming entryway to the garden and to serve as support for the two Concord grape plants (Native) that grow on either side. The wood used was Pine and the arbor was secured with 4 10 inch nails that are attached to each of the four main posts.

For protection and durability, the Arbor was sealed in October with Soy Guard (\$30.00 per gallon) an environmentally safe sealant. Some points from the website [www.biopreserve.com](http://www.biopreserve.com)

- Premium protection against water damage (swelling and warping) for up to 2 years
- Easy soap and water clean up



The Arbor when first installed (above) and then in mid-season with the grapes growing up (below)



**SoyGuard**  
Wood Protection

HOME COMPANY PRODUCTS DEALERS

Kid Safe. Pet Safe.  
Exterior Wood Care Products

why choose soyguard semi-transparent stain and sealer clear water repellent & sealer pressure treated products soyguard pressure

Our Products  
clear premium water repellent and sealer

# Compost & Mulch



The final layout of the garden held 24 beds and 1 patch that extended across the entire plot. Compost (\$240) beds were piled 8-10 inches deep and Pine mulch was spread in the walkways (\$190)



# Organic Growing Supplies



**RAIN BARRELS (\$135)**  
These two rain barrels were purchased from the City of Newton and attached to the downspout of the Gymnasium building near the garden. The barrels can be linked with a short hose and attached to the main hose to water the garden. This practice helps conserve water and reduce the drain on the University's resources.

**SOAKER HOSES (\$150)**  
We purchased soaker hoses made of recycled tires that remain in the soil for the duration of the growing season. These hoses drip slowly over time and allow us to water the entire crop more efficiently.



**THE COMPOST TUMBLER (\$400)**  
The tumbler is a low-maintenance option for producing fresh compost. We put the scraps from the garden and our tours into the tumbler. [www.compostumbler.com](http://www.compostumbler.com)





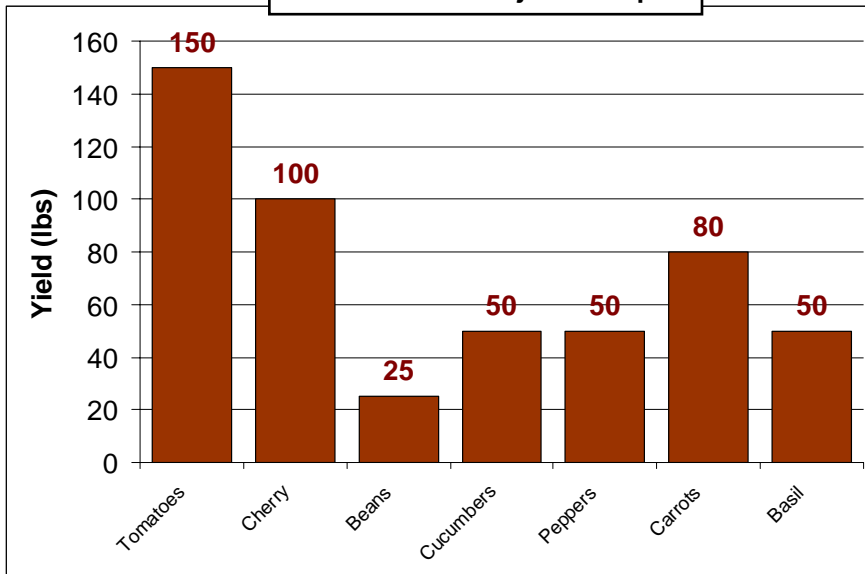
# THE PRODUCE



## Total Market Value of Feature Crops

	Yield (lbs)	Price (\$/lb)	Value (\$)
Tomatoes	150	4.99	748.5
Cherry Tomatoes	100	3.99	399
Beans	25	1.99	49.75
Cucumbers	50	0.99	49.5
Peppers	50	1.99	99.5
Carrots	80	2.49	199.2
Basil	50	2.99	149.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>505</b>		<b>1694.95</b>

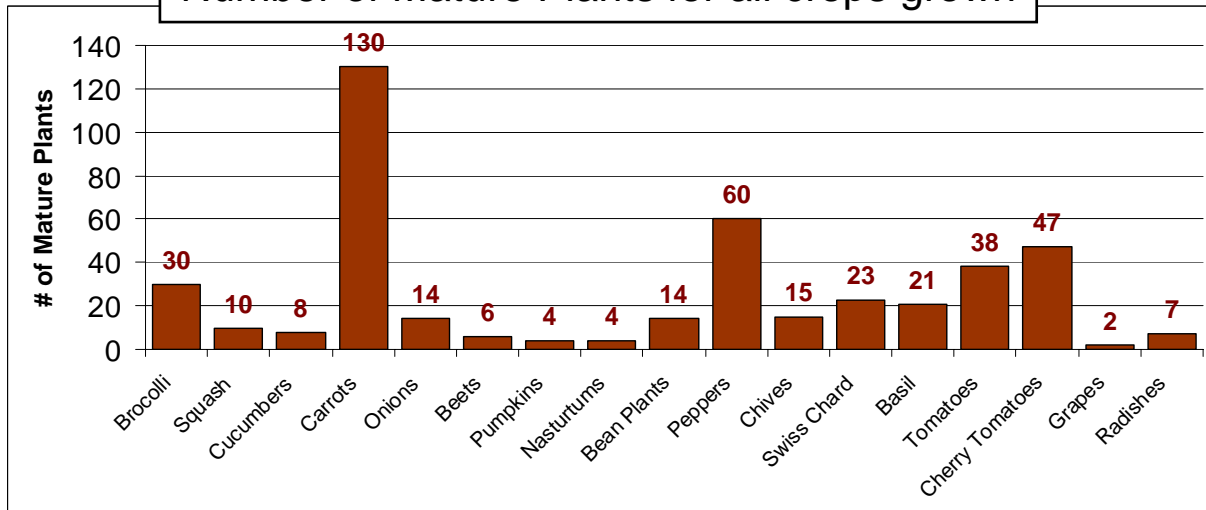
## Yield for major crops



\* Prices are based on Massachusetts values for organic produce at leading produce retailers. Note that we did not sell any of our produce these calculations are to estimate value. Projected yields are higher due to the maturation of soil.

\*\* Poundage rounded up to the nearest 5 lbs to incorporate additional produce not weighed but donated.

## Number of Mature Plants for all crops grown



# Plant Profiles

## Broccoli

We had a few nice heads of broccoli, and some plants stunted from the wet Spring. These plants drew the most comments from students surprised at the size of the plant needed to produce one head.



## Cucumbers

The cucumbers did well early in the year, but the wet weather made them susceptible to rot towards the beginning of Fall.



## Summer Squash

Our summer squash produced well throughout the season. At one point, a younger student guessed that we were growing bananas.



## Carrots

Carrots were prolific this year, which was fortunate because all garden visitors really enjoyed pulling them up from the ground.



## Beets

A wonderful late season treat, the beets were growing strong even through the first frost.



## Pumpkins

Our pumpkin plants produced three sizable pumpkins this year, just in time for Halloween. They gave a strong showing despite the often damp conditions.



## Peppers

One of the jewels of the garden this year, each plant produced 2-4 sweet, crunchy peppers. They were the most popular item in our taste tests.



## Grapes

Grape vines need a few years to get acclimated before they begin to produce to their fullest capabilities. There was one bunch of grapes grown on the downhill plant.



## Cherry Tomatoes

Another favorite snack. These plants were laden with fruit the entire summer and fall. At times the rain caused the fruits to swell to splitting point.



## Tomatoes

Tomatoes love the sun, and our plants gave a strong showing despite the often damp conditions, producing that famous sweet and juicy summer fruit.



# Plant Profiles

## **Radishes**

Famed for growing well both early and late in the season, we were able to squeeze in a crop of radishes after harvesting most of our lettuce.



## **Green Beans**

The green bean vines completely covered the east side of the fence, producing their classic culinary treat while creating a very picturesque border to the garden.



## **Onions**

The onions this year had a little trouble growing large round bulbs due to the containers they were started in, but there is an easy remedy for next year.



## **Swiss Chard**

This cousin of kale and spinach had trouble fending off the aphids this year, but still managed to produce some tasty leaves. Next season the aphids will be caught early and sprayed with vinegar-water.



## **Nasturtiums**

The Nasturtiums added a pop of bright color to the garden, and surprised many participants who had never before tasted a flower.



## **Basil**

The basil plants were very productive this year, growing to over two feet in height and producing large leaves up until the first frost.



## **Oregano**

This pungent and hearty herb flourished in its corner of the bed, and provided an olfactory and culinary treat to many who took cuttings home to grow themselves.



## **Chives**

The chives did well this year, multiplying their bulbs throughout the summer. This enabled them to be divided and repotted for in-house growth at the end of the season.



## **Mixed Lettuce Greens**

Interplanting different types of lettuce helps to keep certain pests at bay. The lettuce peaked early this year, again probably because of the very wet conditions.



# Volunteer Hours & Time Investment Calculations

We calculate a conservative estimate of **610 hours of volunteer work invested in the garden**. This work spanned the general maintenance typically done by a core group of Real Food BC leaders and community volunteers as well as the hours worked by students who would show up to general events. Here is a breakdown of the major sources of time:

## Watering Program

Maintaining a garden is a constant effort and in our first season we had a watering schedule to coordinate who would come on each day. Near-daily watering and maintenance for two shifts per day was required. **(140 hours)**

## Social & Working Events

In the Spring we held planting and compost parties where 15-25 people would show up over the course of a 2-3 hour event and service the garden. **(180 hours)**

## Informal Summer Farmer's Markets

In the Summer we held produce giveaways and gatherings every Sunday afternoon with a regular attendance of 5 to 10 people. At these events students, undergraduate and graduate, as well as community members would show up and help for 1-2 hours. These were great opportunities to spread awareness and garner support for the garden. **(200 hours)**

## Educational Tours

In the Fall, with the return of the students, we held 7 general educational tours that lasted about an hour each. Typically 4 members of Real Food BC were present to lead the tours. **(30 hours)**

## General Tasks & Publicity

Other tasks such as trips to hardware stores, building the arbor, grant-writing, and publicity for the garden were another major source of time investment. **(60 hours)**



# Educational Tours

Throughout the fall, Real Food hosted educational tours of the garden. Students observed the way that their food is grown, learned about the sustainable growing methods used in the garden, and observed the biodiversity in the relationships between plants, pests, and soil. After the tour, participants would discuss the ecological, social, and economic benefits of local food, while enjoying a meal of the produce they harvested during the tour. We reached an estimated 72 students at 7 different tours.



This critter was a feature of our garden tour. This Tomato Hornworm (*Manduca sexta*) can be a large consumer of tomatoes, but in this photo you can see several white eggs that are attached. This is because a Braconid wasp lays its eggs on the back of the caterpillar. The eggs draw nutrients from the caterpillar, eventually killing it. Garden wisdom holds that you should actually leave these infected hosts alive because they breed more wasps, which control the pest population. With pesticide use, the caterpillars are killed, but so are the wasps, so natural pest control only occurs with organic growing methods.

# TOUR TESTIMONIALS

“A strength was how hands on the tour was. From pulling out the smaller carrots to thrive, guessing what the plants were, smelling the basil, and witnessing the natural pesticides (how the worm was naturally being eaten from the inside by the parasites eggs), and putting out wastes from the plants into the compost pile were all engaging, memorable, and increased my understanding of how the organic garden worked and different from many other gardens.” – Erin Flaherty, School of Nursing 2010



“The BC Organic Garden Tour as held on the Brighton Campus by Real Food BC, was a truly unique opportunity that was unlike anything I have ever attended during my time at Boston College...without even considering the ecological benefits of the garden, the produce flat out tastes great...the organic garden was a great example of how natural agriculture can trump science in order to produce better tasting food and with our efforts to keep excessive energy use down, it could give great benefit to the BC community”  
- Joseph Fazio, A&S 09



## Sunday Informal Farmer's Market

During the Summer of 2008 we held open meetings every Sunday. This enabled us to meet many families from the nearby community as well as graduate students and BC professionals. During the meetings we would do basic maintenance work and give helpers free produce at the end of the day. We had several regulars and loved sharing our projects with them.





## Partnership with Professors & Classes

A few professors brought or sent their students to the garden, setting up tours with us or integrating food issues into their curriculum. Michael Cermak's "Planet in Peril" core class sent close to 20 students across the tour dates. Professor Laura Hake brought 15 freshmen in her environmental seminar to the garden. Professor Starr who teaches "The Political Economy of Food" also sent several students to experience the tours.

## TESTIMONIAL BY PROF. HAKE

The garden tour was excellent. We'd already been working in class on becoming conscious about our food choices. Since the students are Freshman, they were confronted with really thinking about food right when they were transitioning to being away from their family kitchen (or counter, or favorite place to stand and eat).

Some of the students were really impressed with how good the produce tasted- I think they'd never had the experience of tasting fresh from the garden vegetables. They also really appreciated learning about all of the ways different groups on campus are working on sustainable projects, and the Garden was a beautiful example of this! We talked about how this idea started with a few students, they got a buzz going, and worked on making it happen, to emphasize the power of an idea, and the ability each one of them has to make real change happen. We also talked about how a university community can give you the latitude and tools to bring a project like this to fruition, and that the skills learned in doing something like this at school will be applicable to their lives when they graduate. They also met some really great, engaged people that will help inspire them to initiate real, positive change. That's the goal of the course, so I really appreciated the excellent vehicle (and people) for getting these points made!

It was a great experience! Thanks for the tour!





# Graduate Student Benefit

Graduate students were regulars at our weekly events in the summer and throughout the fall. We had a core group of 8 graduate students who devoted a cumulative 120 hours of service to the garden. Many took advantage of the free produce and one student used the basil to make fresh pesto for his group that works for corporate responsibility.

## TESTIMONIAL BY A GRADUATE STUDENT WITH NET IMPACT

"When I heard that Boston College supported the initiative to plant an organic garden on campus, I was elated and inspired. Given the current climate of rising energy and food costs coupled with a heated public debate about environmental concerns, the presence of an educational garden on campus is both timely and appropriate.

Over the past summer, over fifty people have been involved in designing, preparing and planting the garden and, on a regular basis, the garden has directly provided delicious, healthy vegetables for about thirty people. Those thirty people have shared the good news with countless others.

My wife and I have been particularly grateful for the fresh tomatoes, basil, squash and peppers we've enjoyed over the past few months. Being involved in the garden inspired me to invite a group of fellow MBA students to try the Real Food Cafe at Addie's. The group enjoyed the fresh, local food and provided feedback for process improvements.

Additionally, for the Carroll Graduate School of Management's club week, I was able to use several bunches of fresh basil from the BC garden to make pesto for Net Impact's club table. We went through three baguettes, delighting about sixty students and faculty while simultaneously spreading the word about BC's commitment to the local, sustainable food movement through its organic garden and support of Real Food BC. I hope that providing fresh, local food to students is just the beginning of BC's efforts to be a more active, conscientious steward of the environment."

Joe Reganato  
Boston College  
BA Theology / Faith, Peace & Justice, 2003  
MBA / MA Pastoral Ministry Candidate, 2009



MEMBER COMMUNITY CAREER CENTER

Net Impact is a  
global network  
of leaders who are  
changing the  
world through  
business.

# Outreach to the Boston Community

In October we hosted a joint tour with the West End House Boys & Girls Club from Allston and the Hyde Square Task Force from Boston. The mix of the younger group and older teenagers was great and we held a team scavenger hunt and gave away free produce. The kids had a great time and this is our first attempt to work with diverse youth and educate about food. The high schoolers got the added benefit of touring a major university.



## TESTIMONIAL

Thanks again for having us to the garden. All of the kids enjoyed the visit for different reasons. Some of the kids enjoyed the natural sweetness of the fresh picked carrots and declared them the "best carrots ever!" Others really enjoyed the flavor combination of the tomato and basil saying it tasted like pizza. I especially love the opportunity to show our kids the importance (and fun) in eating fresh foods, particularly vegetables that they have picked themselves. I look forward to visiting again in the spring, perhaps I could bring a select group that could help with the planting, watering, etc... Please let us know if we can be of any assistance to you in the future.

- Lisa Smith, West End Boys & Girls club, Allston




# Boston College Events

We featured the garden in several events both on and off campus.

## The Loft @ Addie's Grand Opening

The Loft @ Addie's is the new locally-sourced and organic café on campus that Real Food BC has worked hard to open in collaboration with Dining Services. On Thursday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> we had a grand opening party where more than 60 people came to try great food and listen to short speeches by the Real Food leadership team. This was an opportunity where we featured pictures from the garden in a slideshow while people ate. We also presented the first 3 Real Food Awards, for Dining Services, Deirdre Manning, the sustainability coordinator, and Andy Spagnoli, a community volunteer who was a big help in the garden.



**Grand Opening**  
The Loft @ Addie's  
A new green dining destination on campus  
in collaboration with Dining Services & Real Food BC  
Thursday, Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>  
4-5:30pm  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of Concord Commons

**Featuring**

- Welcome by Helen Wechsler, Director of Dining Services
- Hors d'oeuvres from the café
- Introduction to Real Food BC
- Presentation of the first Real Food Awards



## Harvest Fest with EcoPledge

On October 16<sup>th</sup> Ecopledge hosted Harvest fest with several tables featuring sustainability themes. We hauled a large harvest of tomatoes, peppers, and carrots to the Dustbowl to share with anyone who stopped by. It was a great way to spread the word about the community garden.



# Off-Campus Events

## Whole Foods & ZipCar Event

We had the opportunity to collaborate on a unique event where BC students took Zipcars from campus to the Brighton Whole Foods. Zipcar is an environmentally friendly car-sharing program and Whole Foods emphasizes local and organic foods. The participating students learned about both options at the same time as buying some good food.



## Panel at a National Conference BIONEERS BY THE BAY

### **Student Leadership in Greening your School New Bedford, MA, October 23-26 2008**

Real Food BC was honored by the invitation to speak at the annual Bioneers Conference focusing on “visionary and practical solutions for restoring the Earth and its inhabitants.” After a presentation by Head Grower, Danielle Cortesa A&S 2009, students from universities and high schools from across New England crowded around, asking for practical advice on implementing a community garden at their schools. Through this experience we were able to connect with other schools, multiply knowledge, and inspire through example.



# Plant Adoption Program

## Fall 2008

When the season came to an end we held an event where students came and took home our extra plants. At the end of the growing season, before the first frost, we invited students and faculty to adopt Basil, Chive, and Oregano plants to grow in their dorm rooms. Over the course of four such adoption days, over twenty individuals came into the garden and for hands-on instruction in dividing and repotting these herbs for home cultivation and culinary use.



# Putting the Garden to Rest

In early November, volunteers spent two afternoons and 30 man-power hours removing last season's vegetation, expanding the length of the garden beds, and turning over the earth for cultivation next spring. The garden was heavily mulched with leaves to prevent the soil from compacting under the melting and freezing of winter. Additionally, one bed was planted with 40 cloves of New England stiff-necked garlic, which will germinate over the winter and sprout in the spring.



# Publicity

Real Food BC was responsible for two exciting new developments on campus; the Loft @Addie's a café featuring locally-sourced and organic foods in collaboration with dining services, and the community garden. Both activities attracted attention in the student community and we continually used these as opportunities to discuss the garden.

The garden, with its fresh produce and beautiful views provided great photographs to use in educational posters and other artistic representations. The photography by Michael Cermak, GSAS '13 was used to design these pieces.

## Educational Posters

"Cultivating Change" and "Food Miles" are two examples of posters that we used our club money to print in 36" x 24" They are exhibited in The Loft @ Addie's which feeds 600 students Sunday through Thursday.

**Cultivating Change**  
The Boston College Organic Garden

local  
tastes  
better

Real Food BC

This poster features a large, central image of a hand holding a fresh carrot. To the right, there are three smaller inset photos: the top one shows hands working with soil, the middle one shows a group of people in a garden, and the bottom one shows a woman in a garden. At the bottom left, there is a small photo of the garden area with the text 'Real Food BC' below it. At the bottom right, there is a basket filled with various fresh vegetables like tomatoes and green beans.

**How far has your food traveled?**

The average produce travels 1500 miles.  
local food is fresher and reduces  
the use of fossil fuels

Dine Green, Eat Local

Real Food BC

This poster has a black background. At the top, the title 'How far has your food traveled?' is written in yellow. Below it is a black and white photo of a person wearing a 'Real Food Boston College' t-shirt, holding a glass bowl filled with cherry tomatoes. The text 'The average produce travels 1500 miles. local food is fresher and reduces the use of fossil fuels' is written in yellow. At the bottom, 'Dine Green, Eat Local' is written in white, with 'Real Food BC' in red below it. There are two small images of cherry tomatoes at the bottom corners.

# The Hands of Real Food

The Hands of Real Food is another photographic series that we made using produce from the garden and the hands of members of Real Food BC. These photographs were taken by Michael Cermak and edited so that the color of the produce was emphasized while the rest was black and white.





# OUR GARDEN IN THE PRESS

Since May 2008, Real Food activities have been mentioned in 6 Heights articles, 2 articles in "Grad Student Life" the publication of the Graduate Student Association, one issue of the Patriot and one issue of the Chronicle.

Our work has also been featured on the National Real Food Challenge website ([www.realfoodchallenge.org](http://www.realfoodchallenge.org)) and on the BC Sustainability website.

The educational garden tours were covered in a feature article in the Heights by Julia Wilson on September 18, 2008. Another feature article in the October 28, 2008 issue of the Patriot was written by Laurel Manlow.

## GROUP BRINGS GARDEN TO BC

Brighton Campus organic garden yields fresh produce, spices

Published in the Thursday, September 18, 2008 Edition of THE HEIGHTS

By JULIA WILSON  
Business Assistant

[Print](#) [Email](#) [Article Tools](#)

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Fresh peppers, tomatoes, broccoli, carrots, basil, and cucumbers are now all within walking distance of Boston College. Real Food BC's organic garden is located down Commonwealth Avenue on the Brighton Campus, and features organic produce gardened by BC students and members of the local community.

Started by members of Real Food BC, the garden was made possible by a Conscious Lifestyle Grant submitted last year by Merrill Putnam, a former member of Ecopledge and A&S '08, and funds from the Graduate Student Association.

Real Food is a nationwide organization of college students promoting sustainable food systems on college campuses.

Real Food BC is responsible for collaborating with Dining Services to bring Addie's Loft to the old location of Tamarind on the second floor of Corcoran Commons. Addie's features fresh, locally grown food as an alternative to some of the more processed options that have traveled farther before they find their way to your plate.

The garden and cafe were inspired by the food system at Yale University that features its own organic garden that supplies food for a cafe on campus.

At Addie's, the ice cream and cheese are made locally at a dairy outside of Boston, and the tomatoes are from Pennsylvania. The chicken is also from Pennsylvania, and is kept hormone free.

"Addie's is not 100 percent local yet," said Michael Cermak, GA&S '13 and a founding member of Real Food BC. "First, we need to show that this is an important issue and that we have the support of students."



Media Credit: Dave Girler

Michael Cermak helped found Real Food BC, the organization responsible for the garden.

29 October 2008

the patriot

13

## Organic Gardening on Brighton Campus

LAUREL MANLOW  
STAFF WRITER

It is very easy to get caught up in the everyday routine at Boston College and ignore something as unique and wonderful as the new organic garden on Brighton campus.

The innovative and progressive new group taking care of the garden, Real Food BC, is part of the larger Real Food Challenge, an organization working to raise awareness about the interplay between the food we eat and our environment. More than 300 colleges now have farms, are working on making food fair trade, and consciously selling locally grown food. Real Food BC strives for "more local, more sustainable, more fairly traded, more real" food. Boston College had been severely lacking



Courtesy of amoscience.com

in this department, and this is why the organic farm, the farmer's market on Thursdays, and the opening of Addie's Loft upstairs in Corcoran Commons are so pivotal.

The new gardening space was established last spring after Merrill Putnam, a member of Ecopledge, funded the project with a grant. It was originally set up by the

O'Connell House, but the University paid for it to be dug out and relocated. "Originally this was a setback but after that, everything began rolling smoothly," commented Danielle Cortesa '09, a head grower of the organic farm.

Danielle encourages more BC students to get involved. To learn more, you can add yourself to the contacts list

at [www.bc.edu/clubs/realfood](http://www.bc.edu/clubs/realfood). The organization sends out e-mail updates about garden tours and the Harvest Festival. During the festival, everyone will harvest all of the food still in the garden and teach others harvesting techniques with chives, carrots, peppers, and more. It will be an enlightening autumn event in which, says Danielle, "people can come out and get free food while learning at the same time."

The garden isn't at all about just getting free food. It is not a community garden either—in the sense that each person is allotted a tiny amount of land with which they can do anything. The layout is done by a head gardener/grower, such as Danielle, and is planned based on which seedlings the head growers decide to pur-

chase. "Then, as a community anyone can come in and plant seedlings. The growers tend to the plants, water them, harvest them, and eat them," explained Danielle.

Danielle makes it clear as a head grower that "people can't just go in and take what they want for dinner. There are set times when everyone harvests together, we get a big pile of food, and then we take what we want. There's a gate, because otherwise our garden food would be trampled—college students and free food..." Students are encouraged to take part in the harvesting, coordinated by Real Food BC.

Visit the Real Food BC website and sign up if you'd like to get involved in this fantastic experience!

# Goals & Proposals

Our first and primary goal for the 2009 growing season will be to improve upon every aspect of our operations. With startup costs aside, we can devote more time to refining growing methods and improving education and outreach.

Specific goals are to:

**FACILITATE EDUCATION** programming through a garden plan which maximizes crop diversity, sustainable agriculture techniques, and educational signage.

**INCREASE PUBLICITY** to promote knowledge about the importance of the garden for undergraduates and Boston community groups

**SECURE APPROVAL** to serve garden produce in The Loft @ Addie's cuisine and at the Farmer's market on Corcoran Commons. This will be a vital step towards promoting a closed loop food system at Boston College.

**DISTRIBUTE** the produce in a more systematic way and where possible donate food to local shelters/kitchens.

**INCREASE CONNECTION** to the BC curriculum through use of the garden by University classes, professors, and students.

**EXPAND PRODUCTIVITY** of garden space by lengthening beds, intercropping, and planting multiple harvests per season.

**EXPLORE** the feasibility of expanding the garden and starting other garden practices around campus.

As Boston College develops and as sustainability continues to become a standard in the mainstream and in higher education we hope that maintaining a garden will be viewed as a cornerstone of these efforts. Our national organizing body, the Real Food Challenge, has noted that students at over 300 schools are working to develop gardens and making food a central theme for bringing people together. Based on our success, students from nearby schools are already visiting Boston College to see the garden and inviting us to their school to speak about our programs. Prospective students are starting to look to the efficacy of student gardening as a key selling point for choosing their school. We hope Boston College can continue to be a leader and role model for supporting places where we may not only cultivate produce but also sustainable change.

"Fortunately, we will have a next generation of farmers.

Not because they are inheriting land and wealthy enterprises. Not because government policy encourages the maintenance of American traditions of husbandry, land stewardship, and frugal entrepreneurship. Not because there's any money in it. But because a generation of young people wants meaningful work, and they want to heal the earth, our relationships, and our economy. And they see these things are related. They are clamoring to learn farming, real farming, the kind you do by knowing nature, knowing a piece of land, and producing in a context of community. The big ag schools, with textbooks full of fertilizer formulas, are aghast. The grand universities who thought farming was out-of-date are scrambling to build interdisciplinary knowledge about food's origins and meanings. And students, desperate for hands-on skills, are building scrappy gardens at their stately universities, vegetable gardens that light the way to a newly respectable career and industry."

-Dr. Starr, Boston College Visiting Professor of  
"The Political Economy of Food"

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