

NEWS

The Evergreen State College
Olympia, Washington 98505 ~~██████████~~

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Collecting eggs, milking Rhoda the Gernsey, and shoveling fertilizer are just a few of the more earthy aspects of studying organic horticulture and animal husbandry at the organic farm on The Evergreen State College campus.

Sharing equal responsibility for care of the farm's one cow, 12 chickens and one acre of garden, 15 students have been working together for the past year and have just about finished their spring planting.

"We've got sweet peas, potatoes, spinach, lettuce and onions planted already," said Frieda Habbick, a New Yorker who is one of the farm's organizers. "We've still got a lot more beds to plant. We're hoping to put in corn, tomatoes, egg plant, peppers, turnips, beets, peanuts, --- all kinds of crops which the students would like to observe coming up."

The student-initiated project, begun more than a year ago, is intended to serve as a long-term campus learning resource where new ideas and skills can be developed by students, faculty and staff, as well as by interested residents of the surrounding Olympia area.

In its first year the farm was limited to basic research and planting and building projects. Students conducted soil and vegetation surveys, made repairs to or removed old buildings, made land use studies and did some farming. As more information has been gathered, the farm and its young caretakers have moved beyond the basics of farming into areas such as new insect-resistant strains of crops and improved methods of organic farming.

Most of the students now working on the farm are studying under individual academic contracts with one of five Evergreen faculty members. Their fields of interest cover everything from botany to animal husbandry, chemistry to entomology. They share a reading list and hold weekly seminars to compare information. They also attend workshops directed by one of the sponsoring faculty members or a farm specialist from the surrounding area.

(more)

Dick Nichols, Director
Information Services

Faculty Member Robert Sluss, an entomologist, spent two hours at the farm this week lecturing on methods for the identification and control of insect pests without the use of dangerous chemicals. He pointed out the ability of bugs to develop resistances to nearly all kinds of pesticides.

One student, frantically taking down Sluss's advice on how to control the pests, summed up the gardeners' despair with, "Wow. It sure seems like the bugs are gonna win."

Sluss agreed that the possibility was a real one, but said the Evergreen farm "has no real problems with insects yet."

Several of the students, interested primarily in gardening, spend most of their free time at the farm, but are earning academic credit in other areas. Jeff Gilbert, an Ohio student, said the garden supplemented his studies in chemistry and plant taxonomy under guidance of Faculty Member Mike Beug, a chemist.

Leslie Asbornsen, a third year student from Portland, describes herself as "a city girl who just loves the farm.

"I've done everything from taking care of Rhoda, the cow, when she was sick, to planting, and I really enjoy it all," she said. "You just don't get exposed to this kind of thing in downtown Portland."

Funded by a \$2,000 appropriation from Evergreen Services and Activities Fees this year, the farm yields about ten eggs a day and bountiful crop each summer.

"Last year we just gave the produce to any members of the Evergreen community who wanted it," Ms. Habbick said. "The eggs and the little bit of milk Rhoda produces don't go to waste with 15 hungry farmers on hand much of the time."

Plans for the rest of the year include construction of a greenhouse where seedlings can be given a start, plus planting of a flower garden, an orchard and a berry patch. Eventually, more land will be brought into production, more animals obtained and new structures erected.

For now, students are anxiously awaiting a new arrival in their pasture this summer. Six-year-old Rhoda, a registered Gernsey who was donated to the farm by a local dairyman, is expecting a calf July 24.

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