

NEWS

The Evergreen State College
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When Winter Quarter begins at The Evergreen State College January 3 an interest group, primarily composed of students and faculty in the Environmental Design Coordinated Studies Program, will begin activating their proposal for development of a campus organic farm.

Approved by the college administration and favorably reviewed by the Board of Trustees, the student-initiated farm project 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 interested residents of the surrounding Olympia area.

Environmental Design students became interested in an organic farm project early in Fall Quarter, studied its feasibility and then submitted a comprehensive report for review by college officials. The report says in part: "Initially, the farm project will be limited to basic research and building projects--soil and vegetation surveys, repairs to or removal of existing structures, and 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. Improved methods for organic farming, such as alternatives to chemical fertilizers and pesticides, can be explored.

"The farm has long-range potential 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."

"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;

Dick Nichols, Director
Information Services

in other words 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, then, will be one of the main responsibilities and learning experiences of the farm group."

The project is essentially a self-help enterprise, according to Academic Dean Don Humphrey. "We envision a situation where all work and materials are contributed by the participants themselves, thus requiring no expenditure of tax monies. We hope that anyone who is interested in non-commercial, organic farming will participate, including people from the local area who want to learn about or can teach skills in growing, canning, and generally working with nature."

The student report states that organic farming means "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."

The Evergreen "Farm Group" already has identified a site for the project, a 20 acre section of the campus, at the corner of Lewis and Simmons Roads. The land served as a small farm prior to the development of the college. The existing farm buildings--a house, a barn and two other outbuildings--were examined by three Environmental Design faculty members earlier this year and were found to be useable, requiring only minimal repairs and improvements.

The student report indicates that the farm house needs a new roof and suggests that materials might be available by having students split their own shakes from cedar falls on campus property. In addition, the report says, "A community resident has been contacted and has offered to give a workshop on splitting shakes and roofing." The barn requires only small repair and the two outbuildings can be used for tool storage, composting, etc.

"The improvements of the physical structures on the farm are seen as opportunities to enrich the total educational experience of the project by affording students complete designing-construction-evaluation experiences," the report continues. "All such improvements involving mechanical, electrical, and basic structural work will be

coordinated with the college Office of Facilities Planning and will conform to the applicable building codes."

Inspired by a highly-successful experimental farm at the University of California at Santa Cruz, the Evergreen project involves a series of carefully-planned steps, starting with the development of a land-use plan. The plan includes a soil survey, land survey of boundaries and contours, location and land-use study, water drainage study, and a cataloging of plant life and wildlife in the farm area. Most of this work was completed during Fall Quarter as a practical, "real life" academic project for the student interest group.

In order to build up an adequate supply of compost by next spring's planting season, the Farm Group has started a winter composting program. An outbuilding will be remodeled to serve as a compost shelter since composting must be done during the winter to maintain necessary heat. A garbage shredder was built during December to break up large pieces of compost, aiding in decomposition. In addition the group has initiated steps to obtain organic refuse from the college Food Services area and from containers placed adjacent to campus housing units.

Buildings will be repaired during January so that they will be available for agricultural and craft use, as well as serving as a meeting place for farm planning and special workshops during the winter.

During the winter, the Farm Group also will develop a plan and then construct a greenhouse or hothouse. Winter Quarter activity also will include studies into the desirability and feasibility of animal husbandry on the farm, special readings, seminars and biological experiments relative to organic farming.

Spring planting activities will be determined by the land-use and soil surveys and studies.

The group also intends to make arrangements for operating the farm during the summer months prior to the 1972-73 academic year so that the facility will be available as a continuing learning resource for all interested persons.

"The project supports Evergreen's objectives of providing a flexible learning climate which encourages students to pursue their own interest," according to Larry Eickstaedt, Faculty Coordinator of the Environmental Design Program. "It also allows the college to make use of its large and very unique campus as a living laboratory. And, the project is consistent with the basic premise of the Environmental Design Program as described in the college catalog: 'Because of increasing population and urbanization, the diversity of conflicting interests, and the limited amount of habitable space, the problems of designing with nature force themselves upon us as extremely demanding challenges.'

"We think the farm program, along with other projects which will develop during the year, provides students with an excellent opportunity to really dig in and get at possible solutions for the problem our program was designed to study."

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