

The UCI Garden Project II

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Introduction

The UC Irvine Garden Project is creating a vibrant, coordinated garden community at UC Irvine. The project is helping to facilitate communication and collaboration among the gardens on campus to foster increased sharing of resources, labor, garden knowledge, food, and fun.

The project is harnessing the six UC Irvine-based community gardens as a laboratory for hands-on sustainability education, student professional development, community engagement, and research on creating sustainable communities. In addition, the garden project is building linkages with the broader community involved in sustainable food production in Orange County, particularly in low-income communities.

Project Goals

Building off last year's community vision and action planning workshop the goals this year was to begin implementing the action items agreed upon. Working with the Global Sustainability Resource Center we addressed the following items:

- Help coordinate seed exchange and seed saving program
- Host potlucks and tours at each of the gardens to continue our conversation
- Improved irrigation at gardens using drip system
- Mentor students in management or garden skills
- Organize events to begin brainstorming how to create a hub for the UCI Garden community



Results and Outcomes

- Advanced the undergraduate garden in Arroyo Vista housing to be a more productive, organized, and efficient learning garden by adding the following:
 - Started welcome hours with gardener
 - Chore chart
 - Inventory list
 - Added Greenhouse
 - Prepped soil for orchard
 - Created gathering space
 - Drip line irrigation system
 - Plant production log
 - Dedicated beds for pollinators
- Hosted regular events on promoting campus gardening and sustainability:
 - Fall Potluck and garden tour held in the Anthill Village Community Garden
 - Weekly workshops held Mondays in Arroyo Vista Garden open to the campus community. Topics included:
 - urban foraging
 - miracle of mulch
 - seed savings
 - organic pest management
 - soil stewardship
 - de-stress in the garden during finals week
 - Taste the Season
 - sustainable food event
- Created Seed Library
- Convened with SOAR (Student Outreach And Retention) representatives to develop programming for the new expanded student pantry and basic needs hub

Conclusions

I was beginning to think that I didn't accomplish much this last year, then I realized even though I may not be directly involved in each action my role as a food fellow was to identify and assess what needs to be done to improve the overall use of urban garden spaces on campus. My primary role was as an organizer and to help create a network that allowed for various collaborations to take place.



Future Recommendations

Having completed the Global Food Initiative fellowship for two years now I have some recommendations:

- We need a garden on campus at UC Irvine, not in one of the housing communities. The extra bureaucratic layers imposed by housing staff make it very difficult accomplish anything. The garden should be for organic food production and the food harvested will go to the new student pantry/basic needs hub. The crops grown should reflect the palate and dietary needs of the diverse student body at UC Irvine.
- In the meantime, while we wait for the new campus garden a few plots at Arroyo Vista garden should be dedicated to food production for the new student pantry/basic needs hub.
- Dedicated garden staff

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