

Enhancing Sustainability by Expanding the Wildcat Farm Food Forest

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Introduction

A lack of knowledge and understanding of how people can participate in sustainable practices in their everyday lives is a persisting issue in society today. One way to be more sustainable is to eat food grown locally, including from a food forest. Food forests increase local plant growth by simulating a natural forest environment with layers of edible vegetation. This type of system facilitates plant growth, while simultaneously creating a space for people to come and enjoy locally grown produce.



Figure 1. Herb garden ready for planting



Figure 2. Updated original pathway

Expansion

- ❑ The pathway was extended into the back half of the Food Forest using mulch provided by the Wildcat Farm. This section is now much more accessible to the Food Forest's visitors (Figure 3).
- ❑ A small area of grass was cleared out to create a vegetable garden, containing potatoes, tomatoes, and onions, adding another layer to the Food Forest.
- ❑ 3" x 5" custom signs were added in front of each of the plants to help visitors of the Food Forest identify which species are present (Figure 4).



Figure 3. New portion of the pathway under construction

Education

The Food Forest helps educate students and community members on sustainable produce consumptions and gardening techniques. The expansion through this project has helped facilitate access to this resource and has helped people understand what produce they pick by the addition of the plant identification signage.



Figure 4. Example of plant identification signage

Conclusion

Food forests exist to increase locally grown produce, promote and protect biodiversity, and enhance ecosystems. These have been achieved through this project, as well as the goal of facilitating education on sustainable gardening and consumption techniques, all of which contribute to enhanced sustainability at CWU.

This Project Supports UN Sustainable Development Goals:



Updates to Existing Elements

- ❑ The existing herb garden required weeding and replanting of many of its elements. Much of what was previously planted had died, so we removed the dead plant material and weeds (Figure 1).
- ❑ New starts of herbs were planted in the garden and have been monitored closely to give them the best chance of flourishing. This includes perennial herbs such as thyme, mint, rosemary, and oregano.
- ❑ More mulch was added to the previously existing pathway in the front half of the food forest to keep weeds and grass from invading the area (Figure 2).
- ❑ General weeding was done around the existing plants to make them more visible to visitors of the food forest, and to make sure that they remain healthy and are not competing with any other plant species invading that space.

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