



Students Break Ground for St. John's University's Latest Sustainability Project: a Student-Run Organic Garden

July 27, 2009

Students at St. John's University recently broke ground on the Queens campus for a student community organic garden. The carefully planned 34 x 54 ft. site is the latest Sustainability project at St. John's and represents another step in the University's commitment to reduce carbon emissions released into the atmosphere.



Located behind Donovan Hall and beyond the left-field fence of the softball field, the site now consists of five large, 7 X 24 ft. planting beds separated by grass walkways. The entire garden will be bordered by a 12 in.-wide planting bed and a 5 ft.-high wire fence, which will support plant growth, discourage damage to sprawling plants and add interest and shape to the patch. A cedar-wood arbor with a picket fence gate will welcome all who visit the new garden.

A Little Help from Friends

The garden's location was selected by William Bernor, Facilities' Director of Grounds, who took into account site drainage, sun exposure and tranquility of the area. Julia Corwin from the Queens Botanical Garden and Luke Halligan from the Brooklyn Botanic Garden also walked the site and offered professional advice to the student workers.

Graduate students Shweta Jamdade and Ivelin Danailov Spasov researched organic gardens and drafted the Organic Garden Plan. Much of the heavy work was completed by Student Sustainability Coordinators Ashwin Kelwalkar, Ivaylo Spasov Dimitrov, Gabriela Papadopulos and Kristina Miltcheva, under the direction of Thomas Goldsmith, the University's Director of Energy and Environmental Conservation.



Earth Club students have been busy producing compost—the backbone of organic gardening—for the garden from food discarded in the various campus dining areas. The food scraps are fed into the **University's Rocket® Composter**, and in a short time become fertilizer for the new garden rather than waste shipped to a landfill.

Student Earth Club President Is Smiling

Earth Club President Ashley Brown, who is in her fourth-year at St. John's, can't stop smiling. She reports that “there will be plenty of student involvement for planting and maintaining the garden,” which promises to be a gathering place for students with an interest in organic gardening or others just feeling the need to visit with Mother Earth.

The University's Sustainability Committee is planning to host a “planting event” when construction of the garden is completed. That event is currently scheduled for August 18th.

