Memorandum

Date: December 3rd, 2009

To: Land Use Committee

From: Nathan Hecht, Victoria Blanco, Elsa McCargar, Environmental Philosophy Students

Re: Edible Landscaping Project

Overview

We propose to convert a small plot of Luther College campus into an edible landscape. The space will consist of mostly vegetable produce and herbs interspersed with some flowers and shrubs. Our goal is to raise students' awareness of the source of their food, encourage sustainable and practical land use, and provide an aesthetic alternative to the traditional "American lawn." The garden would function as a demonstration for prospective students during the summer and current students during early fall. The specific actions and steps necessary are outlined in the attached implementation plan.

Background

As participants in an Industrial economy, we are deeply disconnected from the land that supports us. Our highly centralized food system requires long supply chains to connect producer to consumer, and few people have a chance to engage in the growing, let alone preparation of their own food. Consequently, we have not only lost our visceral connection to the land, but we are also increasingly unaware of the environmental impacts of our eating habits. This detachment is particularly apparent on college campuses, where students eat almost every meal pre-made in the Cafeteria. Although Luther's student garden provides an important example of sustainable food production and land use, because of its location, this resource is still largely out of sight, out of mind.

Proposal:

We believe that the student community would benefit from a more immediate example of alternative systems of food production and land use. In an effort to raise student awareness and interest in this issue, we would like to establish a small "edible landscape" on campus.

Description: The purpose of this project is, first and foremost, educational. The plot will be small and decorative rather than large-scale and "production-focused."

Location: The plot would be located bordering the western wall of the new Environmental Studies wing of Valders. This is the plot on your immediate right as you walk up the sidewalk to the South entrance of the Valders concourse (from the Library). (see Appendix B)
Potential Plants: Since this is a pilot project, we would plant only annuals for the first year (e.g. kale, chard, broccoli, tomatoes, pole and bush beans, summer squash, winter squash, lettuce, leeks, cabbage, edible flowers, herbs etc.). If the project is successful and continues, we would like to plant some perennial fruit such as strawberries and raspberries.

Food Use: Two or three times in the Fall Semester, an Edible Landscaping Event will be held where students will be able to taste food from the garden and try dishes that contain the landscape’s produce. This event may be held in conjunction with Seed Savers Exchange and/or The Pepperfield Project as a way of promoting and educating the public about sustainable home gardening and alternative landscaping. The event will allow student’s the opportunity to taste the food grown on campus and will also be a wonderful time to educate students and the public about edible landscapes.

Any remaining produce will be added to the produce stream coming from the student gardens.

Labor: David Cavagnaro, an experienced organic gardener and landscaper from the Decorah area has agreed to direct student garden workers and interested volunteers in the realization of this project. He will provide direction, particularly in the initial stages, when selecting plants and designing the landscape. In recent conversation, it is clear that the grounds staff may help to implement the project initially. However we want to emphasize that the responsibility for the maintenance of the plot and harvesting of produce will be that of student garden workers and volunteers; these students will be the main source of labor and control in the continuation of the project.

Resources/Costs: The necessary tools for tilling, weeding, planting, and harvesting are already available in the student garden shed and at facilities. Free seeds will be available through Seed Savers Exchange and David Cavagnaro's Pepperfield Project.

Timeline: This initial project will act as a one-year pilot that will serve to gauge success, identify problems, and improve implementation for the future. This test run will be a wonderful opportunity to explore the idea of an edible landscape and consider the future of such a project at Luther.

Rationale

Education and Awareness

A visible “edible landscape” on campus will allow students to watch their food grow on a daily basis. This will not only help reconnect students with the source of their food, but it will also become an educational resource. The space could be used for workshops and or volunteer events in which students would have the opportunity learn about various edible vegetables and herbs, organic growing methods, and personal/community gardening. In order for students to make better connections with the food grown in the garden, we hope to host food sampling events and volunteer days throughout the fall. We believe this unique addition to Luther's sustainability initiative will be exciting to current and prospective students who care about food-related and environmental issues.
**Sustainable Land-Use**

Luther spends large amounts of time and money managing the grass lawns on campus, both through mowing and treatment with chemicals. This type of land-use is both harmful to the local environment and fuel intensive. Converting some of Luther’s grass lawn into an "edible landscape" will reduce Luther's carbon footprint and ecological impact.

**Aesthetically Beautiful Landscape**

We thoroughly believe, as our consultant David Cavagnaro has said, that an edible landscape can be both functional and beautiful. Colorful vegetables and aesthetically pleasing design will enhance the beauty of the campus for prospective students and alumni and provide an attractive alternative to the standard lawn.

**Contacts**

David Cavagnaro- Life-long landscaping artist who has recently worked at Winneshiek Medical Center to create an edible landscape. He has agreed to supervise the student implementation for the project and help design a plant layout.

Perry Hauls- Ground Maintenance personnel with extensive knowledge of Luther campus and home gardening is willing to collaborate on this project and provide some green house availability for early planting.

Paul Frana- Ground Maintenance Supervisor has agreed to provide a plot of land next to Valders for this project.

**Appendix**

Includes

- Photographs from the Pepperfield Project at Winnishiek County Medical Center
- Luther map describing edible landscape location
- Implementation Plan

**Appendix A- Pepperfield Project Photographs**

*More photos are available upon request from Jon Jensen (jensjo01@luther.edu) or Nathan Hecht (hechna01@luther.edu).*
Appendix B- Location Site –

Appendix C- Implementation Plan

Fall/Winter 2009

1) Gather list of dedicated volunteers for spring planting/summer work, around 5 students if possible

2) Contact Seed-Savers Exchange about Seed Donations (application for Herman's Garden seeds requires $10 donation)

3) Secure David Cavagnaro's involvement and responsibility for this project

4) Pursue options for greenhouse space during winter/spring

5) Set up preliminary meeting times for January or early February

Winter/Spring 2010:

1) Set up schedule of volunteer days for spring planting and weeding

2) Begin planting seeds in greenhouse (February/March) with consultation from David Cavagnaro

3) Make/Order signs describing the project & purpose and get stakes to label the plants being grown (the Luther Garden tool shed should have some)

4) Have the remainder of the plot tilled (with a 2ft. edge) and remove rocks

5) Transplant greenhouse plants in May into the garden patch

6) Make sure the plot is weeded and maintained

7) Trade off work from spring volunteers/workers to summer student worker

Summer 2010

1) Maintain garden
2) Schedule tasting events
3) Begin harvesting produce
4) First tasting event
5) Determine who will continue maintenance during early fall
6) Trade off work from summer workers to fall volunteers/workers

Fall 2010
1) Alert student body with follow-up article in Chips newspaper
2) Continue maintenance/harvesting
3) Continue sampling events
4) Clear area after final harvest
5) Evaluate demonstration/project and discuss its value and future possibilities

Contacts:
Fall/Winter 2009:
- Elsa McCargar (student) mccael01@luther.edu
- Nathan Hecht (student) hechna01@luther.edu
- Victoria Blanco (student) blanvi01@luther.edu
- David Cavagnaro (landscape artist) david.cavagnaro@gmail.com
- Perry Halse (grounds maintenance) halseper@luther.edu
- Paul Frana (grounds crew supervisor) franapau@luther.edu
Winter/Spring 2010:
- Victoria Blanco (student) blanvi01@luther.edu
- David Cavagnaro (landscape artist) david.cavagnaro@gmail.com
- Perry Halse (grounds maintenance) halseper@luther.edu
- Paul Frana (grounds crew supervisor) franapau@luther.edu

Summer 2010:
- Elsa McCargar (student) mccael01@luther.edu
- David Cavagnaro (landscape artist) david.cavagnaro@gmail.com
- Perry Halse (grounds maintenance) halseper@luther.edu
- Paul Frana (grounds crew supervisor) franapau@luther.edu

Fall 2010:
- Elsa McCargar (student) mccael01@luther.edu
- Nathan Hecht (student) hechna01@luther.edu
- David Cavagnaro (landscape artist) david.cavagnaro@gmail.com
- Perry Halse (grounds maintenance) halseper@luther.edu
- Paul Frana (grounds crew supervisor) franapau@luther.edu

Possible Volunteers: Kate Freund (freuka01@luther.edu), Adam Voss (vossad01@luther.edu), David Hecht (hechda01@luther.edu), Erin Green (greeer01@luther.edu), Ella Orngard (orngel01@luther.edu)