

Towne's Harvest Garden

& Community Supported Agriculture Program



Annual Report

2009

Executive Summary

Full report available at
www.townesharvest.montana.edu



Locally, Sustainably and Educationally Grown
MSU Friends of Local Foods





This report was written by Alison Harmon and Sam Robbins, with contributions from Kristine Fitzgerald. Original design by Rachael Harmon.

Towne's Harvest Advisors:

Alison Harmon, Department of Health and Human Development

David Baumbauer, Horticulture Farm Manager

Bruce Maxwell, Department of Land Resources and Environmental Sciences

Towne's Harvest Managers:

Sam Robbins, Operations Manager.

Kristine Fitzgerald, Production Manager.

2009 Interns:

Kelsey Carter	Matt Stern	Kristel Slifer
Hanna Gertiser	Tara Gregorich	Tim Holland
Jacquallynn Jones	Maddie Kelly	Antonette Lininger
Tim Reusch	Gordon Sevee	

Special thanks to:

Karin Neff, Mary Stein, Sarah Payton, Jennifer Nerison, Cathy Zabinsky, Claine Jones, Bernard Schaff, Pete Fay, Gallatin Valley Gardeners, and Ian Black.

For more information about Towne's Harvest, please visit: <http://www.townesharvest.montana.edu>

Or contact:

Alison Harmon, PhD RD LN
Assistant Professor of Foods and Nutrition
Department of Health and Human Development
121 PE Complex
Montana State University
Bozeman MT 59717
Phone: 406-994-6338
Fax: 406-994-6314
e-mail: harmon@montana.edu
web : <http://www.montana.edu/wwwhhd/>

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Towne's Harvest Raised Beds in Mid-July

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Towne's Harvest Garden** is a project that was initiated by **MSU Friends of Local Foods** Student Organization. Friends of Local Foods was formed in the fall of 2006 to bring a diverse group of students and faculty together to raise awareness about local foods and to encourage sustainable lifestyles on campus and in the community. Since that first year of production, Towne's Harvest has increasingly become integrated into the curriculum at MSU. Additionally, Towne's Harvest operates as a Community Supported Farm, distributing produce to members, Gallatin Valley Food Bank clients, and Bozeman farmers' market customers. The mission of Towne's Harvest is to be a source of locally, sustainably, and educationally grown food for the campus and members of the surrounding community.

During the most recent season, David Baumbauer, Horticulture Farm Manager, and Alison Harmon of the Department of Health and Human Development supervised two Graduate Assistants— a Production Manager and an Operations Manager. The Production Manager (Kris Fitzgerald) was responsible for overseeing vegetable and crop production and the Operations Manager (Sam Robbins) focused on project oversight, supervision of interns and communication with the CSA and community partners. Student interns were involved in planting, weeding, harvesting, and distribution.

In 2009 the Towne's Harvest budget totaled **\$35,363.26** for manager labor, seeds, fertilizers, signage, mulch, drip tape and other supplies. Income included the sale of CSA shares (\$275-\$450 each), a contribution from the Gallatin Valley Food Bank, fundraising efforts by the MSU Friends of Local Foods, and an endowed graduate scholarship for the operations manager for the academic year. Total income for 2009 (not including farmers' market sales which will be applied to 2010) was **\$39,000.00**, for a positive balance of **\$3,636.74**.

Labor was performed by graduate assistants, student interns, students enrolled in courses, and volunteers. Paid managers contributed a total of **1532 hours** of labor while students interns worked approximately **1852 hours** during the 2009 season.

Towne's Harvest produces a variety of herbs and flowers as well as beans, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, Swiss chard, cucumbers, eggplant, mixed salad greens, Asian greens, kale, kohlrabi, leeks, arugula, melons, onions, parsnips, peas, peppers, potatoes, pumpkins, radishes, spinach, squash, and tomatoes. The total yield for 2009 was approximately **22,000 lbs of produce** which was distributed through a 13-week Community Supported Agriculture Program to 73 individual/family members, staff, and volunteers, and to clients of the Gallatin Valley Food Bank (approximately **8,000 lbs**). Produce was also distributed through farmers' markets in Bozeman and on MSU's campus. For members, the weekly distribution was scheduled on Thursday evenings from 4 pm to 6 pm at the MSU Horticulture Farm.

This year, THG incorporated several new techniques that required adaptation and innovation. A new sub-surface drip irrigation system was established, allowing the project to refrain from utilizing surface water for irrigation. Overall, the irrigation system was successful, notably reducing weed pressure in the late summer and decreasing the challenges associated with excessively muddy fields.

CSA members were given the opportunity to provide feedback by survey twice during the 2009 season, in July and September. Most members responded on the mid-summer survey that they were highly satisfied with the quality, quantity, and variety of produce they were receiving. Members requested more recipes and guidance for using the fresh produce in their weekly share. Notable comments on the end of season survey included: general thanks and appreciation, noticeable increase in quality for this year as compared to the previous year, and several comments stating that even the small share sizes were potentially more than members could consume in a week.

During the 2009 season, the THG operations manager conducted a CSA share 'value assessment' for which each item in the weekly share of produce was carefully weighed and recorded, and its value estimated based on current farmers' market or retail prices for equivalent produce. The price of a small sized share was \$275, but its value was estimated to

be \$334. The large sized share price was \$450, with an estimated valued of \$554. Both share sizes came with THG tote bags and a copy of the 2009 edition of the Montana Food Guide (developed by MSU students in Alison Harmon's HDFN 351: *Nutrition & Society*).

Part of the mission of Towne's Harvest is to serve as an outdoor classroom and research laboratory. In 2009, Towne's Harvest was integrated in some way into nine MSU courses; (PSPP 345: *Organic Market Gardening*, HDFN 221: *Human Nutrition*, HDFN 321: *Nutrition in the Lifecycle*, HDFN 445R: *Culinary Marketing Farm to Table*, HDFN 351: *Nutrition and Society*, LRES 201: *Soil Resource*, LRES Capstone, PSPP 432: *Advanced Landscape Design*, and ARCH 525-05: *Special Design Topic*.), as well as a graduate level Independent Study and 10 or more SFBS and other undergraduate internships.

Towne's Harvest interns and advisors conducted community outreach in the form of presentations and exhibits at a variety of events and conferences from May through October. These included the Bogert weekly farmers' market, the Gallatin Fairgrounds farmers' market, a MSU campus market in September, MSU Catapalooza, and Bioneers. In July, members of the administration and MSU staff were invited to the farm for the annual 'President's Lunch' and a tour of the garden. Farm tours and volunteer opportunities were provided throughout the summer for groups such as Montana Conservation Corps, Montana 4-H Congress, Park County 4-H, and supporters of the Gallatin Valley Food Bank.

Towne's Harvest had a very productive year, generating approximately **\$15,000-\$20,000/acre**. This effort continues to produce positive publicity for the collaborating colleges and the university, and our partnership with the Food Bank continues to be an excellent opportunity for MSU to serve the community. One major improvement this year was the addition of a cold storage unit which improved the quality of produce and allowed for more flexible harvesting schedules.

The proposed plan of operation for the 2010 season includes hiring a full-time (.75 FTE) year round production manager who will likely have 20 or more SFBS students to teach and supervise. We will modestly increase the number of CSA shares for sale to approximately 50 "full share equivalents", once again offered in a small and large sizes. We will continue to work with the Food Bank to provide the produce most desired by their clients. We have budgeted a total of **\$54,500.00** for labor expenses, benefits, and supplies for 2009.

Recommended improvements include creating a year round organizational structure for preserving the institutional memory of the project, continuing to develop more effective data collection systems; improving production efficiency; extending our growing season in a variety of ways; continuing to improve farm infrastructure and conducting more community outreach events at the farm.

The student organization MSU Friends of Local Foods has been growing due to the increasing number of courses that integrate Towne's Harvest and sustainable food content, as well as the increasing number of students enrolled in the new Sustainable Food and Bioenergy Systems Degree Program. The annual Local Food Fair, co-sponsored by MSU Friends of Local Foods and the University Foodservice Montana Made Program, is an excellent opportunity for outreach. Attendees at the fair have grown from 200 in 2007 to about 600 in 2009. The 2010 fair is expected to be the biggest yet, with USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan to provide a keynote address as part of the SFBS Seminar Series.



PUBLICITY & PROJECT DISSEMINATION

Radio Programs:

- Real Time w/ George Cole. Yellowstone Public Radio. *The Politics of Food with Alison Harmon & Jamie Jelenchick*. Aired: Monday, May 25, 2009, 6:30pm. Archived at <http://www.ypradio.org/programs/local/realtime.html>
- Health Matters w/ Rachel Rockefeller. *Local Food & Health with Alison Harmon*. Yellowstone Public Radio. Aired: Wednesday April 29, 2009, 7pm. Archived at http://www.ypradio.org/programs/local/health_matters.html.

Television:

- Montana Ag Live. Montana PBS. *The Local Food Economy with Alison Harmon* (No. 3103). Aired April 5, 2009, 7pm. <http://www.montanapbs.org/MontanaAgLive/episode3103/>

Newspaper & Newsletters:

- Lauren Russel. *New food major sprouts campus produce stand*. Bozeman Daily Chronicle. Wednesday, September 9, 2009.
- Anne Pettinger, MSU News Service. *Veggies grown at MSU, sold at MSU*. September 8, 2009
- Mary Stein. *Sustainable Food and Bioenergy Systems Program at MSU Off and Running!* AERO Sun Times, The Newsletter of the Alternative Energy Resources Organization. Vol. 36 No. 2. July 2009

Internet:

- Jelenchick, J. (Producer/Film Artist-Partnership Productions) & Harmon, A.H. (Advisor) (2009). *Planting Seeds: Towne's Harvest Garden at MSU*. [DVD/Video] Available at <http://townesharvest.montana.edu/video.htm>.
- Elizabeth Redden. *Green Revolution*. Inside Higher Ed. April 23, 2009. <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/04/23/agriculture>.
- Blythe Copeland. *10 of the Best College Environmental Programs in the U.S.* Tree Hugger. <http://www.treehugger.com/files/2009/08/10-of-the-best-college-environmental-programs-in-the-us.php>. August 18, 2009
- Sarah Kliff/ Kaplan College Guide. *Green Degrees in Bloom*. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/210906>. August 12, 2009.

Professional Presentations:

- Harmon, A.H. (2009). *Sustainable Food & Bioenergy Systems: Interdisciplinary Education at Montana State University*. Oral presentation for the Agriculture Food and Human Values Society and Association for the Study of Food and Society Joint Annual Meetings, State College, PA. May 30, 2009.
- Harmon, A.H. (2009). Speaker. *Are You Doing Food Justice? Towne's Harvest Garden at MSU*. Fall 2009 Aspen Pointe Speakers Series. Bozeman MT. September 17, 2009.
- Harmon, A.H. Speaker. *Sustainable Food Initiatives at MSU*. MSU Food and Nutrition Extension Update, Bozeman MT. May 5, 2009.

Publications:

- Wharton, C., & Harmon A.H. (2009) University engagement through local food enterprise: Community supported agriculture on campus. *Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition* 4(2), 112-128.
- Harmon A.H. (ed.) (2008 & 2009). *The Montana Food Guide... A Companion Resource for Seekers of Locally, Sustainably & Educationally Grown Foods*. Developed as a service learning project by the students of MSU's HDFN 351: *Nutrition and Society*, in collaboration with MSU Friends of Local Foods. Montana State University, Bozeman MT. 120 pages.
- MSU Points of Excellence 2009. *In 2009 MSU added a Sustainable Food and Bioenergy Systems degree program, which brings together coursework in plant sciences, agriculture, food and nutrition, and ecology*. P.4

EXTERNAL FUNDING FOR TOWNE'S HARVEST GARDEN

Future Grants:

2010. A proposal was submitted to the Bozeman Community Food Coop for 4% Friday in 2008. This grant was awarded and will be available for use after our designated 4% day in March 2010. The funds will be used to offer a subsidized share price for 5 or more CSA members during the 2010 season. *(Grant submitted by Sam Robbins, 2008-2010 THG Operations Manager)*

Current Grants:

2008-2010: The USDA Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (WSARE) has funded the related *Sustainable Food & Bioenergy Systems Internships Development Project*. This \$29,983 grant is assisting in the development of the field experience component of a new interdisciplinary SFBS degree program. Towne's Harvest is the site for 200 level internships, and a potential field experience for 400 level interns in the SFBS curriculum. *PI: Bill Dyer; Co-PI: Alison Harmon.*

2008-2011: A USDA CSREES Higher Education Challenge Grant was funded at the level of \$490,000. *Development, Integration and Assessment of Food and Agriculture Systems Education* is a joint curriculum development and evaluation project with Washington State University and the University of Idaho. This grant is helping MSU and the other universities develop and evaluate their curricula as well as improve field experiences at campus farms such as Towne's Harvest. *PI: Alison Harmon; Co-PI's: Bill Dyer, Bruce Maxwell, Cathy Perillo (WSU) and Jodi Johnson-Maynard (U. Idaho).*

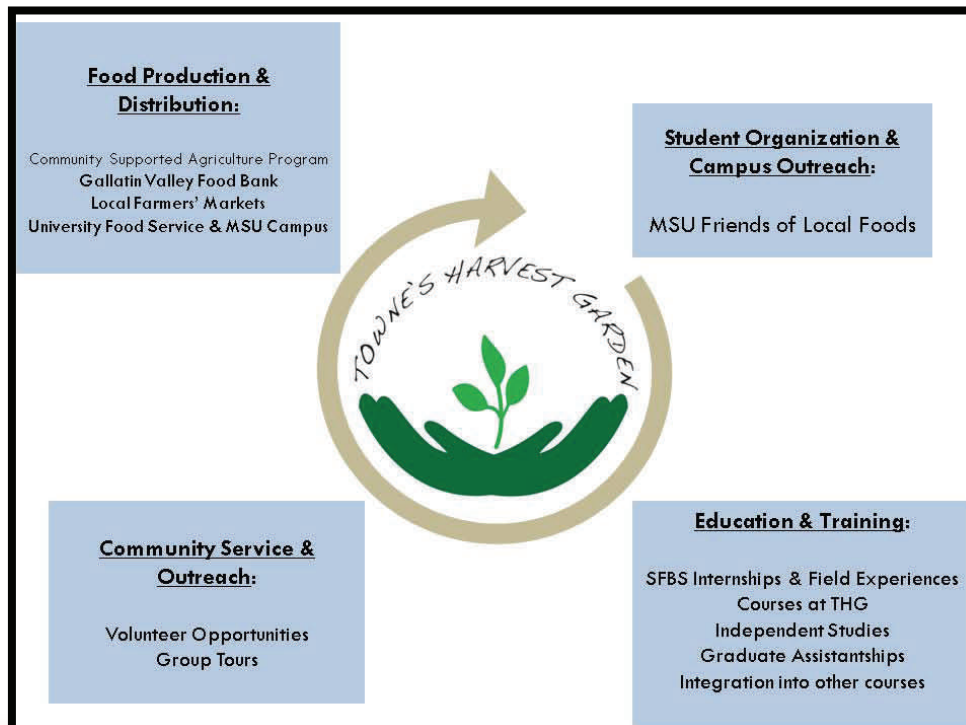
Past Grants:

2008. MSU Friends of Local Foods received a \$1000 grant from the Bozeman United Methodist Church to support offering free CSA shares to 3 families who are also clients of the Gallatin Valley Food Bank *(proposal submitted by Alison Harmon and David Baumbauer).*

2008. A MT Dept of Agriculture "Growth through Agriculture" grant titled *MSU's Towne's Harvest Garden: Infrastructure, Organization, and Marketing Development* supported the installation of a new well to be used with drip irrigation, and the creation of a documentary about Towne's Harvest by MSU film graduate student Jaime Jelenchick, available at <http://townesharvest.montana.edu/video.htm>.

2007. MSU Friends of Local Foods received a \$1000 grant from the Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity 5-A Day Program which was used to pay for a deer fence around the Towne's Harvest Garden's North Plot. *Grant submitted by Rachel Leisso (FLF 2007 Treasurer).*

2007. MSU Friends of Local Foods also received a 4% Friday grant from the Bozeman Community Coop in the amount of \$1579.91 which was used as seed money for the 2008 season. *Grant submitted by Kaly Hess (2007 FLF President; 2008 Towne's Harvest Co-Chair).*





Kris Fitzgerald, THG Production Manager, 2009



David Baumbauer manages the MSU Horticulture Farm.

Forty attended the 2009 President's Lunch.

Mary Stein, SFBS coordinator, was the academic supervisor for THG interns.



Sam Robbins, THG Operations Manager, 2009

In 2009, Alison Harmon offered a new course at Towne's Harvest called *Culinary Marketing Farm to Table*.

