

Towne's Harvest Garden

& Community Supported Agriculture Program



Annual Report

2010



Locally, Sustainably and Educationally Grown
MSU Friends of Local Foods



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2010 THG Campus Farm Stand on 7th avenue.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Towne's Harvest Garden (THG)** 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, and particularly the Sustainable Food & Bioenergy Systems Bachelor's Degree program. Additionally, Towne's Harvest operates as a Community Supported Farm, distributing produce to members, Gallatin Valley Food Bank clients, Bogert farmers' market customers, and the MSU farm stand. 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 2010 season, Alison Harmon of the Department of Health and Human Development supervised two THG managers— a Production Manager and an Operations Manager. The Production Manager (Chaz Holt), hired in 2010 as a full-time classified employee of MSU, was responsible for planning and overseeing all production activities. The Operations Manager (Cotton Sarjahani) focused on accounting, supervision of students and communication with the CSA and community partners. THG Practicum Students were involved in planting, weeding, harvesting, and distribution.

In 2010 the Towne's Harvest budget totaled **\$54,078.00** for manager salaries and stipends, 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, an endowed graduate scholarship for the operations manager for the academic year, a grant from the Bozeman Community Food Co-op, and some support from two USDA grants. Total income for 2010 (including \$7,500.00 from 2009 farmers' market sales) was **\$54,300.00**, for a positive balance of **\$222.00**.

Labor was performed by graduate assistants, student interns, students enrolled in courses, and volunteers. Paid managers contributed a total of **1760 hours** of labor while students and interns worked approximately **2276 hours** during the 2010 season. Volunteers contributed an additional **60 hours**.

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 2010 was approximately **23,497 lbs of produce** which was distributed through a 13-week Community Supported Agriculture Program to 84 individual/family members, staff, and volunteers, and to clients of the Gallatin Valley Food Bank (approximately **4,800 lbs**). Produce was also distributed through farmers' markets in Bozeman and on MSU's campus on Friday afternoons. For members, the weekly distribution was scheduled on Thursday evenings from 4 pm to 6 pm at the MSU Horticulture Farm.

CSA members were given the opportunity to provide feedback by survey twice during the 2010 season, in July and September. Most members responded on the mid-summer survey that they were satisfied with the quality, quantity, and variety of produce they were receiving. Members continue to request more recipes and guidance for using the fresh produce in their weekly share. "Practical Produce" guides, developed by students in the Culinary Marketing Farm to Table class are posted on the Towne's Harvest web site in response to these requests. Several members expressed dissatisfaction at the end of the season with the size of their 2010 CSA share; this concern will be addressed in 2011.

During the 2010 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 \$284. The large sized share price was \$450, with an estimated valued of \$488. Both share sizes came with THG tote bags. Part of the mission of Towne's Harvest is to serve as an outdoor classroom and research laboratory. In 2010, Towne's Harvest was significantly integrated into 3 MSU courses; (PSPP 345: *Organic Market Gardening*, HDFN 246:

Towne's Harvest Practicum, & HDFN 445R: Culinary Marketing Farm to Table), and in small ways in many additional courses. These key courses generate 150-180 student credit hours per summer.

Towne's Harvest practicum students, interns, managers, and advisors conducted community outreach in the form of presentations and exhibits at a variety of events and conferences from March through October. These included the MSU Health Fair, Bogert weekly farmers' market, an MSU farm stand in July- September, and MSU Catapalooza. 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 the Gallatin Valley Botanical Garden staff, the Sustainability Committee of Park City, Utah, and High School Counselors from all over the US. A "President's Work Day" was held on October 1st, during which President Cruzado picked pumpkins and carrots with students, staff, and faculty of the SFBS program.



President's Work Day at Towne's Harvest, October 1, 2010

Towne's Harvest once again 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. The proposed plan of operation for the 2011 season includes a similar organizational structure, with a full time production manager, and a part-time operations manager. A significant percentage of manager time will be spent supervising an increasing number of students completing coursework and internships at THG. We will modestly increase the number of CSA shares for sale to approximately 65 large sized shares, and will experiment with limited selection to one size to eliminate member confusion regarding the share sizes. We will continue to work with the Food Bank to provide the produce most desired by their clients, and continue to decrease the contribution amount. We have budgeted a total of **\$69,000.00** for labor expenses, benefits, and supplies for 2011. The THG project is in need of fiscal support from the University to maintain the level of services and coursework offerings, as expenses have increased by approximately \$15,000 while production revenue is not likely to increase dramatically.

Improved facilities for teaching, outreach, research, and food distribution are sorely needed at the MSU Horticulture Farm. The SFBS degree program, for which Towne's Harvest serves as a cornerstone field experience, has grown dramatically since it was first offered as a major in January 2009. We expect that as the number of majors grows (100 are expected by the end of the 4th year), between 20 and 30 students will need to complete a significant field experience at Towne's Harvest each summer.

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2010 Towne's Harvest Practicum students