

## Garden and Bee Report October 2024

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### **\*Overview:\***

This season, the garden team made substantial progress toward our goals of creating a fun and educational environment while promoting sustainability and community involvement. Despite some setbacks, we have made key advancements in crop production, sustainable practices, and community engagement.

### **\*\*Goals Met and In Progress:\*\***

- **\*\*Garden as a Fun and Educational Space:\*\*** We received overwhelmingly positive feedback from campers, parents, and staff (including Camp Director) about our renewed efforts to make the garden a lively and educational space. The garden has become a sanctuary, especially for children who may feel alienated by other work projects. Activities beyond standard gardening, such as sign and shed painting and tree planting, have expanded our engagement with kids during work project time.
- **\*\*Crop Production:\*\*** Our summer camp crops were as successful as pests allow and included chard, various gourds, kale, peppers, basil, scarlet beans, wildflowers, fennel, herbs, tomatoes, and saplings for the tree nursery. These were grown to serve as hands-on educational experiences for the children.
- **\*\*Soil Enrichment and Planting:\*\*** We improved soil health by multiple tillings of the field with manure and establishing hügelkultur mounds. The orchard saw the replanting of comfrey, which is now helping with sustainable self-fertilization. Comfrey also plays a role in reducing our chicken feed costs during events, and it has become a valuable commodity for local work-trade programs. It stood out as our most versatile, practical, and useful crop at CPC (until the okra project takes hold).
- **\*\*Animal Integration:\*\*** We successfully integrated pet chickens into the workforce by transitioning them back to scavenging animals, with these behaviors being passed on to their chicks. This shift reduces the need for external feed. Additionally, chicken and goat manure has doubled our compost production, contributing to the garden's long-term sustainability.
- **\*\*Sustainable Crop Development:\*\*** We had a positive trial run with sustainable okra plots. By matching this crop to our land and resources, we are working toward the goal of contributing to a local food co-op and directly reducing our own food expenses. This initiative was supported by seed obtained through our Executive Director.
- **\*\*Community Tree Program:\*\*** We planted local tree varieties donated by Till Utopia to fill gaps in the orchard and along trail edges. These include persimmon, white oak, plum, aronia, and chokecherry. These trees were also given away as gifts to summer camp families, members

who lost trees during the tornado, and local Indigenous communities as a gesture of gratitude for recognizing our internal work. This outreach aligns with our broader commitment to longevity, growth, and community healing. These trees were originally obtained by the land use committee.

- **Garden Infrastructure and Maintenance:**

- Unused bins have been repurposed and stocked as vermiculture bins.
- We repaired the push mower, essential for garden path upkeep.
- All remaining clover was seeded, but we will need additional seeding next year to combat erosion on the side porch and outdoor dining areas.
- A significant victory was the application of mulch around the Field House, reducing the amount of dirt tracked into the building.

**Challenges and Setbacks:**

- **Apple Harvest:** While pruning of the apple trees was successful, our apple harvest was completely lost due to spongy moth damage. To mitigate this in the future, I recommend halting pruning next season to avoid additional stress on the trees.

- **Unfinished Projects:** Several initiatives remain incomplete:

- The garden club failed to launch due to a lack of consistent participation.
- We were unable to complete the pond or water feature, a project that is still in planning.
- The planned relocation of the blueberry bushes was not executed, and we will need to address this in the coming season.
- Our garden fence project remains stalled, pending tractor repair. Completing the fence is the top priority for next season, as it will help manage pests and allow us to incorporate dogs or chickens more effectively into crop protection.

**Moral and Operational Concerns:**

The garden has faced scrutiny this season, particularly regarding its overlap with landscaping duties. This has led to a misconception that the garden should serve as a broader maintenance service, detracting from tasks that align with our core mission of sustainable agriculture and education. Moving forward, it is essential that the garden's role be clearly distinguished from landscaping, ensuring that our efforts remain focused on growing food, fostering sustainability, and educating the community.

**Conclusion:**

This season, the garden has made significant strides in sustainability, community engagement, and crop production. However, there are areas requiring immediate attention, particularly the completion of the garden fence and a clearer delineation of the garden's responsibilities. I look forward to continuing our efforts to develop the garden as a thriving educational and sustainable space.

**Bee Report:**

Mariah set up their three hives in the past apiary space. The bees are doing well and establishing their hives this year. During Apple Cider Weekend, they will lead a workshop to winterize the bees.