

ISU Student Organic Farm* – 2008 Field Season

Theo Gunther, co-chair

The ISU Student Organic Farm had a good learning year. This is the third year of the farm at its current location and much is happening. Our perennials are now fully established and include red raspberries, strawberries, asparagus, and rhubarb. The 10 surviving fruit trees in their third year of establishment should now begin bearing. The wet spring caused a slow start but we were able to plant a variety of vegetables in our 24, 4 ft × 150 ft vegetable beds. Beds contained beans, peas, tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants, onions, various cucurbits, and various brassicas.

New additions to the farm included everbearing strawberries and a compost pile. Everbearing strawberries work well for us because they bear fruit most heavily when students return in the fall. The compost pile helped keep the space tidy and produced needed compost. We also compost clippings collected after mowing using a lawn sweep. This should help keep weeds suppressed by collecting seeds and composting them. These additions will be beneficial in the future because the strawberries will be expanded using the new crowns grown from the established beds.

Weed control was provided using the remainder of oat straw acquired from the agronomy research farm the previous year. This year we collected grass clippings from the area surrounding the student farm at the Horticulture Station. We are finding new and better ways to use the resources available and use otherwise wasted resources. We also were fortunate to have approximately a ton of partially composted hog manure in straw bedding given to us from the flax research project in the agronomy department. This manure was added to vegetable beds, perennials, and strawberries.

We had a bumper crop of both potatoes and beans. Tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and cucumbers were also abundant throughout the season. Fresh beans were marketed through Joe Lynch of Onion Creek Farm and potatoes were sold to individuals on campus. Tomatoes and onions were used for salsa and spaghetti sauce in conjunction with the Mustard Seed Community Farm at their canning event in August. Other crops were given to members and some were donated to charitable organizations in the Ames area. We have many outlets for the goods we produce. We plan to produce as much as we can so that we can use it to interact with others in the community in the coming season.

We plan to grow a variety of annual vegetables and to expand perennial fruits. We also are working to develop a recordkeeping system that better documents the activities each year. Plots for people to grow their own gardens will be available again and we will try to address some of the problems such as weed control and abandoned plots. The group would like to continue growing both in membership and production of produce. Wide ranges of interests are represented within the group and many opportunities are available to pursue. We look forward to 2009 as an opportunity to continue expanding into a multifunctional learning farm with many delicious rewards.

2008 Officers

Theo Gunther, Co-Chair

Rachel Cox, Co-Chair

Arion Thiboumery, Treasurer

Sue Deblieck, Secretary

*Note: The ISU Student Organic Farm follows organic practices but is not certified organic. It uses non-certified sources of straw, mulch, seed, and plant starts. It does not have a clean out protocol for shared equipment.