

Class looks to conserve resources

WSU organic farm provides a testing ground for new methods in resource management.

By Sarah Linker
Evergreen staff

A new class at WSU could help change farming practices around the Palouse, including practices at the university's organic farm.

Emily Rude, a senior organic agriculture major, said students suggested many funky ideas in the class, called the "Integrated Design Experience" which seeks to revamp the organic farm and its practices.

"One of our goals is to be self-sustaining in terms of energy," she said. "We want to avoid drawing water from the Palouse aquifer, which is going to be a feat, but we're still trying to do it. Everything is going to be totally redone."

Michael Wolcott, the director of the WSU Institute for Sustainable Design, said the course incorporates a host of students with different disciplines including architecture, construction management, civil, electric and environmental engineering and organic agriculture.

The class, which is in the brainstorming phase of this project, is examining the roots of the issues behind resource problems, Wolcott said.

"We're in early stage of this right now," he said. "We decided to call the project smartFARM, because we are looking at taking computer technologies to help regulate resource loads from the farm itself."

Rude said this course is not the only one she has taken involving the WSU Organic Farm.

As part of the organic agriculture major, she also participated in the Organic Farm Practicum, which allows students to gain firsthand experience with organic farming.

"The best part of the course was simply getting a sense of real world organic practices," she said. "You learn what the things in the textbook actually mean in the field in both senses of that word."

Tara Sistrunk, a senior organic agriculture major, also took the



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Senior organic agriculture major Misha Manuchehri loads up a truck with produce on Glenn Terrell Mall.

practicum and spent about 240 hours on the Organic Farm.

She said the course provided her with greenhouse experience and taught her how to complete organic certification paperwork.

The six-credit course also taught basic farm management, Sistrunk said.

"You could be doing anything from pulling weeds to planting things to prepping the soil to laying out compost," she said.

Sistrunk said her favorite part of the class was starting seeds and watching them grow during the year.

"It's always a real exciting when spring is coming because all the little plants are so cute," she said.

Sistrunk mentioned that most of the crops on the farm are grown for Community Supported Agriculture.

Through this program, community members can purchase a full or half-share box at the beginning of the season, which will be filled each week from May to October

with whatever crops are available depending on the time of year, she said.

"We got to learn how to manage the CSA, which is a way to make money if you're running a farm," Sistrunk said. "It's a really good experience for someone like me

who wants to have a small farm."

Bradley Jaekel, the manager of the farm, said the farm also sponsors different events throughout year such as tours for various groups and organizations.

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The WSU Organic Farm, located on Airport road, is open to the public on Friday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

AID | WSU alumnus will distribute donations

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annual Exhibition event will go toward the drive as well, Lemke said.

Exhibition is an event that showcases the islands through art, music, acting and dance. At the end, there is a final Samoan dance where it is traditional to throw money at the dancer. All this money will go toward the donation drive, she said.

“Our club is a very diverse

club, and this event has created a lot of cohesion within the group,” Kobashigawa said. “We strive for multicultural awareness.”

All donations will be sent to a WSU alumnus currently in the Pacific Islands. She will distribute the donations among local churches and other organizations. This will make sure people who are not receiving aid from the Red Cross will receive a little help, Kobashigawa said.

Donations will be accepted by any PIC member and at the Asian-American Pacific Islander Center in the CUB. A donation box will be located in Southside Dining Center, and the club hopes to have boxes in the other two dining centers as well, Lemke said.

“It made it more personal, having family in Samoa,” Lemke said. “I didn’t know them real well, but they are still your blood.”

FARM | Tours are available

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“We run hundreds of people through the farm every year,” he said. “We do tours from preschoolers on up to university students.”

Jaeckel also said the farm traditionally hosts a Harvest Festival each October. However, this year it has been canceled.

“This past weekend we had cold weather that froze all the

pumpkins and the remainder of the apples at the orchard, so we had to cancel that harvest festival that was scheduled for Saturday,” he said.

Jaeckel still encourages community members to stop by the farm, despite the cancellation.

“We welcome anybody to come on up if they are interested in taking the class or just visiting,” he said.