

# **Campus Sustainability Fund Proposal: Permaculture Perennial Guild Garden**

## **1. Executive Summary (Please describe the overall purpose/goals of your project)**

The Permaculture Perennial Guild Garden is a display and study of permaculture perennial plant guilds in an event hosting site. It provides visual demonstration, experiential learning, and a place for community to gather in sharing, learning and celebration. With the addition of the Greenhouse Café the site will provide a social hub for students, visitors, University of Washington Botanic Garden (UWBG) patrons and parents of children in educational programs. Below are the main points of this proposal:

**Permaculture** – Permaculture is driven by a set of principles and practices to design sustainable human settlements (Hemenway, pg5). Two Australians, Bill Mollison and David Holmgren coined the term, in the early 1970's. The rationale being that if indigenous peoples had been living harmoniously in their environment for thousands of years, surely they must have figured something out about sustainability. Thus modeling human settlements and agriculture after natural systems is the most harmonious, sustainable, replenishing method of design.

**Successional Plant Guilds** – In nature, ecosystems thrive in various successional stages. After a disturbance, pioneer species (grasses, ferns, and weedy types) take advantage of the new vacancy, colonize the disturbed area, and in so doing, serve to stabilize and build soil structure. This first successional stage is followed by shrub types that are then followed by tree types that with time develop into a mature canopy. The farther along an ecosystem is in its succession, the greater its biodiversity and resilience becomes. Conventional gardening mimics immature landscapes. It requires a lot of work to keep other plants out, remove dead plants, mow, fertilize, etc. In natural landscapes these cycles are all part of the process that allows for self-regeneration. By intentionally

selecting species to function in this way, one can increase abundance and vitality and decreases unnecessary maintenance.

**Event Site and Café** – In addition to providing a functional display and educational garden, the Permaculture Perennial Guild Garden will serve as a venue for both formal and informal gatherings with revenue generating potential. True sustainability, after all, must include financial support.

**Renewable Resources** – Also included in this plan are several aspects of resource conservation. By installing solar panels on the south-facing roof of the existing greenhouse structure and establishing a rainwater catchment system, we will greatly increase our efficiency in the use of these resources, save money on costly utilities, and provide a home-scale model of sustainability.

The UWBG seeks \$80,000 to support the creation of the Permaculture Perennial Guild Garden and additional upgrades to the site just south of the Washington Park Arboretum's (WPA) Graham Visitors Center (GVC), set amidst existing greenhouses, and locally referred to as the "Back 40". These upgrades will allow us to meet our goal of fostering stronger relationships with the UW community and beyond by engaging UW students and Seattle residents alike with a demonstration of perennial edible landscaping in a conveniently located and self-contained space.

The garden will serve in academic curricula as an outdoor classroom for urban homesteading, food forestry, and sustainable food production. It will provide ample opportunity for future capstone projects, internships and volunteer positions.

A proposed café and newly created rental space will add revenue to fund future projects and help make the garden financially sustainable.

Finally, the Permaculture Perennial Guild Garden will make an impressive permanent addition to the growing list of sustainability projects at the University of Washington and aid in its mission to be a leader in the burgeoning green economy.

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