

Sustainability

[About](#)[Campus Initiatives](#)[Education & Research](#)[Take Action](#)[News & Events](#)

Sustainability Abroad #2: Finca la Flor



February 24, 2020 | Kaija Schlangen

From barren pasture to a reforested, sustainable community, Finca la Flor has empowered the community and environment around it for decades.

Finca Agroecológica la Flor has been operating and promoting sustainable practices for over 20 years. Located in the highlands of the Central Valley, the farm was created by Brigitte (Bri), and her partner, who was a Costa Rican teacher.

The pair created the farm with the goal of creating a sustainable community that educated people about

“We are not perfect.
We don’t have to be.
It’s more important to

sustainable agriculture. The project started by teaching school groups and has eventually spread to offer



be conscious of trying to help, and to be conscious of what you eat, use and bring to the Earth.” -Bri

opportunities for volunteers to work and live on the farm. Today, Finca la Flor has 10 hectares of regenerated forest, organic and medicinal gardens, a variety of farm animals and health and wellness programs like meditation and yoga.

Sustainable Highlights from la Finca

Finca la Flor began as pasture before it was reforested by a local, Don Umberto. The farm employs people in the community to care for the animals, gardens, cook and upkeep the land. All of the food served at la Finca is vegetarian, with most grown from the gardens. One of our meals for lunch was a salad made with vegetables we picked from the garden, goat milk from the goats, bread and, of course, rice and beans. All of the extra food and animal waste goes into their worm-based compost, which eventually nourishes the gardens.

Finca la Flor has become a home for more than just humans. Four dogs have found a home at the farm after living on the streets. Goats are also kept, as well as chickens and horses. One of the workers, Marine, has been training the horses for [Equine-Assisted Therapy \(https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/equine-assisted-therapy\)](https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/types/equine-assisted-therapy).

With all of these animals, food demand runs high. One of the workers created a sustainable method of cutting crops to feed the horses and goats. Most cutters require electricity, but all this machine needs is human power.

While one person pedals the bike to rotate the cutter, another person pushes the dried crop into the machine to get cut into smaller pieces. The entire process lasts about thirty minutes and is done twice a day to feed the animals.

A new addition to the farm is a medicinal garden. Herbs grow along a spiral-shaped path that will eventually create natural remedies.

Finca la Flor has found a creative solution to deal with grey water (wastewater produced from the buildings, excluding sewage). The farm plants banana plants next to grey water deposits from the buildings. Banana roots require a lot of water and use up the grey water, therefore preventing it from getting into other water sources. The farm gets to swap out their grey water deposits with bananas.



One big problem that faces a lot of Costa Rican farms is the use of pesticides and herbicides to protect animals and crops from diseases. There is no government support for organic agriculture in Costa Rica and chemicals are easier for farmers to obtain and use. A lot of farms in the Central Valley in Costa Rica are located on the sides of mountains. When it rains, the chemicals get carried down the mountainsides and contaminate water sources like lakes and rivers. Gustavo, a worker on the farm and a former chemist, created an organic and sustainable alternative to protect the plants and animals at Finca la Flor without damaging the environment.

Community Empowerment and Wellness

Most of the volunteers at Finca La Flor come already passionate about sustainability and Bri hopes that they “move what they already have into a firm direction” after their time at the farm. Sustainability requires action, regardless of how small or big. Although the volunteers rarely stay at the farm, they give Bri hope that the generations coming up will continue to fight for our planet. Whether that’s in Costa Rica, the United States or another mark on the globe, everyone can make a difference, according to Bri. “All these little seeds grow somewhere,” she says with a smile.

Cover photo by Helen Temple



Tags

[Sustainability](#)

Contact us

sustain@d.umn.edu

(218) 726-8198

TTY/TDD:

(800) 627-3529

1208 Kirby Drive
Kirby Plaza 245
Duluth, MN 55812



(<https://www.facebook.com/UMD.Sustainability>) (https://twitter.com/UMD_Sustainability) (<https://www.instagram.com/umdsustainability>)

RELATED LINKS

[Finca la Flor \(https://www.fincalaflor.org\)](https://www.fincalaflor.org)

© Regents of the University of Minnesota. All rights reserved.

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.