

News Release

Pedersen Garden is Growing

By Itoltefs on Monday, August 11, 2014



On May 21, 2014, the Allen and Freda Pedersen Garden was officially dedicated on the north edge of the University of Minnesota Crookston on City of Crookston property next to the Valley Tech Park building. This is a cooperative project between the University and community with a host of collaborators; UMC's Office of Student Affairs, Office of Academic Affairs, Sodexo Dining Services, Center for Sustainability, and Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. U of M Extension provided guidance though Terry Nennich - Fruit and Vegetable Specialist, and Todd Cymbaluk, a local gardener and agriculturalist provided technical expertise. The Northwest Research and Outreach Center provided equipment loans and suggestions. The U of MN's Institute on the Environment provided a \$ 2,500 Mini-grant which helped with planning through guest speakers and networking.

Actually, a campus garden has been under discussion for the past 2 years but the mini-grant and a generous donation from Allen Pedersen, a long-time Crookston resident and gardening enthusiast helped to move things along in the spring of 2014. Pedersen's donation funded a named Horticulture scholarship along with partial funding of a summer intern to assist with planting and maintenance of the garden. Peter Phaiah, Vice-Chancellor of Student Affairs, and Dan Svedarsky, Director of the Center for Sustainability have been coordinating efforts this summer along with numerous student helpers.

Allen Pedersen, now a resident of the Villa Apartments in Crookston, turned 98 on May 22 but manages to make it out to the Garden 3-4 times a week to check on progress. "I'm so pleased that my late wife Freda and I were honored with this naming of the campus garden" notes Allen, "and I'm amazed with the success this first year." Due to the late spring and considering the site was in grass sod, numerous trips were made over the 3/4-acre site with a disc, roto-tiller, and a drag to break up the hard, but fertile clay soil. Allen has sampled some of the cucumbers and claims the quality is excellent.

Allen, a former high school football coach in North Dakota, is looking forward to the Golden



Eagle football players reporting on campus and chowing down on the bountiful harvest. "The way things are looking, we have a great melon and squash crop in the making," says Pedersen, "and they are already harvesting cabbage, tomatoes, onions, pea pods, and cucumbers." Pedersen recently helped support the purchase of materials to construct "raised beds," which are 20-foot boxes where specialized soils can be mixed to grow herbs, lettuce, and carrots. These will be made from sturdy, Burr Oak planks cut at a sawmill in northeast North Dakota.

Todd Cymbaluk assisted with soil testing and the installation of plastic mulch which helps the soil warm up, keeps down weeds, conserves water, and provides a cleaner product due to reducing soil splatter. Drip tape is laid down in the center of the strips of plastic and when transplants are installed; they are placed right next to the water lines where water can do the most good.

"I'm indeed grateful for all of the financial, material, equipment, and expertise support which has been provided to help get the garden out of the ground this year," notes Dan Svedarsky. "All of us have learned a lot and have been pleasantly surprised with the results so far. The returning students will be very pleased and this is what it's all about anyway."

For more information contact: Dan Svedarsky, Center for Sustainability, 218-281-8129 or dsvedars@crk.umn.edu.

In photo, top, left: First cucumber harvest of the garden. From left; Allen Pedersen; Craig Hoiseth, Executive Director of the Crookston Housing and Economic Development Authority (CHEDA), and Peter Phaiah, UMC Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs.

In photo, bottom, right: Recent photo of the Pederson Garden.

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