

Gadfly learns about the Monocacy Farm Project

The Bethlehem Gadfly community gardens May 29, 2020

🌿 *Latest in a series of posts on community gardens* 🌿



So, following an interest kicked off by Mary Toulouse, Gadfly has been exploring community gardening.

Sometimes, though, you just wait and information comes to you.

The May 28 **Fig Weekly** called his attention to the Monocacy Farm Project, 395 Bridle Path Road.

In 2012, The School Sisters St. Francis sold a portion of their property in Hanover Township along the Monocacy Creek. True to their Franciscan tradition, the Sisters sought a sustainable use for their remaining farmland and committed to feeding the hungry, caring for the earth, and growing healthy community. Nourished by the support of local businesses, individuals, foundations, interfaith coalitions, and volunteers, the seed planted just 7 years ago has continued to grow. Today, the Monocacy Farm Project includes: community garden plots, production fields, a young apple orchard, a propagation greenhouse with rainwater collection, and solar power systems.

The Project's Grow Healthy Community Initiative donates weekly supplies of organically-grown produce to area food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters throughout the growing season. Educational workshops for children and adults are presented throughout the year on gardening, ecology, health and sustainability. In 2019, the farm initiated a "Pick-Your-Own" program for those wishing to harvest fresh fruits and vegetables. All donations received through the Community Gardens and Pick-Your-Own support the Grow Healthy Community Initiative.

Monocacy Farm Project

Mission

The Monocacy Farm Project seeks to use land and resources at Monocacy Manor in the Franciscan tradition to model stewardship and care of the earth, foster community involvement, provide educational opportunities, and serve the needs of the poor.

Project Goals

The primary goals of the Monocacy Farm Project are to:

1. Provide area residents and low-income families access to affordable organic produce.
2. Supply local shelters, food pantries and soup kitchens with donor-sponsored organic produce during the spring and summer growing seasons.
3. Augment food security and facilitate self-sufficiency among low-income families through the promotion of home gardening programs.
4. Provide educational programs to youth and adults on holistic health, nutrition and wellness in partnership with medical professionals, nutritionists, clinical herbalists and naturopaths.
5. Provide annual workshops on sustainability, organic gardening, natural agriculture and permaculture.
6. Provide interns and volunteers hands-on experience in organic gardening, production farming, and permaculture design.

Community Garden Program

Monocacy Farms makes community garden plots available to area residents wishing to plant and maintain their own vegetable gardens. Farm staff compost and tractor-till the plots each spring. Mulch and well-water hydrants are provided free of charge by Monocacy Farms. Free instruction in organic and natural agriculture gardening methods is available to all those participating in the Community Garden Program. A donation of \$100 per season is requested for a standard 10 ft x 25 ft. garden plot, and \$175 for a 20ft x 25ft. plot. Proceeds are used to cover operating expenses and support the farm's weekly donation of vegetables to area soup kitchens, food pantries and homeless shelters.

Addendum: the beat goes on. Gadfly has also learned about the 4-H Lynfield Community Garden Club conceived by Penn State Extension, Northampton County 4-H, and Lehigh Valley Master Gardeners through the Southside Vision program. The club is currently focused on teaching youth about horticulture and basic backyard gardening.