Students for Sustainable Living and Urban Gardening: Creating an Alternative Food System on the NAU Campus

By Ian Dixon-McDonald
And Nate O’Meara
What is SSLUG?

A collective of 30 active members of NAU students and staff working on two current projects:
1. SSLUG Campus Community Garden
2. NAU Composting Program

Goals:
1. Create a hands on demonstration site at NAU.
2. Bring the classroom outdoors via a living learning environment.
3. Educate the community about unsustainable industrial agriculture.
4. Provide a model of a localized sustainable food system.
The Motivations Behind SSLUG:

Current food system is unsustainable and unstable:

- Dependent on cheap oil, cheap labor, global capitalism
- Not environmentally or socially just

We need education about alternatives that:

- Reconnect us with our local environment and communities.
- Emphasize the joys in growing our own food.
- Show us the health and taste benefits.

NAU needs more community space, agricultural projects, and student run hands on sustainability programs.
SSLUG and Climate Change:

Localized, organic food systems…

- Use less transportation and machinery
- Do not use fossil fuel based pesticides or fertilizers (19% of fossil fuel use in the U.S. is for agriculture)
- More plant biomass = less CO$_2$
- Crop diversity = insurance against unpredictable future with climate change
Funding and Donations:

- Center for Sustainable Environments
- College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
- Masters in Sustainable Communities Program
- NAU Research Greenhouses
- Associated Students of NAU
- Flagstaff Native Plant and Seed
- Viola’s Flower Garden
Where is the SSLUG Campus Community Garden?

South campus, South of SBS West and between SBS and SBS West.
What is Permaculture?

• A set of techniques and principles for designing constructed ecosystems that serve the needs of humans without degrading the environment.

• Results in holistic landscape designs that are modeled after ecology and indigenous agriculture.

• Guided by three ethical principles- care for the earth, care for people, and sharing the surplus.

• Works with the local environment and turns problems into opportunities and “wastes” into resources.

• Incorporates as many mutually supported natural and human elements with each element serving as many functions as possible.
The Inputs and Outputs of the SSLUG Garden:

Inputs:
- Labor/Volunteers
- Organizers
- Administrative Support
- Funding
- Seeds/Plants
- Water
- Shade/Wind Breaks
- Compost/Soil Amendments
- Sitting Areas

Outputs:
- Food
- Community Space/Social Interaction
- Education
- Permaculture Demonstration
- Personal Fulfillment
- Beauty
- Fire Prevention
- Ecological Restoration/Habitat
- Shade
What are we growing?

- Short Season Heirloom Vegetables
- Herbs
- Perennials & Wildflowers
- Native Habitat Plants
- Fruit Trees
2008 Accomplishments:

• Planted annual crops
• Planted perennials, shrubs, and trees
• Installed small informative signs
• Collaborated with NAU and FALA classes
• Organized a small committed group to maintain the garden
• Created an email list with 200+ members
• Incorporate terracing and key hole beds
• Created paths and some seating
• Created long term plan and site analysis
Before and After:
NAU Composting Program:

Organized by DeJa Walker at CSE, SSLUG, Sodexho, and DuBois Dining
Funded by Center for Sustainable Environments.

Goals:

1. Demonstrate composting on the NAU campus and educate the community about the benefits of composting.
2. Reduce waste produced by campus dining and NAU Grounds.
3. Create compost for the SSLUG garden and NAU landscaping.
4. Contribute to NAU sustainability goals.
How does the program work?

Signs explain what can be composted will be displayed in dinning area and kitchen.

Prep cooks sort out compostable waste while students place compostable waste in bins.

Volunteers transport waste to compost bins at the SSLUG site.

The green waste is combined with dry waste from NAU grounds.

In a few months time, nutrient-rich compost will be created!!
If you would like to volunteer, contribute, or get involved contact us:

Students for Sustainable Living and Urban Gardening

Organizers:
Ian Dixon-McDonald, Matthew Holmes, Nate O’Meara

gardensslug@gmail.com
www.gardensslug.org
928-286-7372