

The Urban Farm

Dept. of Landscape Architecture
University of Oregon
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LA 390
4 Credits
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CRN 23401
Monday and Wednesday 2:00 - 3:50

“A person who undertakes to grow a garden at home, by practices that will preserve rather than exploit the economy of the soil, has his mind precisely against what is wrong with us.... What I am saying is that if we apply our minds directly and competently to the needs of the earth, then we will have begun to make fundamental and necessary changes in our minds. We will begin to understand and to mistrust and to change our wasteful economy, which markets not just the produce of the earth, but also the earth’s ability to produce.”

-Wendell Berry, *Think Little from A Continuous Harmony: Essays, Cultural & Agricultural*

Wendell Berry also famously described eating as an agricultural act. As we become more aware of this intrinsic connection, the necessity of understanding where our food comes from becomes extremely vital. Eating Local has joined Organic as an important criterion for learning how to behave responsibly and sustainably. Consequently, the necessity to preserve vanishing prime agricultural land has become equally important and has the potential to shape how we reassess our Urban Spaces.

The Urban Farm is a model for alternative urban land use where people grow food, work together, take care of the land, and build community. Dating back to the 1970’s, the Urban Farm has been a place and a process, integrating biological, ecological, economic and social concerns. Key to these concerns is the Urban Farm’s interactive relationship with like-minded Community Programs, offering guidance and hands-on assistance. Urban Farm students are introduced to and directly involved with local concerns such as FOOD for Lane County, The School Garden Project of Lane County, Huerto de la Familia and many others.

The class is a hands-on experience where students learn by doing, drawing upon several organic gardening philosophies. Students should be prepared for physical and sometimes tiring work in all kinds of weather, especially in the cold and often wet winter. We will intend to be outside as much as we can. Although the garden beds are sleepy, there are many seasonal activities that we undertake in the winter. Fruit tree pruning, perennial plant care and loads of greenhouse work will need to be performed.

In addition to the hands-on work, students are also expected to think deeply about how the work they are doing fits into the food system of which they are a part. There will be numerous assignments where they will demonstrate the degree to which they have done this critical thinking. Be prepared to work hard and to share your experience through projects and written reflection.

