



Grounds and Landscaping

Columbia Orchard News

Gardener Patty Wright:

Patricia Wright, designer of the Columbia Orchard, has been a gardener with SU for over fourteen years. She received an education in environmental horticulture from Lake Washington Technical College through their one-year intensive hands-on program. She then went to work in a native plant nursery where she stayed for a year and a half tending to plants in the greenhouse. After this she took a landscaping job with Orkin Plantscaping. Her interest in horticulture led to her to participate in a tour of the SU gardens led by Ciscoe Morris. It was then that she was inspired to apply for a job with the SU Grounds Dept. which she was awarded. Prior to her career in gardening, Patty received a BA in art from Cal State Northridge. She worked as a production artist and graphic designer for ten years. Her knowledge and experience in horticulture and design has made her an extremely valuable member of the SU Grounds team.

Hilary Ball SU sophomore

In 2010 Mayor McGinn and Seattle City Council members launched “The Year of Urban Agriculture”; a campaign intended to encourage local and regional food production. The benefits of the campaign were far-reaching in that, not only did it increase food production, but it promoted sustainability and strengthened community relationships. In support of this movement, the Columbia Orchard was designed by Patty Wright and planted through the combined efforts of the Grounds Dept. This beautiful and creative landscape features a variety of

edible fruit plants including apples, blueberries, and pears just to name a few! Pathways run through the orchard, inviting community members to stroll through and take advantage of the tasty treats it has to offer.

A number of aspects were taken into consideration throughout the process of creating the orchard. Plant selection was one of the first steps. Patty chose to include many recognizable fruits to alert people to the fact that this garden does consist primarily of edible fruits. This was a learning process for Patty as she says she has limited experience in planting fruit trees. She consulted the Raintree Catalog for information on which plants would be best suited for the area. This catalog specifies plants that have been extensively tested in Mt. Vernon to determine which species are most successful in this environment. Another issue which had to be considered before planting was soil quality. The soil in the area was degraded and consisted mostly of hard clay. To overcome this problem, compost was tilled in, and the area was (and continues to be) treated with compost tea.

In addition to supporting urban agriculture, the Columbia Orchard shares a beneficial relationship with another program in Seattle; the [Pollinator Pathway](#). The Pollinator Pathway is a mile-long strip of pollinator-friendly gardens which extends down Columbia St. from 29th to 12th. The intention is to provide support for pollinating insects, particularly native species, whose populations have been decreasing at an alarming rate. SU has been in collaboration with Sarah Bergmann, director of the Pollinator Pathway project, for a number of years. SU donates money and supplies and in return, the Pollinator Pathway supports populations of pollinators which campus gardens depend on. Many fruit trees rely on pollinators, such as honeybees, to facilitate cross-pollination. Thus, attracting pollinators was an important consideration when planting the orchard. Patty chose plants which would yield a succession of flowering from early spring to late fall so that pollinators would be present throughout the season.

There has been some consideration on further planting to be done in the orchard. Patty would like to incorporate some vegetables and herbs into the garden, with her planning for this second phase of planting focusing heavily on the concept of “permaculture”. Permaculture is a design approach based upon the ecology of how things interrelate. Its aim is to create stable systems which provide for human needs, with each element supporting and feeding one another. The result is an agricultural ecosystem which is sustainable and self-sufficient. The term was coined by Bill Mollison who described it as "*a philosophy of working with, rather than against nature; of protracted and thoughtful observation rather*



Grounds and Landscaping

than protracted and thoughtless labor; and of looking at plants and animals in all their functions, rather than treating any area as a single project system” Capitalizing on the mutualistic relationships that plants form, Patty plans to match vegetables and herbs with the fruit plants in the orchard. For example, apple trees have been shown to pair well with chives, leeks, and garlic. This next phase of planting is expected to start in late spring or early summer of 2012.



For any questions regarding the Columbia Orchard Project contact Patty at wrightp@seattleu.edu

The Columbia Orchard is located along the 14th Ave side of the Columbia building, between Cherry St and Columbia St.