

## Highlights in the Teaching & Display Garden in 2022

**Three Sisters Garden:** This space located near the south end of the vegetable garden displays the “Three Sisters” combination of Corn, Beans and Squash. For centuries these three crops have been the center of Native American agriculture and culinary traditions. While planting styles varied, the concepts for planting these three vegetables near each other were as follow. The corn provides tall stalks for the beans to climb so they are not outcompeted by the sprawling squash. Beans being legumes, fix nitrogen through their symbiotic relationship with rhizobia bacteria, and provide nitrogen to the corn, and the large vining squash leaves shade the ground which helps retain soil moisture and reduces competition from weeds. The vegetables seeds for this planting were gifted to us by the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe tribe and include Cherokee Trail of Tears black pole beans, Bear Island and Mandan Bride flint corn and the Gete Okosomin (big old squash).

In this garden the corn was planted in early June in a swirl with space between rows approximately two feet. The inter swirl is Mandan Bride and the outer part of the swirl is Bear Island. When the corn was about 6 inches tall a single bean seed was planted near the base of each corn plant. About a week later after the beans germinated the squash seeds were planted several feet around the edges of the outer swirl of corn.

**Seed to Kitchen Collaborative/Organic Seed Alliance vegetable trials:** For many years the Spooner Research Station has conducted field scale organic vegetable variety trials for the SKC project. The goal of this research is to evaluate new and promising vegetable varieties that have improved flavor and direct market qualities. These plots are typically 1/8 to over one acre in size and include replicated and randomized plantings. To increase participation and feedback, gardeners and fresh market growers can now participate in evaluating select breeding line in their own gardens.

Participating gardeners are sent all the seeds they need for their trials, labels, planting maps and datasheets. They agree to start the seeds and plant a minimum of 3-4 plant and manage them as they normally would other crops and provide feedback on how plants grew. In the Display Garden we have a pepper breeding trial, four different tomato breeding trials, and several potato breeding trials. More info at <https://seedtokitchen.horticulture.wisc.edu/>

**Children’s Garden and Little Free Library:** We now have an officially registered Little Free Library located in what is now being called our Children’s Garden Area. This Little Free Library features kids’ books and will be incorporated into our summer *Kids in the Garden* program.

**Organic Mulches in the Garden:** Keeping the soil covered is one of the guiding principles of improving soil health, and mulches are one option. Shredded bark and wood chips are being used in walkways and under perennial plants, and various locally sourced plant materials are used under and around annual plants. Organic mulches suppress weeds, help retain soil moisture and enrich the soil with organic matter and nutrients.

**The Teaching & Display Garden is a joint effort between** UW-Madison College of Agriculture and Life Science Spooner Agriculture Research Station, UW-Madison Division of Extension and Master Gardener and Research Station Volunteers. More info at <https://spooner.ars.wisc.edu/>