

FEATURED

UGarden prepares for harvest season

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The arrival of springtime marks the beginning of growing season for farms and gardens, and Mary Schulz, volunteer coordinator at UGarden, said the University of Georgia, established with agriculture as part of the land grant, places an emphasis on food.

“I think it makes UGA unique in the amount of land they have to work with for agriculture and the relationship between UGA and Georgia as a state and Athens as a city,” Schulz said. “They have a relationship of charity and giving back to the city of Athens because we were granted so much land in the first place.”

The UGarden uses volunteers to harvest produce, including vegetables, fruits, shiitake mushrooms and herbs.



“We have about four acres in rotation every season using organic practices,” Schulz said. “We concentrate on having good soil to grow our vegetables in.”

UGarden works with academic departments on campus.

“We use greenhouses here at the UGArden that are shared by the horticulture department, so we have a good amount of successive sowing,” Schulz said. “We have crops that has just been seeded, crops that are in the middle and crops that are in the field. We always have a good rotation of plants going out of the field and plants going into the field.”

Schulz said the season affects the types of foods grown.

“We grow a lot of greens during the springtime, and right now we have lots of vegetables, we have some onions and we have most of the regular summer crops, lots of tomatoes and squashes,” Schulz said.

She said the UGArden, like any other garden, works in seasoned rotation.

“Once its ready for harvest, it takes a lot of people,” Schulz said. “Usually our biggest harvest is in the summer, when all of our spring work pays off. In the fall we are doing cleanup preparing for winter. In the spring we are switching from lower fall beds to upper summer beds.”

Because the garden is run through student labor, volunteers are allowed to take home some of the produce they cultivate. The majority of the food is donated out into the Athens community, to organizations such as Campus Kitchen at UGA and the Athens Community Council on Aging.

“We’re focused on getting healthy meals out into the Athens community and our main goal is to get meals out their to people who need a little extra assistance during the month,” said Katie Faulkner, responsible for events and fundraising for Campus Kitchen.

Faulkner said the meals Campus Kitchen makes could not be possible without UGArden.

“They are how we get most of our fresh vegetables that we use to cook healthy meals,” Faulker said. “We use the spinach and other different greens they give us to cook our meals and deliver them later that week.”

Faulker said Campus Kitchen is responsible for cooking, planning and delivering the meals, which she estimates is more than 100 per week. The meals, she said, are planned around what UGArden has available, but other components of the meal come from places, such as Earth Fare.

Brooks Oliver, food services materials manager, said he mostly obtains food from other local companies for dining halls because the quantity produced by UGArden is not large enough to feed the amount of students that eat in dining halls every day.

Oliver said he strives to buy as much local produce as possible. Local food, he said, is food from any state that touches the state of Georgia.

“Right now we’re getting sweet potatoes from North Carolina, we’re getting locally grown mushrooms and greens from regional areas, strawberries out of Florida, and Georgia is one of the highest chicken producing states” Oliver said.

Oliver said he would consider buying food from UGArden in the future if circumstances permitted.

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