Reclaiming Land for a Collaborative Learning Garden

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Introduction



This project reimagines the inaccessible outdoor space at the center of the **Biological Sciences Building** into a biodiverse haven, offering students, faculty, and community members a peaceful and green oasis within our campus. The benefits of community gardens to mental and physical well-being are well documented, with these spaces not only promoting environmental awareness, but also engaging and strengthening community connection(Lanier, Schumacher, and Calvert, “Cultivating Community Collaboration and Community Health Through Community Gardens”; Koay and Dillon, “Community Gardening”).

Methods: An Interdisciplinary Approach

The community garden will serve as a hub for interdisciplinary collaboration at Cal State LA, offering students hands-on opportunities, to engage in innovative projects. A student guide program will support garden maintenance and workshops on sustainable gardening, food sovereignty, and traditional plant uses, providing students with valuable knowledge and leadership skills that benefit students and their communities as they take this knowledge home. Additionally, the garden will invite community organizations to curate annual programming, fostering connection within the campus and the surrounding neighborhood, and creating an engaging, interactive space.

Objectives

Create a community gardent that :

1. **Fosters environmental awareness** by using endemic species and alternative growing methods to create a biodiverse habitat.
2. **Encourages community engagement** through workshops, events, and student-led initiatives.
3. **Supports food sovereignty** by empowering students with accessible food cultivation techniques and developing their leadership skills through peer-to-peer education.
4. **Advances sustainable practices** by utilizing aquaponics for irrigation and education.

Pollinator Garden Plants



Eschscholzia californica



Lupinus albifrons



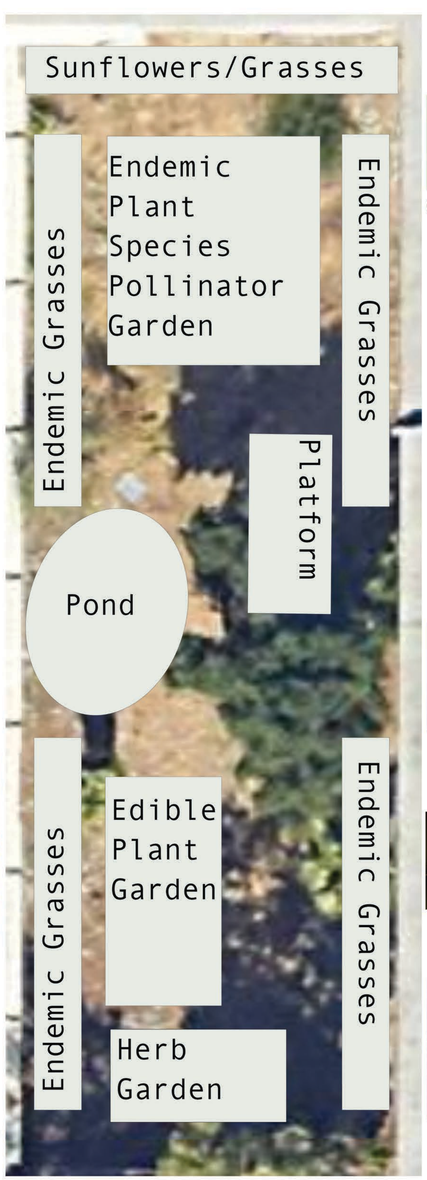
Epilobium canum



Encelia Californica



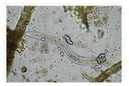
Eriogonum fasciculatum



Pond Life



Gambusia affinis

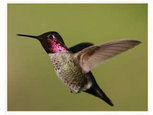


Nitrifying Bacteria

Garden Visitors



Danaus plexippus



Calypte anna



Apis mellifera



Cotinis mutabilis

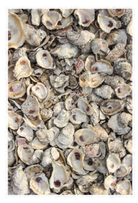


Muhlenbergia rigens

Endemic Grasses



Elymus glaucus ssp. glaucus



Oyster Shell Path

Paths and Features



Reclaimed Wood Platform & Benches

Garden Features

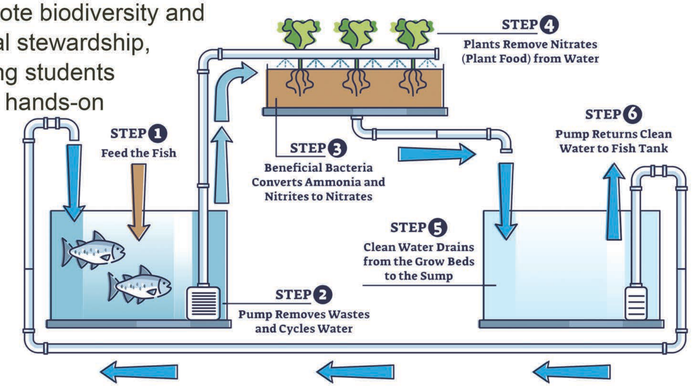


The garden will feature six key components:

- **Raised planting beds** for growing edible plants
- **Pollinator garden** featuring native California plants
- **Meadow-like grassscapes** along the perimeter
- **Pond** to support wildlife and aquaponics system
- **Reclaimed wood platform** meeting and event area
- **Herb garden**

WHY AQUAPONICS?

Aquaponics offers a sustainable solution for urban agriculture in water-scarce regions like Los Angeles. Rooted in ancient practices, it is gaining renewed attention for its effectiveness in creating a self-sustaining ecosystem and can be used to promote biodiversity and environmental stewardship, while providing students with valuable hands-on learning experiences (Krastanova et al., “Aquaponic Systems”).



Conclusion

Through interdisciplinary collaboration, this once-neglected area can be transformed into a shared, natural sanctuary where students can learn about California native plants, exchange ideas, and foster a sense of community. This democratized garden will serve as a hub for education, connection, and growth, benefiting all who participate.



The desire for redoing this space is clear; now it is time to bring this vision to life.

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References

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Krastanova, Milena, Ivo Sirakov, Sofiya Ivanova-Kirilova, Dobry Yarkov, and Petya Orozova. “Aquaponic Systems: Biological and Technological Parameters.” Biotechnology & Biotechnological Equipment 36, no. 1 (December 31, 2022): 305–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/13102818.2022.2074892.

Lanier, Jacqueline, Julie Schumacher, and Kerri Calvert. “Cultivating Community Collaboration and Community Health Through Community Gardens.” Journal of Community Practice 23, no. 3–4 (October 2, 2015): 492–507. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705422.2015.1096316.

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