

UWM's Sustainable Gardens

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On college campuses, everything begins again in the fall. A new semester means new classes, new challenges, and new faces. And at UW-Milwaukee, fall also means a new harvest.

Right now, students and staff are gathering crops from more than 900 square feet of sustainable green space on campus. It all connects to a larger commitment to sustainability.

"When it comes to food, you can see it from beginning to end. From seed to compost. It makes sustainability real," said Kate Nelson, sustainability coordinator at UWM. "Food is our daily connection to the environment."

The harvest is used in UWM's restaurants across campus, providing fresh and organic food options to students. The culinary department has taken a turn toward less wasteful food sources in recent years, aiming to reduce the average "food mile," or distance food travels from source to plate. If it's not grown on campus, much of the food served in UWM's restaurants is organically grown on Wisconsin farms.

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"People might not know how sustainable we are. They tend to think of Madison, San Francisco and Boulder, but I find a true value of doing these things in Milwaukee. There's a huge food movement here," Nelson said.

In addition to raised beds around campus, one garden is located atop the Sandburg Residence Halls. That plot churns out tomatoes, onions, garlic, pumpkins, and a variety of herbs.

And the rooftop garden has another purpose -- it doubles as a green roof. The plants help keep the building cooler in the summer and warmer in winter, all while protecting neighboring water sources from chemical-laced runoff.

Students and faculty have a chance to grow their own food on campus, too. On the south lawn of the Physics Building, small plots are available for rent, and students and staff are free to plant whatever they'd like.

Beyond sustainable gardening, Nelson says UWM is always looking for ways to reduce its environmental impact. An aggressive recycling program, water conservation, and abundant solar panels are all examples of that mission in action. To find out more, visit the [official website of UWM's Office of Sustainability](#).