

Culinary Garden Project Proposal for Expansion

In the Spring of 2008 KU Dining's Catering Chefs were granted permission to plant a small container garden. The garden was originally planned as a method to reduce fresh herb waste and lower costs during the slower summer months. Located on the 6th floor patio of the Kansas Union, it quickly became apparent that the garden was situated in a prime growing area. Free of the traditional garden pests, with full sun and secured behind a locked gate, the herbs and tomatoes have yielded close to 200# of produce over the last 4 seasons. During the growing season, these ingredients are highlighted in the daily specials offered at Impromptu, Retail Salad bars and various Catered events. At season's end, we dry and freeze our harvest to allow for usage during the winter months.

Following the first year of the "Secret Garden", word spread across campus that Dining was growing produce on the roof of the Union. That year photos and articles of the garden were featured in the University Daily Kansan, The Oread Magazine, Kansas Alumni Magazine and The Lawrence Journal- World video edition. The publicity led to interest among students, faculty and staff. We even received a letter from a 1965 KU graduate with suggestions for growing boxes specifically designed for container gardening. The implementation of the 'Earthboxes' increased our yields by over 50% and provide a more uniform appearance to the garden area. Students also utilized the garden for various class projects on sustainability and environmental studies.

The Union Roof top garden is a hidden gem. This year we would like to bring it to the public by expanding to the north patio area on the 6th floor. By bringing the garden onto the larger patio area, we can highlight the positive impact a small unused space can make to our campus community. The additional area would be filled with uniform Earthbox containers and whiskey barrel planters on wheels. Our intention is to have various smaller containers that can be easily moved to ensure the best presentation possible. The original white mayonnaise and pickle buckets would be stored, out of view, in the back area and painted to harmonize with the additional planters. While the area would be kept secured, the windows will allow visitors to the Union a nice view of a working culinary garden. During the off season, the fallow containers will be stored out of the line of site in the area currently housing the existing garden. Framed posters will explain the use of the space with historical data on harvest, yields and crop uses across campus throughout the year.

Currently the garden is comprised of tomatoes, herbs, peppers and tomatillos. The proposed expansion will allow us to experiment with squash, cucumbers and other vegetables and provide harvests ample enough to touch all areas of KU Dining. While a water source is available, we would also like to use rain barrels operated by a solar pump to maintain the area. These barrels were featured as part of KU's Earth Day celebration, Rain Barrels on Parade. A joint venture between KU Dining, SUA, the KU Bookstore, KU Environs, The KU Center for Sustainability and Coca- Cola, the barrels were auctioned off to raise money for the KU Student Rain Garden. As interest in local produce increases among our students, faculty and staff, the expansion of the

culinary garden will provide a visual detail of the growing cycle. The expansion of the roof top garden will highlight KU Memorial Unions continuing dedication to our community and environment.