

# YEAR IN REVIEW

Sustainable Agriculture Project  
Grand Valley State University



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# Letter from the Farm Manager

Isak Davis



Greetings friends and colleagues!

2024 was my first year as farm manager and educator for the SAP, and I had a fantastic experience exposing eager minds to the importance of sustainable agriculture and teaching them that growing your own healthy food is approachable and fulfilling. Personally, it is gratifying to witness plants growing from seed kernels into ripe produce during the slow arch of the season. It's a reminder that we all have the potential to develop into something wonderful and meaningful with dutiful communal care and healthy conditions.

Farming provides numerous sources of inspiration. At a base level, farming feeds us, offering the nourishment and energy we require to engage with the larger world through the creation of artistic forms, the development of substantial relationships (both with humans and non-humans alike), and the generation of joy! It provides a source of hope for students grappling with the harsh realities of global climate change and systemic social issues. That tangible hope is woven into the work and care of farming because each year we start seeds that are smaller than a fingernail in the warm refuge of the greenhouse, and trust that those same minuscule seeds rapidly expand into plants that soar to the skies. That trustworthy growth within agriculture has occurred year after year on our Earth and has been a constant source of inspiration throughout generations. That source is still available and waiting to be tapped into, and we will continue to cultivate that hope at the SAP for the next generations.

As the SAP enters into a new season of growth, I am eager to get my hands dirty alongside the new cohort of interns to sow the next generation of seeds in the greenhouse. This past season, we saved many seeds, which deepens our relationship with those plants and perpetuates hope of new life into the future. I can't wait to see those seeds come back to life! It is always an exciting and, now necessary, time to engage positively with the Earth, and the Sustainable Agriculture Project at Grand Valley allows students and community members to deepen their understanding and relationship with our fragile and resilient natural surroundings.

Peas and Love,

*Isak*

# 2024 Year in Review

Some of the highlights from the past year include:

The warmer weather this fall allowed us to extend our campus farm stand through to the end of November, providing access to fresh vegetables to Grand Valley students well into the semester. We were still harvesting tomatoes in November.

4831 total hours  
of people who  
visited with the  
SAP

1549 people  
visited the SAP

3,000+ student  
and community  
volunteer hours

22 SAP interns  
spent 2,300  
hours engaging  
with high-impact  
experiences

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# Seeding Sustainable Food Practices

This year was a busy year at the SAP. We received our Produce Safety Certification from the Ottawa County Conservation District, which means that the SAP adheres to the best produce safety practices with our harvesting and washing routine, so we can ensure healthy and clean food for our community.

Once the season was wrapping up, we sowed a cover crop of clover, carrots, and other winter hearty crops over a portion of the South Field to fixate nitrogen and maintain healthy soil structure throughout the chilly winter months.

We prepared a total of 653 CSA shares for our shareholders this past season. Think of the massive salad that you could make with all those vegetables.

This season we supported Replenish, the GV student food resource, and the Community Food Club with over donations of 650 servings of fresh produce to ensure access to fresh produce to all members of the community.



# Cultivating Leadership

This season, the SAP had 23 interns who learned new skills, fostered community engagement, and shared impactful experiences on the farm. The interns are one of the crucial elements to the SAP, and they effectively bridge the gap between academic pursuits into active hands-on experiences in the field. Collectively, the interns tallied up over 2400 hours either working at the SAP or a SAP related project!



The SAP also had three farm crew members who worked tirelessly to weed, harvest, wash, pack and deliver produce to shareholders and local food resources.

One of the farm crew members, Cameron Doane, was awarded the first Outstanding Student Employee Scholarship from the Office of Student Employment. This scholarship recognizes students who have shown leadership, dedication and innovation within their campus employment, and Cam certainly exemplified those qualities on the farm. Read his application essay [\*\*here\*\*](#).

# Nurturing Place

The SAP held our annual Harvest Party during the first Friday of Sustainability Month in October. This communal event featured a shared potluck meal with numerous bouquets of arranged flowers followed by camp games, seed ball throwing, and an extensive SAP tour. Thankfully, this year we were blessed with picturesque clear skies and balmy weather. In addition to the festivities of the Harvest Party, one of the SAP interns organized a successful clothing swap, where students could exchange their old clothes for a fresh fit.



# Growing Community

The SAP had numerous groups visit the farm for engaged educational experiences across a variety of academic disciplines. Overall, we had 11 community organizations partner with us for programming, 5 GVSU clubs met at the space, 3 area schools visited to learn about sustainable agriculture, and 14 GVSU courses collaborated with the SAP on curriculum. This extensive community engagement both with GVSU and other organizations demonstrates the importance and interdisciplinary nature of the SAP.



In addition, in partnership with the Office of Sustainability Practices, the SAP helped host the 2024 Growing Connections Food Summit. This biennial summit, hosts farmers, food justice advocates and stakeholders within West Michigan's food system and encourages collaborative conversation to ensure a healthier and holistic food system.

# Looking to the Future



As the SAP enters into its seventeenth season of growing, we are excited to follow the arch of the season into the future. First starting from the germination of the seeds yielding into the steady, exponential growth of the plants, we will grow alongside them until they are ready for harvest. We will strive to educate and equip the next generation of student farmers to produce their own sustainable food, uncover the buried information from within the layers of soil to contextualize our present reality of food injustice, and build a stronger community around care for the Earth. The SAP is an oasis and meeting grounds for socially and environmentally conscious students, and we will continue to cultivate those threads so hope exudes from the fabric of our being.

This upcoming season, one of our focuses areas will be compost production. First, we will lead a backyard composting workshop for the city of Grandville, explaining how to cultivate a healthy compost. Then, we will build upon our partnership with the Engineering Department to revamp our compost operations at the SAP from the ground up in order to curb the food waste gap and invite more community engagement. This will allow us to produce food safe compost that we can use to amend the beds and share with community members.

It is always the time to care for the environment, and in this next season, the SAP will help students utilize their gifts, passions, and abilities to find solutions to global existential challenges right here in Allendale.

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# Stay Connected

For any inquires, please contact us!



## Sustainable Agriculture Project

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SAPManager@gvsu.edu



[gvsu.edu/sustainableagproject/](https://gvsu.edu/sustainableagproject/)



[instagram.com/gvsusap](https://instagram.com/gvsusap)



Sustainable Agriculture Project  
4539 Luce St.

Jenison, Michigan 49428

