



*People and Nature: Our Future is in the Balance*

## **National Wildlife Federation**

11100 Wildlife Center Drive • Reston, VA 20190 • <http://www.nwf.org/>

**New College of California  
San Francisco, California  
Spring 2003, Landscaping**

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Campus Profile**

New College of California is a small humanities college based in San Francisco that is dedicated to education for a just, sacred and sustainable world.

#### **Contacts**

Laura McKaughan  
Green it Up! Project Coordinator  
Phone: 415-437-3479  
E-mail: [laura@newcollege.edu](mailto:laura@newcollege.edu)

Mary Gilbert  
Advanced Master Gardener  
Phone: 650-922-0613  
E-mail: [mggpsychology@hotmail.com](mailto:mggpsychology@hotmail.com)

Michael McAvoy  
Project Supervisor  
Phone: 415-437-3465  
E-mail: [mmcavoy@newcollege.edu](mailto:mmcavoy@newcollege.edu)

### **GOALS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

#### **Goals**

Our goal was to create a community rooftop garden composed of environmentally friendly materials and showcasing medicinal herbs, organic vegetables and native landscaping. In order to make the rooftop garden feasible, we first had to reinforce the roof with a deck that had a steel crossbeams and lay down a composite decking made of recycled plastic polymer and wood fiber. We also needed to construct gardening boxes and seal them, get soil and plants and design the garden. We set a goal of forming a garden committee and having garden building weekends. In addition to the work of constructing the garden, the Green it Up! Project contacted the Eco-Arts class about creating a garden mural that will enhance the aesthetic of the garden as well as incorporating live plants into the design of the mural.

The excitement about the rooftop garden is as much motivated by what it can become in the future as what it means for us now. We have envisioned holding classes there about herbal healing and gardening, fostering a relationship with the plant world by having students volunteer to maintain the garden, practicing horticultural therapy there, hosting events and much more.



## **Accomplishments**

Success on the rooftop garden is coming much more slowly than anticipated. We successfully developed a garden project working committee and have met twice to design the garden and share our ideas for the future possibilities of the garden.

Members of the committee come from a range of different backgrounds and degree programs including students from the Eco-Dwelling, Psychology and Humanities Programs, community members and two high school students from TEAM, a youth environmental leadership program for at-risk teens. We had our first garden building day on April 19<sup>th</sup> when 7 volunteers showed up to help design and create the garden. We spent the first half of the morning designing the gardening boxes and envisioning the space we had to work with. Then we set out to construct the boxes and, though our boxes may not soon win any design awards, they are fully functional and will work wonderfully once the deck is constructed. The Eco-Arts class also finished two large murals that will be installed once the deck is built. The major delay has been securing money for the deck. The labor and materials for the laying down of the steel beams alone costs \$6,000 and the decking material, though it will be installed by volunteers, will cost another \$2,000. Luckily almost all of the other supplies necessary for the building, such as power drills, saws, screws, nails and the plants and soil have been donated or borrowed. However since the deck is the primary component to construct before we can move on to other things, the length of time it is taking to construct the deck is weighing on morale. The school has promised to cover whatever expenses it can afford and has even hired a development assistant whose first project is to solicit donations for this project.



## **Challenges and Responses**

As mentioned above, lack of funding for the project has been the biggest obstacle and we have been very creative in confronting this obstacle. Several members of the committee have been working very hard to secure donations for the project. As a result, we had about 20 plants donated from the San Bruno Prison Project, we have found free soil offered on the internet, the tools were borrowed from the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners lending library and we have written letters for donations to three different hardware stores for the tools, decking and beams. Though this process takes longer than it would if we had the money upfront, we feel confident that we will be able to secure the resources we need before the summer is over.

Other than that, the challenges have been minimal. This is a very popular project on campus and we have never had a shortage of volunteers to help build the garden. We also have a wide variety of expertise including an eco-design expert, a master gardener and a holistic healer. New College is the type of institution that attracts wonderfully diverse students and staff, and this garden serves as a unifying point for the different interests and abilities of many different people.

## **ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT**

### **Leaders and Supporters**

The rooftop garden project is part of a larger campaign to reduce the environmental impact of New College facilities called the Green it Up! Project which was initiated by Laura McKaughan. Laura is a recent graduate of New College's MBA program in Environmental Entrepreneurship

and began the Green it Up! Project as her thesis project. Laura has worked on many other greening projects as well, including a greening committee for the Bioneers Conference and has been paid for her role as coordinator of the project for the past two semesters.

Mary G. Gilbert is the co-coordinator of the rooftop garden project. Mary received her Advanced Master Gardener credentials from Michigan State University. She is currently an MA Psychology candidate at New College of California. After receiving MFT licensure, she plans to gain certification in the areas of Horticultural Therapy and Art Therapy. Organic and square-foot gardening techniques are two programs she plans to implement with the Green it Up! roof garden project.

Gonzalo Hidalgo is the chief technical supervisor for the garden project. Gonzalo is a student in the MA program in Eco-Dwelling and has over 15 years experience in natural building. His emphasis in school is on the integration of natural building in urban settings. He also has plans after graduation to build an educational center in the community of Algarrobo, Chile dedicated to promoting art and permaculture.

### **Funding**

The rooftop garden has been funded to date by money raised at the Creating Community Lunches. These monthly lunches feature organic, vegetarian lunches while encouraging community building and creating a showcase for student initiatives through tabling and an open mike. There was also a fundraising campaign done during registration and small private donations that have helped further the project.

### **National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program**

Though the Green it Up! Project was not included in the fellowship program, we have still sought out the National Wildlife Federation as a resource during this project. The project coordinator referred to the website many times and found the online case-studies in *Campus Environmental Yearbook* and suggestions offered there to be extremely helpful. In addition, we used the book *Ecodemia* many times throughout the project and it helped define many of the project goals.

### **CLOSING COMMENT**

In many ways, this has been the most rewarding goal of the Green it Up! Project because it has brought together so many diverse ideas and people. The project has been able to flourish, largely due to the fact that the project coordinator never took ownership of the project and was open to new ideas and perspectives. One suggestion to any leader of a project like this one is to become an excellent listener. The wealth of ideas that come from this will help a simple garden project come to mean so much more.