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High yield

Greenhouse to increase food production, sustainability awareness

Campus and Community

BY MANDY COOK

There's a new hot spot on Memorial's St. John's campus—but it's not of the Wi-Fi variety.

A tidy-looking greenhouse has been added to the raised beds of the community garden between Queen's College and Long Pond.

"It's going to be hot in there in the summertime," said Toby Rowe, co-ordinator of the Sustainability Office at Memorial, as she opened the door to exit the building.



From left, Ethan Doney and Toby Rowe in front of the community garden's new greenhouse.

 PHOTO: CHRIS HAMMOND

It's great news for gardeners who will get an opportunity to try their green thumbs with tomatoes and peppers and other vegetables that generally require more heat than the Newfoundland and Labrador sun can provide.

In its sixth year of operation, the community garden is a big draw for many in the Memorial University community. In addition to the greenhouse, which measures nine by 12 feet, 26 new plots have been added to the original 36. There are different sizes to suit gardeners who wish to plant several varieties of vegetables and for those who would rather produce a smaller yield. There is an accessible plot, too, so everyone can enjoy the garden.

Student involvement

Ethan Doney, a master's student in geography who hails from Sussex, N.B., helped secure the funding to cover the cost of the greenhouse's construction. His involvement in a number of sustainable food systems groups, such as the Sierra Youth Coalition and Meal Exchange, prompted him to apply for IMPACT! funding through the Co-operators Youth Program for Sustainability Leadership.

"We have a strong partnership with the Community Garden as a means of bringing more local, sustainable food to campus and as a way of helping people produce their own food," said Mr. Doney during an interview with the *Gazette* among the plots in the garden.

"The greenhouse will help dispel the negative stigma around growing food in Newfoundland and Labrador."

“We really appreciate Ethan’s contribution,” said Ms. Rowe. “The greenhouse is a great addition to the garden. We will be able to extend our growing season and provide protection to plants that are more cold sensitive.”

Mr. Doney says the greenhouse will allow Memorial gardeners to get a jump start on the growing season this year by starting seedlings in its warm environment. Greenhouse gardening workshops are also in the works.

“The more young people get involved, the better.” — Ethan Doney

Administered by the Sustainability Office and a volunteer board of directors made up of faculty, staff, and students, the garden had nearly 100 members last year. Garden members include undergraduate and graduate students, staff and faculty, and groups such as the Aboriginal Resource Office, Graduate Students Union and Campus Childcare Centre. The Graduate Students Union and the University Food Services Committee (funded through Aramark) are funders of the new plots, and Facilities Management has provided in-kind support.

While approximately 90 people apply for a plot each year, Mr. Doney wants to see that number grow—especially among the student population.

“This is a place that can be used to foster education related to sustainable growing on the island and provide outreach to the younger student population. The more young people get involved, the better.”

Students, staff, faculty and retired staff and faculty may apply for community garden plots; plots can be shared. Plots are awarded through a lottery and can be kept for up to three years.

*Member fee per year is \$50 for a large plot, \$30 for a small plot. **The 2016 application deadline for plots is Thursday, March 17.** You can find the application [here](#).*

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