

# Profile from the Field

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## Experiential Learning in Agricultural Systems

**Project Title:** GVSU Upward Bound TRiO  
Flower and Herb Garden at the GVSU Sustainable  
Agriculture Project

**Coordinator:** Levi Gardner

**Location:** Allendale, MI

**SARE Grant:** \$1,996

**Duration:** 2010-2012

To read the full project report, go to  
[www.sare.org/projects](http://www.sare.org/projects) and search for  
project number YENC10-032.

Through the Grand Valley State University (GVSU) Sustainable Agriculture Project, Levi Gardner helps students learn about food production and gain an appreciation for the process of planning, growing, harvesting, and selling horticulture and floriculture products. The project is growing at a regional public university with a limited history of agriculture or food systems education.

With support from a SARE grant, high school students without previous exposure to farming, gardening, or environmental education were hosted at the university during a five-week summer program. Students were introduced to collegiate life and took a course on sustainable agriculture that was developed to expose them to integrative and experiential learning. Students cooked and shared a meal together from foods they helped grow. Gardner said

many students had never seen a tomato plant or a recently harvested onion, or had tasted fresh garlic.

Sixteen students participated in 2011, while 22 participated in 2012. A freshman stated in his final project, "As a citizen I want to try and help people understand that sustainable agriculture is important because many people don't know about what goes on behind the scene. They don't know where their food really comes from so I want to help them understand."

In the future, as the program grows, Gardner said the group will seek more publicity for their work. They also would like to visit a farm. He said they will continue to focus on how to integrate this work into the students' academic and professional goals.

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