

SMFA Garden

Name: Michaela Morse

Is this a project that you will work on alone, or will you collaborate with others? If you are collaborating with others, list their names, their Tufts affiliation, and their contact emails. Please indicate which member of your team will be the principle contact.

Principle contact: Michaela Morse, BFA/BA Fall 2020, michaela.morse@tufts.edu

Collaborator: Lauren Kimball-Brown, SMFA Library Coordinator (Tufts staff), lauren.kimball_brown@tufts.edu

Please provide a 300-350 word description of your project

Our proposal is to create multiple garden sites of pollinator-friendly native plants on the SMFA campus. We aim to beautify our grounds and create shared community space, while supporting local pollinator populations and restoring native plants to the ecosystem. The SMFA Garden will be an ongoing collaborative project, providing opportunities for student artwork such as signage, container design, and outdoor sculpture, as well as offering a site for events. We will seek to support the SMFA's curriculum by engaging with multiple areas of the school, for example growing plants for the papermaking department to use for fiber, and edible plants for classes that work with and consider food in art. Students will be encouraged to make artwork for any studio course with the garden in mind, giving them the valuable opportunity to put their projects into action and gain installation and design experience not readily found in all classes. We are engaging with our community throughout the project, already holding open brainstorming meetings, as we plan to issue calls for design proposals and invite students to participate in seed-starting and garden installation. Key staff collaborators, and the support of the SMFA Sustainability Committee, will ensure that the garden is cared for year-round, whether or not classes are in session.

We envision outdoor container gardens located in high-profile areas around 230 The Fenway, the largest of which would be the balcony adjacent to the SMFA atrium, visible to all who enter the school as a welcoming sight of natural beauty, in contrast to our industrial facility. The Tufts Pollinator Initiative has committed to supplying us with seedlings, allowing us to build on that project's success by expanding its footprint to our campus and amplifying its important educational outreach. In what is otherwise a predominately industrial landscape, the SMFA Garden will serve non-human populations of native plant species and insect pollinators while raising the community's awareness of current environmental issues and supporting young artists at many stages of their development.

What is the problem that you are looking to solve?

On a biological level, the SMFA Garden will perform the environmentally crucial role of providing food sources for local pollinators. Pollinator decline poses a major threat to

agriculture and ecosystems, as the food supply for humans and wildlife depends on insect pollination. The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation has defined four steps that individuals can take to combat this decline: growing pollinator-friendly flowers, providing nest sites, avoiding pesticides, and spreading the word. This collection of garden sites will address all four elements, incorporating blooming and host plants, organic gardening practices, and informational signage.

On a social level, the garden will enrich the central commons space of the SMFA and bring our community together through the invitation to collaborate. Our campus will be embellished with outdoor spaces for our community to enjoy, which will also offer a welcoming site for visitors to the school. The SMFA campus occupies a small footprint in a dense urban setting, and its lack of shared spaces and overall gray, industrial aesthetic can be alienating. Introducing natural beauty into this space will soothe and inspire those of us who spend time here. Already in the early stages of gathering support for this project, students who are relatively new to the school have been extremely enthusiastic about the vision of growing plants and the attractive, sculptural objects that the containers may become. From these conversations and others with our key supporters like TUPD, Facilities, and the SMFA Sustainability Committee, it is clear that our community is eager to contribute a vast range of skill sets and assist in the successful realization of the SMFA Garden.

Has this been done before at Tufts?

Yes

When in the past was this project done? By whom?

The Tufts Pollinator Initiative planted native, pollinator-friendly gardens on the Tufts Medford/Somerville campus over the past year.

How is this project different than the ones done in the past?

The SMFA Garden will establish the first pollinator garden on the SMFA campus, and go beyond the primarily biological aims of the Tufts Pollinator Initiative by infusing a creative, collaborative approach into the project that will strive to serve our fine arts community and its visitors.

How will you measure success?

This project will be a success when we have established a garden of thriving perennial plants, have observed activity of diverse pollinator species, and have involved feedback and participation from our community in all steps of the process. The social aspects of this project will intersect its biological aims through all stages, from brainstorming to design, container construction to planting, and regular event planning to realization. We will continue to foster this success by establishing procedures for care and maintenance of the garden through the seasons into future years, and sustain the opportunities for events and engagement in the garden.

How many people would this project impact? Please categorize them as students, faculty, staff, and other

In terms of workload, the project will initially impact the student and staff member who are leading it, as well as the Associate Director, Boston Facilities (staff) and Police Sergeant (staff) at SMFA, who will be consulted in the planning stages about the logistics and safety specifications of container design and installation.

As for groups we have already engaged with in the development of this project, we will continue to discuss its progress with the SMFA Sustainability Committee, which consists of students, faculty and staff. The Tufts Pollinator Initiative will be involved in coordinating the donation of seedlings, and its leaders (graduate student and post-doctoral researcher), our primary contacts, will provide logistical garden planning and maintenance advice.

Finally, we plan to involve an as yet unknown number of additional students, faculty, and staff to participate at various levels in establishing the garden in the community. In terms of benefit, we hope the project will positively impact all students, faculty, staff, and other visitors to the SMFA campus.

What is the environmental impact?

The garden will provide food sources and habitat for local insect pollinator populations, helping those populations grow. Supporting pollinators benefits the surrounding ecosystem, as insect-pollinated plants support additional wildlife. Gardening with plants native to the region specifically supports vulnerable native pollinators, and helps to restore the original biodiversity of the area. We hope that spreading the message about gardening for pollinators will inspire others to create pollinator gardens in whatever spaces are available to them, increasing the environmental impact of the project.

What are the educational impacts of this project?

As the whole development and ongoing activity of this project will engage the community, its educational impacts will be numerous and take many forms. The design and construction of the garden containers will educate those involved on the ecological needs of pollinators and plants, helping them to learn to consider new criteria and methods. Events during the early stages of the garden in the Spring 2020 semester and in the following academic year will be open to the community and focus their messaging on how anyone and everyone can get involved in supporting their local ecosystem, and why it is important to do so. The possible incorporation of the garden into SMFA class projects across departments, from papermaking to sculpture, observational drawing to visual media studies and beyond, will bring its educational impact directly into the classroom. Lastly, educational signage about native plants and the importance of pollinators will be developed and included at each garden site. The high visibility of the garden locations will ensure a wide audience for this messaging, which will be a source for learning even when no one is present at the garden.

**What is the social impact (excluding educational aspects)?
(e.g. alleviating climate injustice, community resiliency, culture change, equity, etc)**

The primary social impact of the SMFA Garden will be to strengthen the community at SMFA through collaboration, shared space, and relational art-making. It will literally serve to help new and old community members alike “bloom where they are planted,” through its inherently interdisciplinary demands that will foster the cross-pollination of artists and artistic ideas in the generation of creative solutions. These demands will be both strategic and conceptual, ranging from how to construct and maintain the garden, to how to best sustain its engagement, and the process of working towards these goals will be the impact itself; building up a more interconnected and supportive community.

From a purely aesthetic viewpoint, the garden will infuse life and color into the SMFA’s central commons spaces, which overall are gray, industrial environments that can curb creative energies. Students with whom project lead Michaela Morse has spoken are vocal about how they feel alienated by these spaces in which they spend so much of their time, and are enthusiastic about the idea of introducing more natural beauty. The SMFA Garden will work to soothe this discomfort and even become a source of inspiration for continued art making and collaboration.

In the future, we envision that the garden’s location in the heart of Boston will provide opportunities for further community outreach and collaboration with local and national organizations working to make urban spaces more livable and sustainable for people and wildlife alike.

Will it help Tufts meet its sustainability goals? If so, how?

(See Tufts sustainability goals here:

<https://sustainability.tufts.edu/sustainability-at-tufts/our-commitments/commitments/>)

This project addresses a number of actions set forth in the Talloires Declaration of 1990, beginning with increased awareness of environmentally sustainable development through the design and construction of the garden containers. Although on a much smaller scale than a LEED certified building for example, encouraging the community-solicited design of our garden sites to be ecologically informed will give SMFA artists firsthand experience in incorporating sustainable methods into their art production.

The goal of the SMFA Garden to integrate with the school’s greater community feeds into a number of the declaration’s other goals; its contribution to creating a culture of sustainability and directly educating on environmentally responsible citizenship will take place through the events that are held in the garden and the signage that will be present. Environmental literacy will be fostered by this programming and interdisciplinary approaches will be pursued by connecting artists, academics and the greater community in the collaborative process of developing the garden and hosting events. Individuals will be informed on how they can support pollinators and native plant species to counteract damage to the earth’s biodiversity, while simultaneously being offered a broader network to tap into and maintain the movement.

Provide us with a timeline of planning and implementation of the project. (This question is for optional additional information not included in the Gantt chart)

General timeline for SMFA Garden

- Winter 2019-20, approximately Dec-Mar
 - Dec 2019 – Feb 2020: Conduct multiple community information sessions to connect with and hear from all stakeholders. Put out a call for proposals of garden container design and features. As project initiators, we will research and provide the basic logistical requirements of the garden, i.e. soil depth for overwintering perennials, site space limitations, etc.
 - Feb 2020: Incorporate seed-starting workshop and/or other related garden event into the SMFA Health, Safety, and Sustainability Day, hosted by the SMFA Sustainability Committee (proposed date: Wed, Feb 26th)
 - Mar 2020 & after: Work with finalists on garden design to construct container gardens and related forms. Install them at their sites, possibly with the help of Facilities.
- Spring 2020, approximately Mar-May
 - Mar 2020: Growing seedlings. Outreach to community for garden initiation in spring.
 - April 2020: Depending on last frost, begin to transplant seedlings to container gardens. Located directly next to the main building, it may be possible to safely plant earlier in the season than conventional in-ground gardens, allowing for visible greenery to appear during the academic year when the majority of the school community is most present.
 - May 2020: SMFA Senior Thesis Program (STP) Spring Exhibition. As student in the SMFA STP, project lead Michaela Morse will incorporate the social space of cultivating the garden into her thesis work for the program's spring exhibition. This will be the formal introduction of the established SMFA garden to the community.
- Summer 2020, Jun-Aug
 - Maintenance of the garden by school staff, overseen by Lauren Kimball-Brown.
 - Aug 2020: Potential inclusion of SMFA garden into Pre-Orientation program, Arts @ Tufts
 - Possibility of other summer programming at SMFA which includes the garden
- Academic Year 2020-21, Sept 2020 — May 2021
 - Fall 2020: In her final semester, Michaela will remain present to facilitate community engagement events and opportunities with the SMFA Garden
 - Winter 2021: Inclusion of the SMFA Garden in future Health, Safety and Sustainability Day
 - Spring 2021: Re-planting as needed and continued fostering of established SMFA Garden

How much funding are you requesting from the Green Fund? Are you seeking funding from other places?

We are requesting \$4500 and are not seeking funding elsewhere.

Who would take care of the garden over breaks?

Collaborator Lauren Kimball-Brown is year-round, full-time staff at SMFA and will tend to the garden during breaks. We will seek out additional year-round staff collaborators throughout the project, such as other members of the SMFA Sustainability Committee, to expand the pool of caretakers.

Would like to see a letter of support from TUPD and facilities stating that the infrastructure can support the weight of the garden/is safe

Both letters of support requested are now included in our application packet on Box for review by the Green Fund Committee. (Previously, on the 12/1 deadline, we were still awaiting the final letter). They are signed by Associate Director, Boston Facilities, Gunnar Trenoweth and Police Sergeant Darren Weisse. A supplementary letter of support from SMFA at Tufts Administrative Director, Caleb Davis is also included.