



# UMA Augusta Community Garden Annual Report for 2019

Associate Professor of Sociology James Cook



## Annual Report Executive Summary

2019 marked the fourth year in which the UMA Augusta Community Garden operated on the Augusta campus as a combination of a civic engagement project, a center of education, a student organization and a visual landmark signifying an active campus. The project of the garden continued to integrate undergraduate activity, campus events, faculty advisors, action research and outreach to a variety of university and community constituencies.

In 2019, the community garden project on UMA's Augusta campus accomplished much:

- The growth of 695 pounds of fresh produce and herbs, all of which were donated to the Augusta Food Bank;
- The participation of 212 different people in 221 hours of gardening and 30 hours of social and educational events;
- The involvement of 10 campus groups in the Augusta-campus “adopt-a-bed” program to plant and care for vegetables in dedicated raised beds;
- Infrastructure improvements to the garden to develop long-term sustainability;
- Comparative research examining the prevalence and characteristics of campus community gardens at state universities across the United States.

As this project continues, however, the challenges facing the UMA Augusta Community Garden are coming into starker relief:

- SSC 334, the course designed to supplement the UMA Augusta Community Garden (and an unconnected project, the UMA Bangor Community Garden), has never reached a course enrollment of more than 10 students;
- After a period of great success, the UMA Augusta Community Garden club has entered a period in which old student leaders have left campus and remaining students are reluctant to enter leadership roles;
- The community garden project itself was created as a top-down vision of staff and faculty and presented to students, rather than generated from a bottom-up process of listening to student's desires and drives;
- As a civic engagement project, the garden focuses on introducing students to a role of service on behalf of others' interests. For more privileged traditional college students, this marks a departure from their norm, but for our less privileged students this reinforces the patterns of subordination in their lives;
- Seen as a social service, the garden is an inefficient project for supplying food to the Augusta community that could be accomplished in other ways using fewer resources;
- The time commitment required for the faculty advisor of the garden project as a club and a campus physical installment is unsustainably large;
- Finally, coronavirus-related campus shutdowns prevent gardening well into 2020.

As the community garden project at UMA continues past its infancy into adolescence, and given the pause imposed by the campus closure due to coronavirus, it is a good time to reflect on the possible futures for the garden.

## Orientation and Vision

This is the third annual report of the UMA Augusta Community Garden; prior reports on the history and circumstances of the garden may be downloaded from the UMA web page <https://www.uma.edu/student-life/clubs/gardens/>. This report does not pertain to the UMA Bangor Community Garden, which has separated itself from the UMA Augusta Community Garden.

The UMA Augusta Community Garden is envisioned as a *site of education* in community organizing, a *seedbed for social connection* that sustains and retains students on campus, a *testbed for practical application* of academic research, a *space where skills of civic engagement* are learned and practiced, and a *program to serve public need* through the growth of food for Maine families and the growth of leadership for Maine's future.



# Trends in the Garden for 2019

## *Garden Output*

One of the goals of the UMA Augusta Community Garden project is to grow fresh and healthy vegetables to donate to the Augusta Food Bank. The following table describes the harvest of vegetables donated to the Augusta Food Bank by year:

2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
0 pounds	298 pounds	556 pounds	716 pounds	695 pounds

In addition to these donations, the UMA Augusta Community Garden harvested a large quantity of seeds from its harvested vegetables. Some of these seeds are being held by the garden for planting in the 2020 season, but beyond what seeds we need to plant, we generated a surplus of seeds, and organized giveaways of seed packets to community members in 2019, giving away 47 packets of seeds in all.

The sustained relatively high output of the garden over time is impressive given the decision, reached in consultation with leadership of the Augusta Food Bank, to rely less on growing food such as squash and kale. While being easy to grow and weighing a great deal,

UMA Augusta Community Garden Harvest Variety, 2017 - 2019			
Vegetable	Pounds 2017	Pounds 2018	Pounds 2019
Arugula	-	3.7	1.3
Basil	-	-	7.9
Beans	80.5	59.0	99.3
Beets	6.5	29.0	12.3
Bell Peppers	-	-	22.1
Blueberries	-	0.3	2.0
Broccoli	-	-	4.8
Brussels Sprouts	-	-	0.2
Cabbage	-	37.5	12.9
Carrots	75.0	68.8	16.0
Chard	10.4	3.8	18.5
Cucumbers	-	159.5	76.8
Fairy Eggplant	-	-	0.7
Garlic	20.0	37.0	21.5
Hot Peppers	-	-	1.9
Hungarian Wax Peppers	-	0.3	-
Kale	2.0	61.0	1.1
Lettuce	-	14.5	2.9
Mint	-	-	4.1
Mixed Greens	-	16.1	1.0
Onions	26.0	10.0	7.8
Peas	15.5	34.0	26.5
Potatoes	-	-	12.1
Radishes	60.0	13.0	14.6
Raspberries	-	-	10.8
Scallions	-	-	4.0
Squash	175.0	19.0	36.1
Strawberries	-	1.8	1.8
Tomatoes	34.9	112.0	111.7
Turnips	54.0	26.0	162.7

squash is overabundant at food banks and food pantries during the summer. We have also learned from the Food Bank that kale, while abundantly growing in our garden, is not a

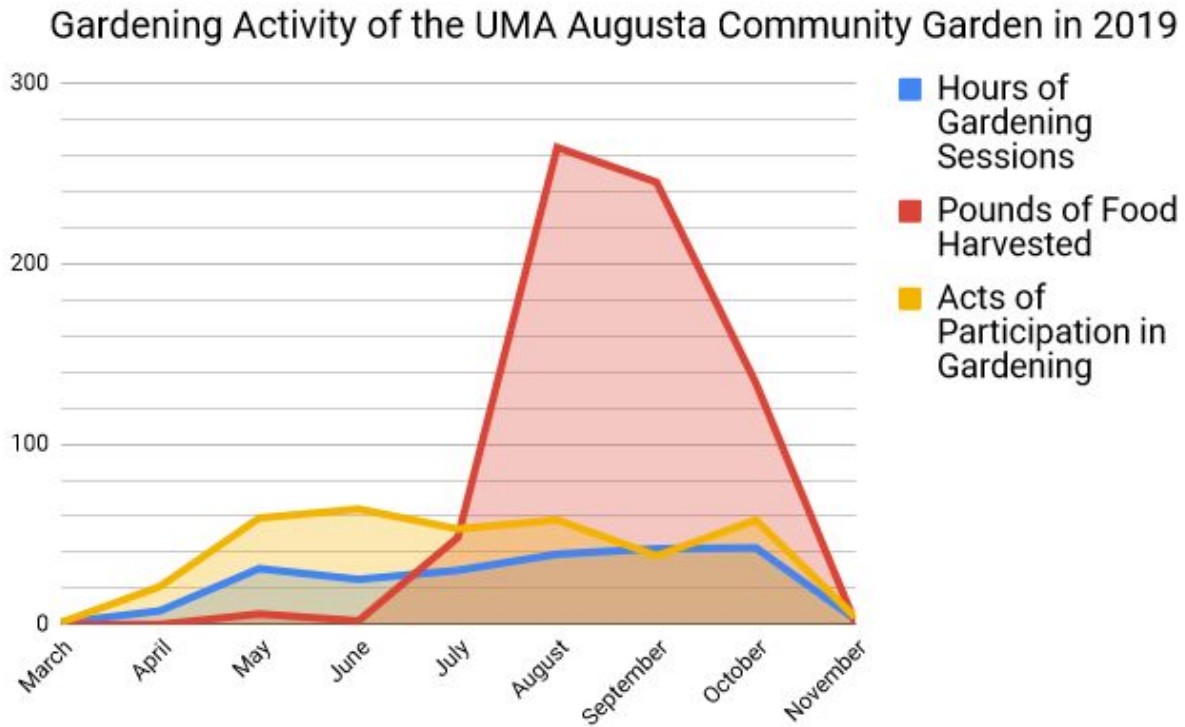
vegetable with which many Mainers are comfortable. In place of relying only on squashes and kale, we have grown an increasing variety of vegetables, as the table above shows.

Moving forward, we will continue our experiment from 2019 in the growing of a few unusual “heirloom” varieties of potato in order to further develop our own collective gardening skill and to provide something unusual to food bank clients. But otherwise, the UMA Augusta Community Garden will continue to avoid growing heavier but less-needed vegetables from the squash and potato families.

## Participation in Gardening and Garden-Related Events

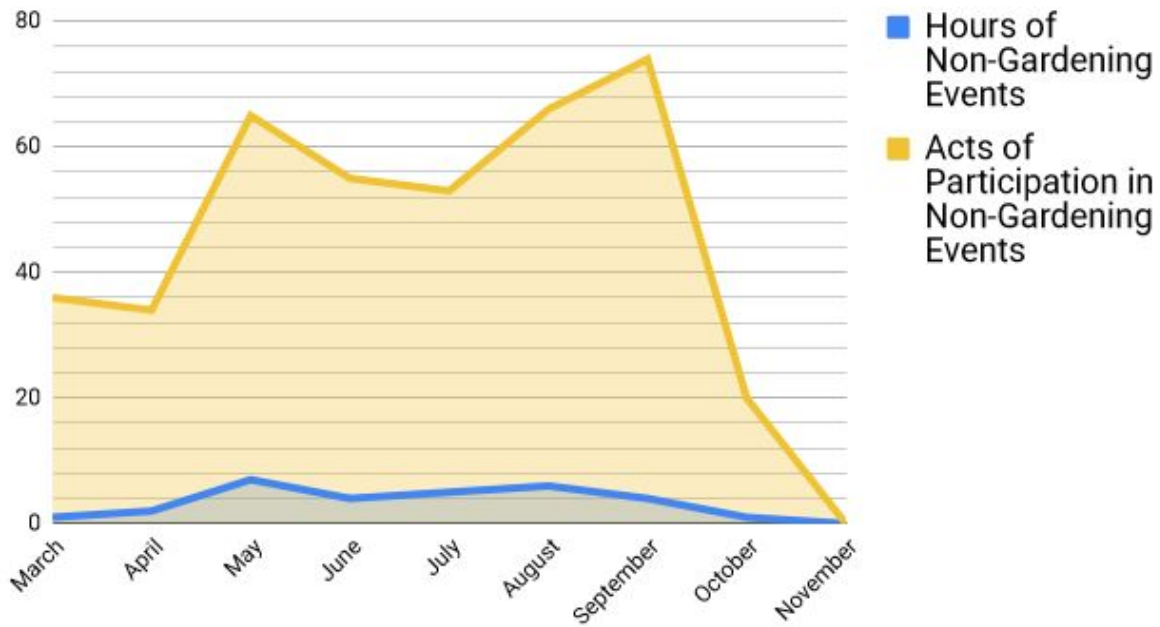
“To everything there is a season” -- Ecclesiastes 3.

The work and the joy and the community and the produce of the garden each have their rhythms. The following graphs show the rhythms of our garden in 2019:



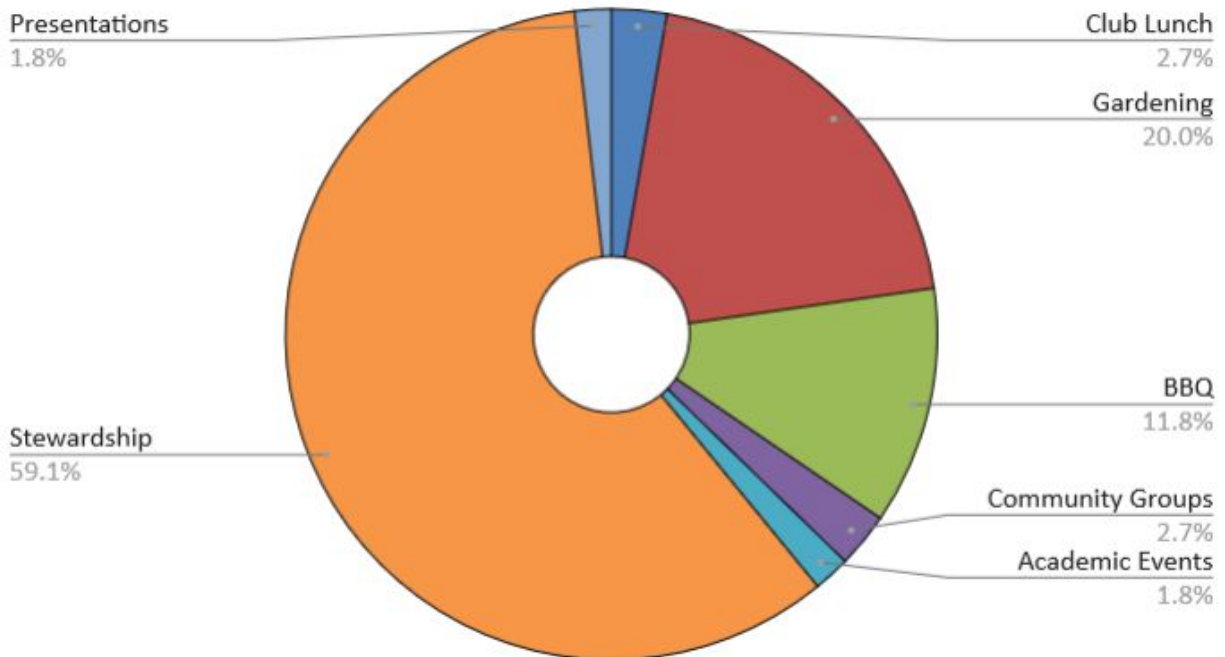


## Non-Gardening Activity of the UMA Augusta Community Garden in 2019



In the 2019 Augusta campus garden, the number of gardening sessions and the number of campus events organized by the Augusta garden club continued to grow, to a total of 110 recorded events on the Augusta campus (a similar level to the 113 events of the 2018 season). These events can be broken out by type:

## Type of Garden Event, UMA Augusta Community Garden 2019



In this chart, “gardening” refers to the group activities needed to grow a garden: sowing, weeding, watering, and harvesting. “Gardening” events are attended by a mix of staff, students, faculty, and community members. “Stewardship” refers to periods of time devoted by the two faculty principally organizing the garden -- Associate Professor of Sociology James Cook and Assistant Professor of Computer Information Systems Matt Dube -- to maintaining the space of the garden for use through deliveries, equipment maintenance, mowing, tilling, and event setup and takedown. The dominant event type of the year, “Stewardship,” reflects the significant burden for supporting faculty in maintaining the garden space.

As the number of garden events has increased, the number of participants in Augusta gardening and garden-related events has also increased. In the 2018 year, a record 305 distinct individuals (126 UMA students, 108 community members and students from other schools, 4 administrators, 44 staff members, and 23 faculty members) took part in either gardening or garden-related events. In the 2019 year, this number dropped from the prior year, but remained above any year other than 2018 at 212 distinct individuals (102 UMA students, 60 community members and students from other schools, 1 administrator, 32 staff members, and 17 faculty members).

This is the second year in a row out of the four years of this garden project that UMA students have made up the majority of participants in gardening and garden-related events. In the 2013 Office of Civic Engagement Strategic Plan, Key Goal 2.8 declared that the garden should “Maintain and expand an annual community garden to involve a minimum of 30 students annually.” In 2017, it took both the Bangor- and Augusta-campus gardens put together to reach this total. In both 2018 and 2019, the Augusta campus garden alone has surpassed that goal for involvement many times over, a remarkable success.

<b>2019 Adopt-A-Bed Participants</b>	<b>Pounds of Vegetables Harvested from Bed</b>
Amber Theriault - Marketing & Communications	28.9
Matt Dube - CIS	10.5
Diane Shorey - Academic Logistics	140.4
Students of French Club	12.4
James Cook and Lorien Lake-Corral - Social Science	50.0
Les French - Mathematics	40.0
Larisa Batchelder - Alumni	19.3
Sherrie Brann - Student Support & Development	10.7
Robert Kellerman - Honors	45.2
Students of TRiO	10.3

In the Augusta-campus adopt-a-bed program, 10 campus groups were involved in tending their own raised beds, extending the social integration of the garden with the UMA community. As the above table shows, a considerable share of the total harvest came from these “adopted” beds.

## *Design Completion -- UMA's First Successful Garden Labyrinth augmented by Perennial Corners*

After the Augusta garden's unsuccessful attempt to grow a corn labyrinth in 2017, a new design for a concentric-circle labyrinth was adapted from *Labyrinths & Mazes: A Journey Through Art, Architecture, and Landscape* (Tatarella 2016) to fit an ellipse within a central rectangular space in the garden. In 2018, students in SSC 334 (Cultivating Community) used the mathematics of an ellipse to plot and seed labyrinth, with sunflowers creating a wall and white clover serving as a nitrogen-fixing, traffic-tolerant ground cover.



In 2019, the second year of a successful garden labyrinth at UMA, the white clover regrew as a perennial fixture, but we replaced sunflowers as walls with a variety of vegetables of increasing height moving toward the center of the labyrinth (first bush beans and root vegetables, then tomatoes, and finally pole beans, to establish labyrinth walls.

Placing the elliptical labyrinth within a rectangular space left the center of our garden with four unused corners. In 2018, we planted the first two corners with raspberry canes and blueberry bushes. In 2019, we planted another set of raspberry canes and blueberry bushes in the other two corners to complete the labyrinth design.

Preparing for 2020, we have rotated crops to ensure soil and vegetable health. In the fall of 2019, we sowed the outer ring of the labyrinth with garlic cloves for the next year. In the innermost ring, we look forward to an expansion of mint, a crop that has proven especially popular with members of the New Mainer community who live in Augusta.



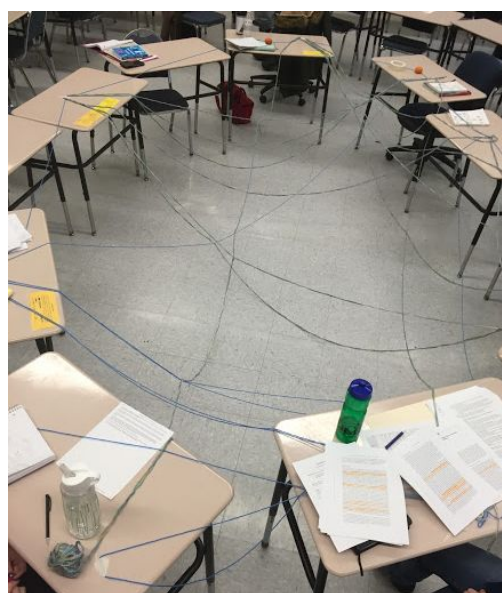
# Challenges That Face the UMA Augusta Community Garden

The previous pages of this year's annual report describe the considerable and continuing successes of UMA Augusta Community Garden. But as the consecutive years of the current garden project add up, it is worth taking some time to consider the challenges that the garden faces as a civic education and civic engagement project.

## *Challenge #1: Academic Coursework and the Gardens*

Prior garden reports share the history of the development of SSC 334, Cultivating Community, a course which is designed to help build leadership in students individually, to help build skills in analyzing and intervening in community collectively, and to use the community garden as an applied place to practice and hone these skills.

Regardless of campus location, Augusta or Bangor, the SSC 334 courses have struggled to gain large enrollments. The first two years of enrollments topped out at ten students, and since then have consistently fallen below those levels. An increasing share of students are enrolled as online students, making the fitting for an ever-smaller pool of online students. In addition, the course is not a requirement for any program, making it less attractive to students in highly-constrained majors.



*Challenge: how should the garden project respond to the continuing low levels of interest in the Cultivating Community course?*

## *Challenge #2: Academic Coursework and the Gardens*

Last year's report describes considerable success with the UMA Augusta Community Garden Club as a student organization, a success attributable in no small part to the energy and dedication of its student officers. These officers organized meetings, promoted events, and used their own social networks to recruit and engage additional students as participants.

As regularly happens at a university, however, students move on. One of our officers has since graduated; another has left the university for other ventures. As a result, in the fall

semester of 2019 the garden's student organization was left without the number of officers needed to call a meeting according to its own constitution. Since then, recruitment efforts via email, social media, and personal contacts have failed to attract a new group of students interested in serving as the organization's officers.

We have discovered in our research that other college campuses maintain student organizations by requiring participation, either in order to earn a badge or degree certification, or in order to fulfill the requirements of one or more academic courses. In these circumstances the student organization persists, not as a reflection of grassroots-level student interest but instead as a reflection of faculty or administration priorities. If that is what it takes to keep a student organization going, should the student organization keep going? This is not a rhetorical question with an obvious answer.

*Challenge: how should the garden project respond to low levels of interest among students in leading a student organization?*

### *Challenge #3: Top-Down Vision*

Before the current 4-year period sponsored by the Social Science program, the UMA Community Garden civic engagement project on the Augusta campus was led by the Honors Program, the old Office of Civic Engagement, and Education faculty. In all of these iterations, the garden was a first and foremost a university-sponsored idea that was then promoted as an opportunity to students.

This approach taken in developing UMA's community garden projects has run contrary to the community organizing principles of Amartya Sen (see Schischka et al. 2008), which calls for those who would intervene in a community to first speak with and listen to that community in order to learn how members of community envision their experience, what capabilities they perceive as needing development, and how such development of capabilities can be best accomplished through community action. Instead, successive organizers have adopted the "Field of Dreams" idea that "if you build it, they will come."

Students *have* come to the garden, and they have participated to an impressive extent, but the difficulty in attracting new student leadership for the garden project may reflect a mismatch between students' own vision of their educational and civic missions and faculty/staff vision of what those missions should be.

To assess this question empirically, a survey has been deployed to students in introductory social science courses, asking them in open questions to describe the level and direction of their interest in civic engagement at the university, and then asking in closed questions for rankings of various possible civic engagement efforts at the university. How will a community garden rank in prompted questions? In unprompted questions? It will be instructive to find out.

*Challenge: is a community garden actually what students want, reflecting their own vision of self- and community-development?*

## Challenge #4: An Ivy League Mission at an Access Institution

The idea of civic engagement at a university has roots in the Ivy League universities (see Moran 2017 and Hartley et al. 2010), whose students came from upper-class backgrounds in which they were accustomed to being served and destined for a life of commanding leadership. In such a context, the essential intervention of civic engagement in higher education took on the cultural idea of *noblesse oblige*, that the moral burden of the privileged is to use their power and resources to help others. By incorporating the particular form of service learning into curricular and co-curricular activities, privileged students' lives would be transformed by bringing them into contact with, and action on behalf of, the "needy" (Butin 2003).

This transformation-through-exposure-to-service model may not actually be so transformational to a student whose life has been the experience of either service to others through a gendered experience of family and community, or subservience to others through subordination in a racial or class stratification system. Many of our students at UMA have no need to be introduced to the idea of service or being pressed into acting on behalf of others' interests -- this has been the basis of their lives prior to enrollment.

Furthermore, the model of service learning represented in the work of the UMA Augusta Community Garden supposes that effective social change will come from the actions of individuals to help individuals. Mitchell et al. 2012 (p. 614) describe the danger of individualizing difference in the context of racism:

*"When problems are framed as the result of individual circumstances (e.g., drug addiction, dropping out of school) rather than political and social processes (e.g., immigration policy or residential segregation), students are denied opportunities to learn that racial domination is not the result of past 'mistakes' from which some passively benefit but, instead, is the result of intentional processes that are ongoing."*

A transformative experience for students at UMA, most of whom come to education from a life of disempowerment, would be the experience of the other side of civic engagement -- practice in the skills of discovery, the discovery of voice, and use of voice in pursuit of social and political change. The UMA Augusta Community Garden does not currently offer this model of civic engagement.

*Challenge: do UMA students need to learn to serve, or to find their voices?*

## Challenge #5: Inefficient Provision of Social Service

There are many purposes for a university civic engagement project beyond the simple provision of a social service. For instance, the social connections forged when students, staff, and faculty work together on a project have the potential to increase student retention and graduation (Tinto 1998). University civic engagement projects also have

public relations value; in 2019 the UMA Augusta Community Garden was featured on the front page of our university's website, is mentioned in prospective student tours, and even showed up in television advertisements. Students learn organizing and communication skills when making the garden project work.

But if we consider just the service aspect of the UMA Augusta Community Garden in supplying fresh vegetables to hungry families of Central Maine, consider the inputs and outputs of the project. In these terms, the output for 2019 was 695 pounds of vegetables. The input in gardening time alone was 784 hours of labor for the year. That's 1.12 hours of work per pound of vegetables donated, or 0.89 pounds of vegetables donated per hour of work. Our gardening may be noble in intention, but it is very inefficient in action.

Consider that if those 784 hours were spent with volunteers working at a minimum-wage job at McDonald's, with a minimum wage of \$12/hour in Maine, those volunteers would have earned \$9,408. Even if we assume \$4/hour were withheld on each paycheck, the volunteers working at McDonald's could have donated \$6,272 to purchase fresh vegetables from a Hannaford supermarket, where broccoli crowns, for instance, can be purchased for \$1.99/lb. That comes out to 3,152 pounds of broccoli if garden volunteers had worked at McDonald's to buy vegetables. By working in the garden, they produced just 784 pounds of vegetables, a process that was four times less efficient than minimum-wage work.

*Challenge: if the purpose of civic engagement is just to provide a service, why garden when we could work at McDonald's? If the garden project pays off for the university in other ways, how much is that worth?*

## *Challenge #6: Investment of Leadership Time*

The number of people involved in the Augusta campus garden, and the number of events held by the garden, mark continued success in 2019. But this success takes a surprising amount of work. For every Augusta-campus garden event, university supervision must be present to ensure safety and security, and UMA regulations require a club advisor to be present for all club meetings and activities. In addition, preparation for activities and upkeep of the garden site require a significant number of stewardship hours. Without these hours spent, the garden could not succeed as a sufficiently organized physical space, much less a civic engagement effort. These activities are necessarily those of faculty or staff, since they involve supervisory responsibility for club activity and the physical upkeep of campus space.

To satisfy the requirements for keeping the garden project going, Associate Professor of Sociology James Cook and Assistant Professor of Computer Information Systems together logged 268 hours of work in the UMA Augusta Community Garden during the 2019 season.

*Challenge: is this amount of time invested in faculty leadership of the garden sustainable?*

## Challenge #7: Pandemic

The final challenge is not limited to the UMA Augusta Community Garden, but is monumental to the entire university, the state of Maine, the nation, and the world. As I write these final sentences, we are in the early stages of a pandemic that is projected to shortly overwhelm our health care and public safety systems. For that reason, all social activities at the UMA campuses have been shut down and social distancing has been required.

In the months to come, a small number of faculty and staff will travel as individuals to the UMA Augusta campus to keep the space of the garden in some order. But otherwise, for good reason, the UMA Augusta Community Garden is shut down as a civic engagement project. This pause in hectic garden-related activity provides us a good opportunity to thoughtfully consider all of the above challenges faced by the garden, and to weigh them against all the benefits the garden provides.

*Challenge: after the pandemic, what next?*

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