



October 2021

Edited by: Molly Tarvin

McRae, Peachey Begin Construction On Allegheny's New Food Forest

When he was just a freshman, Sebastian McRae had the idea to incorporate a “food forest” on Allegheny’s campus. The forest would consist of a wide variety of fruit trees in the small field adjacent to the Carrden, next to Walker hall. Students would be able to get food from the trees, accessing the various trees via dirt trails. Not only would it be a fun treat for hungry students, but it would give the community access to local fruits, and provide pollinators with more plants to work with, making the school that much more sustainable and ecologically friendly.

All of these details took some time to plan out, of course, which is why McRae has only started the actual construction of the food forest this year, as a senior. It has taken time to plan out the construction process as well, as multiple steps had to be put in place in order to create a full timeline for the creation of the forest over the course of this school year. In order to make this timeline, Sebastian has worked closely with Kelly Boulton, Allegheny’s sustainability director, who is largely in charge of managing on-campus systems and structures of sustainability. He has also pulled in a junior seminar group to help him work on the project this semester, with Ashlynn Peachey in charge of that group project.

Construction of the food forest officially began on October 14th. McRae and Peachey invited ESS students and faculty to help create the forest as volunteers, and for a few hours that afternoon, 10-15 volunteers came in and out to help create the dirt trails that will begin to direct the landscape of the food forest. Trusted ally and friend of McRae, Tim Weighart, was especially helpful because of his great attitude and awesome muscles.



McRae ('22) breaks ground for Allegheny's food forest



By: Tim Weighart

Cover Art by: Leuca Hanish



Carrden Food Forest- Continued

The trails were created by bringing in a skid steer that removed the grass. We then used shovels and rakes to make the trails more level, as the slight incline we were on would make the trail somewhat uneven. After we had made all the trails level, we put down leftover cardboard from the campus center that would eventually decompose so that we could prevent weeds from growing on the trail. We then had wood chips delivered that we dispersed along the trails to make even, aesthetically pleasing and distinct trails. That was the full extent of what we did that day, to provide the basis for what would eventually become the food forest.

Throughout the process, McRae constantly consulted the ground plan for the forest, and made calls on what looked good and what we still needed to work on. He has put a lot of careful thought into the process, even weighing the short-term carbon emissions and ecosystem disruption against the long-term benefits of sustainability before going forward with the plan. Many individuals came by and expressed curiosity or intrigue in what we were doing, including many ESS faculty and staff. Hopefully, this curiosity will turn into excitement among the student body once the food forest is completed next spring. It has been several years since a new natural project was added to Allegheny's ecological landscape, so I think it was a welcome surprise for the entire community to see something new here.

As of the time of completing this article, McRae has gotten many more plants to place in the food forest, and he has already planted one peach tree. Plans to continue planting are in fruition. The food forest will not be completed until next spring, since many plants will not survive the winter if they are planted now, and it may be even longer before they consistently produce fruit, but the long-term cultural and sustainable benefits are undeniable.

Food for Thought

The food forest was designed to showcase an alternative style of agriculture. It's meant to be a space where students can openly interact with foodways and learn about how food is grown, permaculture, and the history of the land. It's going to take a while for the food forest to reach its full potential. Probably at least 5 years until we get decent yields from the space. Still it is so exciting to think about the ways that students can change the college landscape. That a student group, like the sustainable design team, is able to come together and make an impact on campus. I'm really excited to watch the food forest grow over the next two years. It'll be even better to come visit campus in 5 or 10 years and see the food forest at full potential.

- Ashlynn Peachey, '23





A Book of Bread: Eric Pallant's Hobby Hits the Shelves

When one considers a book written by a professor, our minds will almost always jump to a dry, academic research publication that embodies their life's work in a niche topic of their field. However, our own Professor Eric Pallant is working to break that stigma with his first published book, *Sourdough Culture: A History of Bread Making from Ancient to Modern Bakers*, as he explores not his academic passions, but instead his lifetime hobby of breadmaking.

Professor Pallant's breadmaking began one fateful day during his first year at Allegheny College, when he attended a picnic and tried his first piece of authentic sourdough bread. Ever with an experimental attitude, Pallant accepted a sample of the sourdough starter from the original baker, and has been growing the starter, making his own bread, and spreading the love for handmade bread ever since. He has nurtured three separate sourdough starters, the unique collections of yeast and bacteria which gives the bread its unique flavor, and traced the origins of his original starter to the Cripple Creek gold rush, nearly 133 years ago. With his new book, Pallant explores not just the history of his own starter, but the history of sourdough, bread, and the process of agriculture all the way to its beginnings in Mesopotamia. His research took him across the world, finding traces of bread making history in San Francisco, Israel, and China, along with more local destinations such as the Crawford County Fair and Allegheny's own Carrden. Now, the adventure is embodied for the world to read in his debut book.

As explained by Pallant, the process of writing a book about bread is almost as time consuming as perfecting the sourdough itself. Begun nearly ten years before the release, Pallant has delved into the studies of archaeology, history, and microbiology, along with interviews with expert bakers and other scholars.

Likewise, getting the book to print was an exhaustive process, one which included the vastly political world of publishing companies and agents. All in all, Pallant experienced the most pushback from the editors in regards to his position as a professor. He admitted that the publishers were skeptical of the book, expecting a deeply scientific overview of breadmaking which would not sell. In stark contrast, Pallant assures his book is a fun and informational read, keeping an adventurous tone and an entertaining story that will keep all readers, regardless of education, continually invested.

The book's attention on the national- and even international- scope speaks to the appreciation all readers hold for Pallant's writing style. Besides holding the third spot for best selling 'Food History' books on Amazon, *Sourdough Culture* was also given 4.6 out of 5 stars and excellent reviews from scholars and bakers alike, including renowned American author Micheal Pollan. Additionally, upon the book's arrival, Pallant was interviewed by CNN (who featured not only a story, but also his recipe for bread and starter), NPR, numerous podcasts, and even an *Isrealei* magazine. In the future, Pallant will be traveling to multiple cities and festivals to do signings and talks, including a reading, and bread tasting event at Grounds for Change on November 1st.

Professor Pallant's book is being sold in the Allegheny bookstore, and is also available at Barnes and Noble, Amazon, and online book sellers. Pallant urges anyone who reads the book to leave a review on Amazon, and likewise hopes his book can inspire a new generation of bakers. He encourages anyone who is skeptical of the process to keep one fact in mind: even the worst loaf of homemade sourdough will be better than anything bought in a store.

COP26- A Chance to Get It Right?



**UN CLIMATE
CHANGE
CONFERENCE
UK 2021**

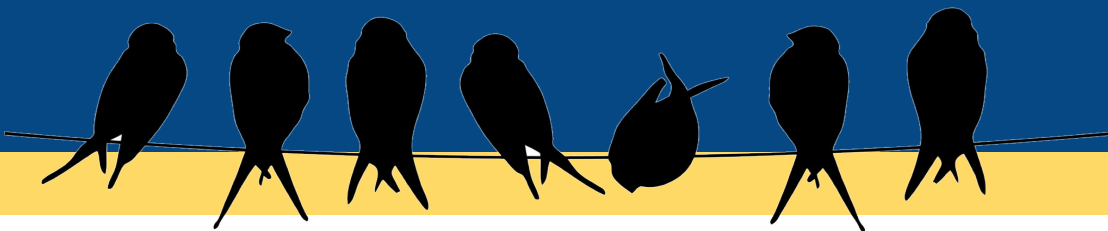
The Conference of the Parties (COP) – the annual UN-hosted global climate summit that in the past has resulted in the Kyoto Protocol (COP 3) and the Paris Agreement (COP 21) – begins a two-week session for its 26th meeting on October 31st. COP 26 kicks off 5 years after the meeting that produced the Paris Agreement, and at a time when the world faces many stark realities. The most recent IPCC report – the huge assessment of all published climate science done every 5-7 years by teams of scientists from around the world – was characterized earlier this year by the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres as “a code red for humanity.” This year has seen record-breaking heatwaves around the world, increases in extreme weather events, and increasing numbers of climate refugees fleeing myriad climate impacts on their lives. Additionally, a new record for global carbon dioxide emissions was set in 2020 despite the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns that temporarily slowed the global economy.

The original Paris Agreement goal to keep the world well below 2°C of additional warming above pre-industrial levels – with a primary focus of keeping the world from warming above 1.5°C – cannot be met by existing voluntary national pledges to the agreement. In fact, even if every nation fully meets its pledge – something that almost none are currently on pace to do – we will exceed those temperature thresholds to the tune of seeing a 2.7°C temperature increase by the end of the century. This outcome will be physically and socially catastrophic for the world, and those catastrophes will not wait until the year 2100 to occur. Earth has currently warmed by 1.1-1.2°C above pre-industrial levels, and that warming is already causing devastating outcomes around the globe, including here in the US. A recent report from the UNEP indicates that we have 8 years to cut GHG emissions in half if we want to be on a trajectory to avoid crossing those crucial temperature thresholds and give the people of the world a good chance to create a sustainable future.

The new national plans established at COP 26 will determine whether the international community finally gets on a pathway toward stabilizing runaway global warming and ensuring a survivable future for the planet and the people on it, or whether the world’s largest GHG polluters – like the US – will continue failing to tackle climate change because of a mission to maintain status quo in the service of neoliberal capitalism’s rapacious growth machine.

The world looks and operates the way it does because of choices that were, and continue to be, made by some people. So far, those choices have created a world of radical inequality, and one where the poorest among us are being burdened with nightmare scenarios as the planet around us burns, or floods, or dries up. The world is as it is because of choices that have been made to achieve certain goals, and much and many have been sacrificed in the process of moving us all to this point in history. However, these choices are not encoded in human DNA. We are capable of doing things differently. Starting now, we can decide to prioritize things like equality, justice, and true holistic sustainability. We can make different choices than those that have been made so far, and by doing so put the world not only on a trajectory of planetary climate healing, but also on a trajectory to actually improve the lives of all people -- because the systems that give us the climate crisis also give us inequality and injustice.

COP 26 is not the only piece in the climate policy puzzle – there are many sub-national and local actions that can have meaningful impact on reversing current trajectories – but it will send an important message for the world. If COP 26 results in an improved Paris Agreement with greater emissions reductions pledges that are supported by real policy from the polluting nations of the world, then it can serve to turn global momentum toward a sustainable future. If it follows the pattern of simply paying lip service to climate action, and acts to maintain status quo around the planet, then it will have failed and an even greater burden will be placed on local and regional efforts to do what national governments and international agreements refuse to do. Major polluters like the US have failed on 25 previous occasions to make new choices. COP 26 offers an opportunity to finally begin getting it right.



A Conservationist's Alternatives to Stoning Birds to Death

If you're like me, you probably care about the environment. So, you can probably understand how disagreeable it is to use the saying "kill two birds with one stone" – it doesn't align with my environmental values, it seems insensitive, and it certainly isn't vegan. It's not that I don't value efficiency, because I do. It is important to make effective use of resources, especially with the growing impact of climate change, and that goes for rocks as well. I just think that the time has passed in which killing birds is a relevant activity. Here are a few possible alternatives to the old adage that seemed to me a lot more sustainable.

- Flip two pancakes with one spatula
- Catch two fish with one hook (and release them, of course)
- Catch two leaves with one hand
- Grab two macroinvertebrates with one tweezer
- Cause two smiles with one corny joke
- Make two cups of tea with one bag
- Eat two meals with one fork
- Feed two vegans with one tofurkey
- Photograph two bird species with one picture
- Wear two socks with one sandal
- Bake two loaves of bread with one starter
- Complete two ESS major requirements with one class
- Start two campfires with one match
- Roast two s'mores with one stick
- Eat two Brooks meals with one swipe
- Get two tokens for one green box
- Crash two parties with one Halloween costume
- Plant two trees in one hole
- Catch two spiders with one cup
- Taste two apples in one bite
- Knit two hats with one ball of yarn...

As you can tell, there is no excuse to be killing birds with rocks anymore, since we could be doing any of these more sustainable alternatives. Some of these sayings also have utility beyond accomplishing only two things with one action – they can be used over and over again! Have one designated spider-catching cup, and catch fifty-seven spiders each year with it! See how many fires you can kindle from a single flame! See how many years you can keep a vintage sourdough starter alive! Eat as many meals as you can with a single fork! We can all be sustainable if we follow this doctrine! If you like any of these, please feel free to begin popularizing them within the ESS department. But don't stop there! Think big, and bring positive change to the whole college!

**BOOK
SIGNING
and
READING**

With Professor Eric Pallant

Including:
Book Selling (20% discount)
Sourdough Bread Tasting
Sourdough Bread Raffle

Grounds for Change:
Monday,
November 1st
7PM - 9PM

**SOURDOUGH
CULTURE**
A HISTORY OF
BREAD-MAKING
FROM ANCIENT TO
MODERN BAKERS
ERIC PALLANT
FOREWORD BY PETER REINHART

Notice Anything Different?



The food forest's peach tree!



The pond is coming back!



New tree stump chairs!



A new plant in the lobby!

A Touch of The Arts

Poem by Meredith Muschweck ('22)



Fall Foliage

The leaves remain greener
longer than previous autumns.
The out of the ordinary warmth
of the weather is to blame
for this slow browning.
Usually the ground is littered
with rusted oak tree leaves,
the gamboge of the ginkgo,
and the carnelian of the maple.
The breeze threatens to knock
them from their wooden perch,
yet still they blanket the trees.

Want to Write Our Next Poem?

Email Molly Tarvin at
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