



ESS Newsletter

April, 2025



Alumni Highlight - Collette Walsh!

After graduating from Allegheny in 2013, Colette worked on various vegetable farms for several years, with a particular interest in the more scientific aspects of agriculture, like soil science. Additionally, she went to the University of Santa Cruz and got a degree in Horticulture. Today, she resides in Pittsburgh, PA, and is the founder of Sol Patch Garden, an urban cut flower farm in Braddock, PA! She's incredibly passionate and proud of the success of Sol Patch Garden, and has been able to build an amazing team of people who work with her there. While she does spend a lot of time with people who are also into farming/agriculture, she also likes to dance, and has experience in things like contra dancing, square dancing, and two-step dancing! Altogether, Colette says that she loved her experience at Allegheny, and that it helped her to build a strong community of people that she felt supported by and allowed her to dive deep into her interests. In terms of advice for current Allegheny students, Colette suggests that it's really important to try different things professionally and that doing jobs that you might not immediately be interested in can help produce lots of valuable experience for future careers.

Thank you for sharing your story with us!

Alumni Highlight - Cat Waddington!

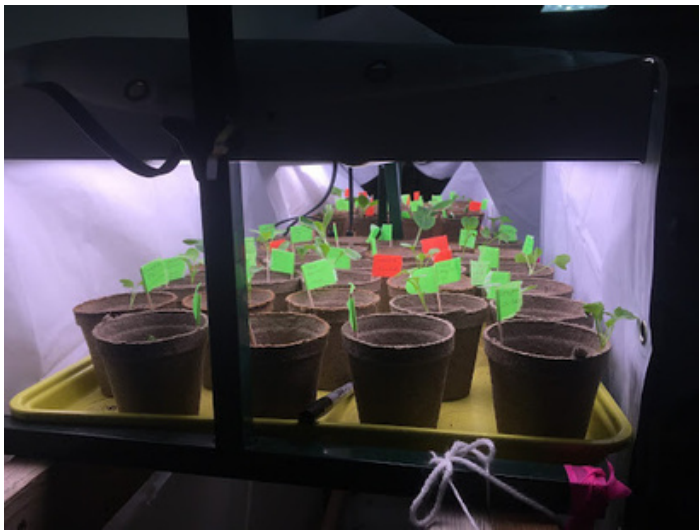
After graduating in 2018, Cat moved to Pittsburgh, PA with her fiancé and worked at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Garden with four other Allegheny alumni. While she said she didn't have a clear idea of where she was headed after graduating, she eventually came into horticulture, and now works as a Horticultural Coordinator for the Western PA Conservancy! This entails managing around 140 gardens throughout the area, one of which being De Arment Park, which is the triangular green space between French Creek Pkwy. and Park Ave. that houses the "Welcome to Meadville" sign! Outside of her career, one of her favorite things to do is take hiking trips up north in the Adirondack Mountains with her fiancé and her pets. Ultimately, Cat said that the ESS program quickly became her home at Allegheny. Her advice for current students would be to take small, slow steps while working, to use Allegheny's nonprofit job board to look for careers in ESS, and to actively participate in events for organizations that you're interested in. Thank you for sharing your story with us!





Enviro. Research Methods: Compost Questions

This semester, students taking the Environmental Science research methods course are working with Dr. Kevin Geyer and Dr. Matt Bethurem to explore the impact of compost dehydration on its quality as a growing medium. Composting, especially on commercial scales, is a beneficial waste management strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions compared to landfill systems. The process also generates a useful product, but the high moisture content of compost makes it heavy and difficult to efficiently transport to where it would be most useful. A solution to the transportation problem is drying the compost to be lightweight, but does this change the quality of the compost for plant growth? That's where the Research Methods project comes in. The class is currently running an experiment growing radishes and summer squash in compost that has undergone differing levels of dehydration treatment before being re-hydrated for the plants to grow. By measuring plant growth and biomass, the goal is to determine if the compost-drying treatments affect plant productivity.



The experimental setup of the plants growing in different compost treatments.



Educational Trail Signage

This semester, Rich Bowden's research methods class worked on designing signs that will be placed along a nature trail on one of the Foundation for Sustainable Forests's (FSF) properties. Sam Scott (They/them, class of 2027) explained how their class wanted to "educate people about the environment, but also about how foresters take care of the environment." Because of the location of the trail, they explained how their class did a lot of research on forestry, and, at the time of the interview, they also discussed how their class was creating signs about introduced species, tree ID, and other similar topics. In closing, Sam shared how they have had a lot of fun working on this project and that they think "environmental education is really important," so they were "excited to be a part of the project."

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