

Urban Food Production Workshop Report



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1. Workshop Summary

The Urban Food Production Workshop is a half-day event where students from D.C. public and private schools come to Muirkirk Research Farm to participate in experiential learning demonstrations and activities about urban farming and its benefits. The workshop is a collaboration between the Center for Sustainable Development, the Center for 4-H and Youth Development and the Center for Urban Agriculture. During the past two weeks two workshops were held; one on May 12th and another on May 19th. On May 12th students from **Calvary Christian Academy Middle School** (Ward 5; 10 males, 12 females, all African American) attended the workshop and on May 19th students from **Friendship Blow Pierce Middle Public Charter School** (Ward 7, 12 males, 14 females, all African American) attended.

2. Workshop Program

The students begin their time on the farm with a brief introduction and welcome from Che Axum, the farm Director. Then, the students are asked to sign in and split into three smaller groups to facilitate a hands-on experience learning program. The workshop includes the following stations:

➤ **Station 1: Aquaponics (managed by Dr. Kamran Zendehtel)**

At Station 1, the students learn about the importance of growing food in urban environment with a focus on the bio-intensive method of growing vegetables and fish together in a closed-loop system, aquaponics. The students get to see a small aquaponics display that they could keep inside their home to grow herbs and fish. Students are also shown large-scale aquaponics production with tilapia¹ and tanks at the farm.

➤ **Station 2: Soil Types (managed by Dr. Lorraine Clarke)**

In this station the students learn about the best type of soil for growing nutrient-rich food, the different types of soil and how to recognize them. The students are also taught what to do to create good soil if their soil at home is less than ideal. At this station, students identified the quality of a soil sample given to them.

➤ **Station 3: Compost and Planting Crops (managed by Diego Lahaye & Jaime Brown)**

At Station 3, the students learn how to make compost and the length of time it takes to make good compost. Students then go into the greenhouse and learn what different plants, like tomatoes, onions and carrots look like in the seedling stage. They also learn about transplanting seedlings by digging a small hole and placing the seedling in and covering it with soil.

After participating in all three stations, the students fill in a questionnaire to evaluate student's learning and share any comments that students/teachers might have about the program. The students also receive a snack before returning to their school.

¹ For the first two workshops held, tilapia had not yet been delivered to the farm so the students were shown the tanks where tilapia are grown.