

DEAD ZONES, WEED NESTS, AND MANURE MISHAPS:  
HOW GARDENERS CULTIVATE COLLECTIVE PLACE IN  
EAGLE HEIGHTS COMMUNITY GARDENS

by

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## Introduction

The garden plots of Eagle Heights Community Gardens stretch for eight acres up a hillside on the west side of the University of Wisconsin at Madison's campus (Figure 1). Individual gardeners shape much of the space in this allotment-style community garden: their plots join together into a cohesive landscape. Bent water spigots, flowering Canada thistle, and trailing butternut squash vines fill the Gardens. At the beginning of the growing season you can see all the way up the brown hillside, where debris from last year provides hiding places for multitudes of mice. By the middle of August, masses of vegetation hide gardeners who assiduously tend their plots, weeding and harvesting. Everything is brown again in October, plants slowly dying amidst thriving cool-weather spinach and kale. Residents of Eagle Heights began gardening near their apartments in 1960 (Figure 2). They arranged for plowing of a common space that they then filled with personal gardens. The Gardens you can walk through today, however, are not the same as those cultivated years ago. Gardeners continuously modify areas of shared concern by redefining what they hold collectively and therefore what they must manage together. This history of Eagle Heights Community Gardens probes how human beings define collective resources and manage them: a process that depends not only on social beliefs but also on our tangible interactions within a landscape.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I will use 'landscape' throughout this piece to describe the Gardens as a cohesive place: one that people perceive as unitary and, somehow, separate from surrounding lands. 'Landscape' has a complex theoretical history in Geography. Landscape has been a unit analysis for geographers: distinct land areas transformed by human cultures. Beginning in the late 1970s, critical landscape theorists critiqued landscape scholarship by probing exactly what processes (and power dynamics) these normative physical spaces make invisible. I attempt to elucidate hidden aspects of the Gardens' commons in this history. See John Leighly, ed., *Land and Life: A selection from the writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962); D.W. Meinig, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Don Mitchell, *Lie of the Land: Migrant*

## *Place*

Myriad gardeners form the Gardens' place by cultivating land side-by-side. In the Gardens, gardeners intentionally cultivate specific plants within their personal gardens. Gardeners categorize what vegetation is, or is not, allowed in their plots – and at times collectively decide what plants can grow on their shared land. All gardens must have boundaries: gardeners protect these areas from trespassing weeds, insects, and floods. Gardens require rich soil, plentiful water, enough sunlight, and sweaty labor. Gardens reflect gardeners' gardening goals, ideologies, and knowledge. All garden boundaries are permeable: movements across the Gardens' bounds shape them as a place. Gardens, and all places, form from the physical, social, and economic connections between spaces.<sup>2</sup>

You can enter Eagle Heights Community Gardens from all sides, tracing well-trod paths or tramping through tall prairie grasses. You may find yourself, unconsciously, winding back and forth down the long paths and gradually descending from the hill's crest. Hazards fill the walkways. Water spigots jut at odd angles out of the ground and various slopes, dips, and holes await the unaware wanderer. Perhaps, occasionally, you can't wait for a row to end and so tiptoe cautiously through a plot: you tread where you hope nothing is planted, sidestep tomato cages, and brush by raspberry bushes. You can enter the Gardens from all sides, and so can everything else.

In 1966, gardeners attached an irrigation pipe to a fire hydrant in Eagle Heights

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*workers and the California landscape*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> Michel Conan writes that “Gardens are simply places where a social group engages in gardening. This makes the definition of gardens contingent on economy, environment, and culture of any group of gardeners.” Michel Conan, “From vernacular gardens to a social anthropology of gardening,” in *Perspectives on Garden Histories*, ed. M. Conan, (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1999), 183.

(Figure 3). They dug into the ground to bury the pipe and laid it through a culvert under Lake Mendota Drive to reach the Gardens. Today, the water line parallels the drive through a thicket of buckthorn and catalpa trees. Water, which enters the Gardens in these pipes, is a collective resource that all gardens need. Rainwater also moves across the Gardens: it pulls soil down the hillside and forms lakes at the bottom after summer storms.

Canada thistle rhizomes push through the soil, sending up new shoots in adjacent plots. The thistle's violet flowers go to seed which the wind off Lake Mendota blows across the field. Gardeners carry buckthorn to their plots to trellis beans: they leave a trail of berries to sprout into new bushes. Red tailed hawks come here from Bill's Woods to teach their young to hunt – the mice are fat from forgotten squash and abandoned beets. Each day, a family of sandhill cranes makes its way up from the Class of 1918 Marsh to feed on strawberries and toads. Bees collect pollen and then fly back to their hives in the oak savanna east of the Gardens.

When the Gardens were plowed twice a year, the plow came through the southwest entrance, drove up the hill, and then wound its way down. It left grassy strips untouched for paths and to break rain water's insistent flow. Gardeners paid the Experimental Farms for plowing and maintenance, sending plot fees into the College of Agriculture's account. People's beliefs about personal health mingled with visions of ecological flows and they turned to organic gardening practices: ideologies altered gardener's material practices.

International students bring exotic seeds to plant in orderly hills. State

Department decisions change gardener demographics as it allocates student visas to different countries.<sup>3</sup> Gardeners swap seeds or leave plants on the share shelf. Some steal other gardener's raspberries or begin to tend abandoned plots. People come to the Gardens to water plants in the twilight or lug mulch just as morning sunlight limns the surrounding trees. People cultivate land to save money; to practice future lifestyles; to connect with the earth; or because they always have. Gardeners come to the Gardens with various gardening experiences, practices, and desires. All of these minute movements defy any notion we may have of a garden's rootedness or as a static and a-historic place.<sup>4</sup>

The Gardens as a place emerge from all of these interactions. Place is mutable, continuously reshaped by new material realities and social ideas. We form place out of our physical surroundings and the meanings we ascribe to specific spaces.<sup>5</sup> We tangibly interact with our environments: our experiences within places shape our understanding of them.<sup>6</sup> These physical encounters both affect, and are altered by, our cultural milieu. The social, economic, and physical connections between one space and many others alter place: connections which change material landscapes and people's ideologies.<sup>7</sup> We

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<sup>3</sup>Steve Williams, interview by author, February 9, 2010.

<sup>4</sup>Yi Fu Tuan refers to place as a pause, one in which we can gain experience and understanding. Gardens, however, are constantly full of movements and alterations despite plants' apparent stasis. Yi Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The perspective of experience*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

<sup>5</sup>That does not mean that our surroundings comply with the meanings we assign them. Anne Whiston Spirn notes, "There is always a tension between the autonomy of nonhuman features and phenomena and the meanings we ascribe them." Anne Whiston Spirn, "The Authority of Nature," in *Nature and Ideology: Natural garden design in the twentieth century*, ed. J. Wolschke-Bulmahn, (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1997): 251.

<sup>6</sup>This is the realm of humanistic geographers and phenomenologists. They theorize place as lived experience and something that we make out of Cartesian spaces. David Seamon connects our movements through space to how we experience and therefore create place. He terms such actions "place-ballets." Tim Cresswell, *Place: A short introduction*, (Maldon, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 20-23, 34.

<sup>7</sup>Political ecologists focus on such connections, as "any explanation of local phenomenon ... is nested within a wider context of pressures and coercions." Paul Robbins, *Lawn People: How grasses, weeds,*

socially define the nonhuman inhabitants of the land when we decide what we would like a space to do.<sup>8</sup> Cultural ideologies and personal beliefs shape our intentions and therefore our actions.<sup>9</sup> But these larger social structures are reworked by gardeners “in their own interpretation of what matters.”<sup>10</sup> Our intentions -- how we decide to interact with the people, rocks, plants, and insects in the Gardens -- determine what it is for each of us.

Our perceptions of place also come out of the material world around us. As places for cultivating food, when you garden, you literally eat your labor. You chew on your soil and swallow the summer's rain. In gardening spaces you struggle to cultivate certain plants and exclude others. To do this, you modify biotic communities and the soil they rely upon. You contend with the non-garden nature that continually invades your garden including insects, floods, birds, and raccoons. We attempt to shape the world around us, but often the non-human parts of the environment do not conform to our desires.<sup>11</sup> At

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*and chemicals make us who we are*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 6. Also see William Cronon, “Kennecott Journey: The paths out of town,” in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*, eds. William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> Recent scholars have framed the humanist concept of place as exclusionary and static. I believe that we can combine phenomenological understandings of place – the ways we materially and intimately know our surroundings – with the ways in which places are continually reformed by changing social and economic circumstances. Tim Cresswell, *Place: A short introduction*, (Maldon, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 39.

<sup>9</sup> Robbins remarks that any system of ideas (ideologies) is also material. Robbins, *Lawn People*, 15.

<sup>10</sup> David Crouch, *Art of Allotments: Culture and cultivation* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2003), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Politics ecologists theorize that one way in which non-humans gain agency is by resisting human actions. See Noel Castree, *Nature*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 156. Environmental historians have also used resistance to describe non-human agency. For example, Richard Judd writes “a landscape variously resistant to human improvement, a dynamic environment that shaped human culture as much as human culture shaped it.” *Common Lands, Common People: The origins of conservation in Northern New England*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 37. Mark Fiege notes that the land western farmers were cultivating “resisted ... efforts to control it.” Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The making of an agricultural landscape in the American West*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 44.

other times, gardens give us too much: when you can't harvest all of the cherry tomatoes spilling onto the ground or the giant squash produced from five hills of zucchini. The ways in which we interact with our material surroundings, though, are much more complex than resistance or overabundance. Agency of people and things comes out of the connections between them: we form places and they form us.<sup>12</sup>

The Gardens are both an individual and a collective place: a landscape in which gardeners balance personal and community needs. Gardeners continually reference their wonder at, and appreciation of, the diversity of plots in Eagle Heights Community Gardens.<sup>13</sup> Gardeners have always walked the Gardens' paths. They revel in, and learn from, individual cultivation practices: Okies growing okra; Californians planting on the flat for easy irrigation; big-stick gardeners from Asia building secret rooms with trellises; Midwesterners cultivating thickets of sunflowers and raccoon-tempting corn. Each plot is a place of personal expression.<sup>14</sup> Every gardener decides what to plant, how to work the soil, and what actions to take against insect invasions or a lack of water. These

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<sup>12</sup>In actor network theory, agency resides in the relationships between actants (human and nonhuman alike). See Sarah Whatmore, *Hybrid Geographies: Natures, cultures, spaces*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002); Michel Callon, "Some elements of a sociology of translation: Domestication of the scallops and the fisherman of St. Briec Bay," in M. Biagioli, ed., *The Science Studies Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 67-83; Bruno Latour, *We have never been modern*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). ANT theorists, however, do not dwell on the fact that space and place truly matter in discussing all interactions, or take into account power differentials which play a role in forming landscapes, particularly the primacy of human intentionality. See Dianne Rocheleau and Robin Roth, "Rooted networks, relational webs and powers of connection: Rethinking human and political ecologies," *Geoforum* 38 (2007): 433-437. Mark Fiege demonstrates how networks need to be rooted in space: "The human network that rested on the irrigated landscape mirrored the texture of the land itself. In attempting to change and control a dynamic environment, irrigators themselves changed. Culture and nature, social system and natural system, shaped each other [...]" Fiege, *Irrigated Eden*, 206-207.

<sup>13</sup>Judy and Paul Bosland, telephone interview by author, February 21, 2010; Richard Lawton, telephone interview by author, August 21, 2009; Nondee Jones, telephone interview by author, February 3, 2010; Robert House, telephone interview by author, June 6, 2010; and many more.

<sup>14</sup>Gretel Dentine, interview by author, October 1, 2009; David Crouch, *Art of Allotments: Culture and cultivation* (Five Leaves Publications, 2001).

individual choices reverberate back into other people in myriad ways: they learn how to interact with a garden's nature; enjoy an aesthetic, sensory experience; exchange vegetables. The physical gardens are also connected as the abstract plot boundaries are permeable to everything that moves across the landscape. Gardener's interpretations of what collective responsibilities they have to each other and the land stem from their experiences creating personal gardens on common property.

How gardeners define what they each require from the Gardens' land underlies what resources and attendant responsibilities this group of people holds collectively: what is common to them all.<sup>15</sup> Over 50 years, gardeners have continually reshaped which physical resources they manage together and what governance structures they institute to protect access to shared resources. The collective resources and responsibilities within Eagle Heights Community Gardens are malleable. Gardeners' interpretations of place alter the Gardens' commons: not only what a space physically provides but also what it should provide and to whom.

### *Collective rights and responsibilities*

In Eagle Heights Community Gardens, gardeners cultivate personal plots on common property: their basic common resource, then, is land. In common property relationships, all owners have the right of equal access to collective resources – although

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<sup>15</sup>When common property is managed with social institutions, scholars refer to it as “the commons.” Commons include both physical resources and the social relationships people form to govern the use of these finite resources. I will be examining both what gardeners believe they physically own in common and what they see as their shared social community. Bonnie McCay and James Acheson, “Human ecology of the commons,” in *The Question of the Commons: The culture and ecology of communal resources*, ed. by Bonnie McCay and James Acheson, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1987), 8.

codified equality does not necessarily translate into actual equality. Common property relationships give individuals certain rights to a resource, and responsibilities to other resource users accompany these rights.<sup>16</sup> Common property regimes rely upon social institutions (limiting who and how resources are used) to regulate equal communal rights.<sup>17</sup> A “commons” is comprised of both physical resources and their social governance structures.<sup>18</sup> Scholars who study commons seek to identify how institutions governing common-pool resources develop and why certain social formations prevent the depletion of finite, natural resources.<sup>19</sup> A resource's material properties determine both the governance structure in place and the efficacy of management practices.<sup>20</sup> In a community garden the land gardeners cultivate is one shared resource. Gardeners in these collective spaces, however, hold more than the land in common.<sup>21</sup>

Property relationships connect community gardeners, yet people who garden on

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<sup>16</sup>Commons scholars make the point that common property is not property open to all (“open access”), but property relationships within which users have associated duties that limit resource use. Daniel Bromley, “The Commons, Property, and Common-Property Regimes,” in *Making the Commons Work: Theory, Practice, and Policy*, ed. Daniel Bromley, (San Francisco, CA: ICS Press, 1992), 4.

<sup>17</sup>C.B. Macpherson, ed., *Property: Mainstream and Critical Positions*, (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 3-4. I write about property as a relationship between groups or individuals. Property rights, therefore, change depending upon the social context we exert them in. This is opposed to the ownership model of property, which describes property as a relationship between a person and a thing. Lynne Heasley, *A Thousand Pieces of Paradise: Landscape and property in the Kickapoo Valley*, (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 6-7.

<sup>18</sup>Bonnie McCay and James Acheson, “Human ecology of the commons,” in *The Question of the Commons: The culture and ecology of communal resources*, ed. by Bonnie McCay and James Acheson, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1987).

<sup>19</sup>Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Nives Dolsak and Elinor Ostrom, “The Challenges of the Commons” in *The Commons in the New Millennium: Challenges and Adaptations* ed. N. Dolsak and E. Ostrom, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 3-34.

<sup>20</sup>Dolsak and Ostrom, “The Challenges of the Commons,” 11-12.

<sup>21</sup>Glover claims that “gardeners must share resources, such as space, tools, and water. Cooperation is, therefore, a necessary component of the activity.” Cooperative possession of material goods is just the beginning of what gardeners must collectively manage. Troy Glover, Kimberly J. and Diana C. Perry, “Association, Sociability, and Civic Culture: The democratic effect of community gardening,” *Leisure Sciences* 27 (2005): 79.

communal land need to negotiate more than how they divide the land. Communities share physical resources or living spaces; they also form out of common concerns, beliefs, or responsibilities.<sup>22</sup> Scholars researching community gardens often do not identify exactly what shared causes or resources hold gardeners together. For geographer Hilda Kurtz, allotment gardens are “so-called” community gardens due to their individual plot layout rather than communal cultivation.<sup>23</sup> Laura Lawson, a community garden historian, states that “garden advocates past and present consider urban gardens as ‘commons’ because they are a communal resource to meet current needs associated with subsistence, protection, and civic functions.”<sup>24</sup> Lawson, however, does not adequately discuss exactly what resources gardeners hold collectively or how these resources change over time.<sup>25</sup>

Community garden scholars – who have a tendency to depict collective gardening as a way to transcend social ills – usually fail to address exactly *what* gardeners hold in common: Is it only the land? Or is it infrastructure? Material practices? Social ideals? Neighborhood? Weeds? Governance structure? All of these have, at some point, been common to all gardeners in Eagle Heights Community Gardens. One community gardening manual states that gardening communities have “one place in common – a

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<sup>22</sup>Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 76.

<sup>23</sup>Hilda Kurtz, “Differentiating multiple meanings of garden and community,” *Urban Geography* 22 (2001): 667. Pudup discounts Kurtz's simplistic conceptualization of community. Mary Beth Pudup, “It takes a garden: Cultivating citizen-subjects in organized garden projects,” *Geoforum* 39 (2008): 1231.

<sup>24</sup>Laura Lawson, *City Bountiful: A century of community gardening in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>25</sup>Hilda Kurtz states that in Lawson's work, “conflation of the individual with the collective that would better be teased apart.” Hilda Kurtz, “City Bountiful: A century of community gardening in America,” *Geographical Review* 97 (2007): 430.

garden.”<sup>26</sup> But if place is constantly shifting, what the gardeners hold collectively must also change.

The common intention of cultivation underpins all of the Gardens’ collective resources and responsibilities. With common goals, gardeners share material resources and form joint governance structures to ensure that all individuals have equal access to a garden space. Gardeners continually redefine their collective responsibilities to ensure that one gardener’s actions do not impinge on this individual right. Changes that occur in the Gardens’ commons include which individuals should have the right (with associated responsibilities) to garden in the collective space; who enforces the rights; what actions undermine another’s rights; and how gardeners conceptualize nonhuman parts of the Gardens and their place in social relationships.

This is a narrative of how collective responsibilities in the Gardens change through time and how they are affected by cultural beliefs and the tangible work of cultivation. This also is a story of how a group of people navigates the boundaries between individuals and communities, between one physical space and another. Places and communities are always personal: they physically exist, yet we bring our own experiences and interpretations to them. I am, therefore, present in the following history. My argument is that what gardeners hold as common changes with shifts in people’s perceptions of the Gardens: it will be helpful, then, for you to see what place of the Gardens is for me. As I worked on this project, I was slowly drawn into the Gardens of today: participating in the Garden Committee and the decisions it makes; getting to know the people whose invisible labor maintains common spaces; forming friendships with

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<sup>26</sup> Jamie Jobb, *The Complete Book of Community Gardening*, (New York: Morrow, 1979), 36.

those around me. The Gardens swallowed me, so I will always be present in the following stories: in my descriptions of how I physically experience the Gardens, in the questions I asked of previous gardeners, in what I decide to include and omit. I cannot remove myself and I don't believe that will hinder this history at all.

### **A walk through the Gardens today**

For me, the Gardens' place is inescapably physical. I know, subconsciously, that my ideologies underlie my tangible experiences. Yet the Gardens surround me when I enter them: gardening is a sensual experience. I believe you need to walk through the physical Gardens for a bit to fully comprehend what a history of collective resource management can tell us about the Gardens' material and social landscapes.

Sensing my plot begins with my feet – as soon as the ground was warm enough this spring, my shoes came off so I could feel the grassy paths and edges of my raised beds. With shoes on, I clumsily step where I shouldn't: packing the soil down around newly drawn rows or clipping a trailing pea vine. So the shoes come off and my toes tell me where I am. That means dirt coats my feet, musty leaf mulch sticks to my calves, and rocks bite the arch of my foot. Yet it doesn't matter. I need to feel the ground through my soles as well as my hands.

Hands would be the expected place to start as my fingers become inept with mud, my palms grow calluses, and my nails fill with dirt. I need my hands to fork the soil, create two rows of raised beds as my mother does in her garden, shovel compost, drop rows of seeds, transplant fragrant tomato plants, squish harlequin potato beetles and their orange eggs.

There's a house wren that keeps me company from her perch on the shed with a long cascading call. I have plot 212 -- right by the entrance but far enough from the trees so their shade doesn't stunt my plants. The trellises built by the gardener next to me do create some light problems, however, and so will my volunteer Jerusalem artichokes once

they grow. Being near the entrance also means that the sounds of carts -- people entering this place -- sometimes penetrate my weeding concentration. The 200 row, though, is not on the main path and so few people come by me directly. Instead, as anywhere in the Gardens, voices float by.

We can't move beyond my plot yet although things beyond this 25-square-foot piece of land constantly intrude. I laid leaf mulch yesterday. My family never used mulch while I was growing up so this is new to me. But it keeps the ground damp, stops weeds, and helps the plants I check on each day. When we enter from the path first there are the peas, purple blossoms tangled in crisp leaves. The next beds have spinach, arugula, carrots, beets – all depleted at the moment, as the spinach is bolting with the heat and some critter snacks continuously on my beet and carrot seedlings. These are followed by my beans: planted for my grandfather whose favorite garden vegetable was green beans. The rest of my beds hold tomatoes, basil, cucumbers (which I plan on saving from the yellow-and-black cucumber beetles if I can), eggplant, peppers, fava beans, and potatoes that sprouted in my cupboard. I've ringed my plot with herbs and perennials; a rose from my other grandfather's 98th birthday; strawberries I rescued from the weed pile; lemon thyme and rhubarb from Gretel; yellow irises from Steven; mint from a previous gardener; raspberries from my first plot; garlic from a friend; surprise dill; parsley from the Chinese grandmother whose plot abuts mine. As I brush each plant their odors reach my nose: dill – tomato vines – carrots newly pulled from the ground. Scents are nearly impossible to convey along with their associated memories, thoughts, meals, and tastes.

Every sense is involved here but you have to see the view just as we pass the shed. Rising to the top of the hill, and descending into the flood-prone swale, is a quilt of garden plots. Structures, green borders, flowers, a person appearing amidst the plants for a moment cover the space. Grass paths connect the plots, providing space for walking and for our irrigation system whose spigots pop out of the ground every four plots or so.

The plots blend together and change with the seasons. In March, when few gardeners have arrived, it feels desolate: bare earth bristling with forests of last year's debris. Every person is visible as they move through and between plots: bending, lifting, and hauling. But by June, the hill is green and gardeners blend into giant rhubarb leaves.

I admire one plot, a double plot actually. It exudes English kitchen garden. It is fenced with plastic mesh and two wood entry door-frames on the path beckon you into a separate world that is buttressed with hollyhocks and climbing peas. You can walk under a mantel, stepping into fresh hay spread between four rows of raised beds. Greens fill the first rows and large tomato cages are ready for the 6-inch-tall plants to grow. This plot feels tended, protected, permanent, and confident in its ability as a productive garden. There is a small path out the back, well-trod, into the garden plot behind.

Walking through the Biocore Prairie, legs scratched by grasses, we enter the Gardens' northeast corner. Or what used to be the furthest corner of the plots: the long-trod path now ends amidst prairie for no reason with the Gardens beginning a good 100 feet to our south. They just burned here. Smoky scents rise up to meet us as we step across blackened ground covered by grasses reduced to ash and green glints of plant shoots. Our walk downhill is choppy, as the 30 years of semiannual garden plowing

manifest here as two cliffs. They mark two ghost garden rows, topography apparent in the rest of the Gardens as well. There – a field of chives and garlic onions. They don't belong in a prairie but they enjoy the ash nutrients as much as the plants restoration ecologists would like to have here do: tangible, tasty reminders of past gardening.

Now we're at the top of the hill. There's the shed in the far southwest corner, its white walls interrupted by the raspberry patch barely visible from here. A row of fruit trees marks the Gardens' northern border. It stretches straight west until it encounters one of two tree islands: a place farmers stored rocks, and then gardeners stored rocks, and now contains masses of migrating neo-tropical birds and weeds that the Lakeshore Nature Preserve would prefer the gardeners take care of, and the gardeners could care less about. Garlic mustard and burdock, curly dock and Canada thistles in the tree islands don't threaten eggplants. Why should they weed there?

I always watch the Chinese grandparents. Groups make their rounds over the dewy paths each morning, checking on plots and chatting, cigarettes hanging off lips as they pluck fresh lettuce leaves or cut garlic chives. Their plots are immaculate: perfect rows of greens, packed together so that the slightly raised beds appear to be bursting at the seams. The grandparents delineate their plots with fences of 10-foot-high sticks, carried back from the woods and then sharpened with a cleaver to slide smoothly into the ground. Some have woven sticks horizontally through so that the pillars form giant woven barriers. Gardeners mark paths in these plots with thin boards; places to balance while they remove each weed and examine every plant: garlic chives, bok choy, lettuce, cabbages, peas.

Individual places and communal spaces filled this walk: they feel, for me, rather permanent. Yet the Gardens' commons form through complex social and physical processes. Nothing about the Gardens I know intimately was predetermined. In fact, while many of the current communal rights and responsibilities have analogies (and roots) in past Gardens, gardeners constantly reform their commons to meet evolving material and cultural circumstances.

**1960 – April 1966:  
Bounding a collective place**

In 1960, residents of Eagle Heights began gardening on land just north of the 300 units of Eagle Heights apartments (Figure 4). A group of volunteers envisioned a shared garden space and agronomy students laid out individual, spatially proximate plots. Gardens rely on certain material inputs including space, fertile soil, and water. Eagle Heights' gardeners could provide these requirements together. At first, their governance structure regulated only collective, non-human physical resources. After several years, rules regulated gardeners own actions as well. In this period, gardeners delineated common spaces for paths; managed the space to ensure fertile soil when faced with poisoned areas; and installed an irrigation system that they would move when apartment development threatened their plots.

Gardeners cultivated common ground on property owned by the University of Wisconsin. Property negotiations between University departments, therefore, affected gardeners' relationships to each other and the land. Before 1946, the land on the western end of the University of Wisconsin's campus had long been controlled by the College of Agriculture. When the University faced a growing student population after World War II, campus planners decided to build residences for faculty and married students on these lands. The College maintained control over some areas including what was once the Young Farm east of Lake Mendota Drive. University Houses apartments (for faculty) were completed in 1948, and Eagle Heights apartments (for married students) were under construction from 1956 to 1966. Residents perceived the lands around their houses as vacant and available for their informal use.

Gardeners' perceptions of the Gardens come out of their cultural ideologies of food, finances, agriculture, and environmental change. The 1950s were a time of continued war austerity.<sup>27</sup> The graduate students moving into Eagle Heights grew up in the 1930s and 1940s and brought many of their depression-era ideas of frugality with them. Agricultural practices in the United States during this period underwent rapid changes: farmers increasingly relied on synthetic inputs and mechanization.<sup>28</sup> Agriculturalists called for a growth in crop production to combat world hunger. They celebrated the Green Revolution brought by new plant hybrids, pesticides, and fertilizers.<sup>29</sup> The modern environmental movement began to take shape in the early 1960s, marked by the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962. Carson's depiction of pesticide poisoning drew people's attention to the effect chemicals had on their environments and bodies.<sup>30</sup>

### *Expanding populations*

After World War II, the GI Bill sent veterans to college when they returned from abroad without employment. Universities had to deal with the increased student populations. Between 1945 and 1971, the University of Wisconsin's population tripled.<sup>31</sup> The University reformed both its social and physical infrastructure in response to this

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<sup>27</sup>Harvey Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A social history of eating in modern America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 130.

<sup>28</sup>R. Douglas Hurt, *American Agriculture: A brief history* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994), 327.

<sup>29</sup>Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty*, 145; John Jenkins, *A Centennial History: A history of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison*, (Madison, WI: College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, 1991), 134 and 152.

<sup>30</sup>Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett, 1962).

<sup>31</sup>E. David Cronon and John W. Jenkins, eds., *The University of Wisconsin: A History. Volume 4, 1945-1971, Renewal to Revolution*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 228.

growth. The population increase placed excessive pressure on Madison's housing facilities as veterans arrived in Madison accompanied by wives they had left for the duration of the war. For the first time, the University needed to find places for student families to live.<sup>32</sup>

The University developed three temporary housing locations for married students in response to this influx of students: Truax Field, the abandoned army camp; Randall and Monroe Park Trailer Camps; and Badger Village, located at Badger Ordinance Works 35 miles west of campus.<sup>33</sup> These cramped housing units held married students for years and inhabitants prided themselves on their austere lifestyles. Badger Village residents gardened and preserved food to save money: “here from dawn to pitch dark – from early spring to late fall – men and women dig, plant, and harvest ... King Thrift is ace high. Parents who thought that 'The kids just couldn't make it', when they were married before 'Jim' finished his college work, have to give ground a little at this point.”<sup>34</sup> Students made do with these housing arrangements as they waited for a real home as “homes -- we are not at all ashamed of being trite – are the economic, social and religious cores of the well-being of our entire human order.”<sup>35</sup> While student wives worked to manage cramped households, University planners were arranging new, permanent married student housing on campus.

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<sup>32</sup>Susan Burdick Davis, *The Student Veteran's Wife*, (Madison, WI: Susan B. Davis, 1947), 10.

<sup>33</sup>Davis, *The Student Veteran's Wife*, 9-11.

<sup>34</sup>Davis, *The Student Veteran's Wife*, 35-37.

<sup>35</sup>Davis, *The Student Veteran's Wife*, 38.

*A cultivated landscape*

Planning decisions made in 1946 delineated the property arrangements in place when construction of Eagle Heights began in 1956. Picnic Point, the Young Farm, and Eagle Heights Farm were some of the last open spaces on the University of Wisconsin's campus. Until the mid-1940s, the College of Agriculture managed most of the campus's western lands.<sup>36</sup> Its cultivated lands were bound on the north by a fringe of woodlands bordering Lake Mendota and to the east by Eagle Heights Hill. Agricultural test plots spread across the old Eagle Heights Farm, west of Lake Mendota Drive and north of University Bay Drive. Researchers used the land for various purposes: cattle pasture, potato scab research, alfalfa strain development, and orchards.<sup>37</sup> Cowbells resonated across pastures, echoes of Madison's pastoral past.<sup>38</sup> The University's growing population could not be met by existing housing and the Regents approved new faculty student housing on land directly south of the Eagle Heights Orchard. Researchers vociferously protested this decision especially as the only land still available for pasture was on the degraded Young Farm east of Lake Mendota Drive.<sup>39</sup>

Agricultural researchers found the Young Farm unappealing because of its steep topography and poor past land management. In August of 1944, Henry L. Ahlgren, an Associate Professor of Agronomy, wrote to Arthur Hasler regarding “the Picnic Point

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<sup>36</sup>Thomas D. Brock, “Eagle Heights,” *Historic Madison: A Journal of the Four Lakes Region* 12 (1995).

<sup>37</sup>I.L. Baldwin (Dean and Director, College of Agriculture) to E.B. Fred (UW President) July 24, 1946, 9/1/1/5-3, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>38</sup>Mike Oberdorfer, telephone interview by author, July 14, 2010.

<sup>39</sup>A.W. Peterson (Business and Finance Director) to F.B. Butler (Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation) July 26, 1946, 24/9/2, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI; I.L. Baldwin (Dean and Director, College of Agriculture) to E.B. Fred (UW President) July 24, 1946, 9/1/1/5-3, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

area and more specifically the large open area which is now occupied primarily by bluegrass.” His analysis was discouraging, especially for use of the land by the College of Agriculture: “It appeared to me that there has been considerable past erosion as a result of cultivation. The soil is apparently relatively infertile and not particularly productive at the present time. The area itself is generally not sufficiently uniform so that it could be used for crop or soil research.”<sup>40</sup> Because of these tangible limitations, when the Board of Regents decided to place University Houses on the College’s Eagle Heights Farm land the College successfully negotiated for increased acreage.<sup>41</sup> The College lost approximately 20 acres of land to University Houses but gained 31 acres: 25 acres on the Young Farm and 9 in the Northeast corner of Eagle Heights Farm (Figure 5).<sup>42</sup> With this decision, the College of Agriculture maintained a hold on land on the west side of campus.<sup>43</sup> Lands near these test fields slowly filled with apartment complexes and their human inhabitants.

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<sup>40</sup>Henry H. Ahlgren (Associate Professor of Agronomy) to Arthur Hasler (Professor of Limnology), August 1944, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>41</sup>A.F. Gallistel (Chairman of the Arboretum Committee) to E.B. Fred (UW President), July 24, 1946, 9/1/1/5-3, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI; I.L. Baldwin (Dean and Director, College of Agriculture) to E.B. Fred (UW President) July 24, 1946, 9/1/1/5-3, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI; I.L. Baldwin to E.B. Fred, December 4, 1946, 9/1/1/5-3, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI; January 17, 1947 Board of Regents minutes.

<sup>42</sup>Noble Clark to Dean Baldwin, memo, *Eagle Heights Land Exchange* August 17, 1946, [9/1/1/5-3, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>43</sup>The negotiations demonstrate how we use physical land characteristics to justify specific use of space. In a letter two months after College of Agriculture won rights to increased acreage on the Young Farm because of its poor quality, R.A. Brink (Professor of Genetics) asked to use the land precisely because of the same physical characteristics: “Experience has shown that the particular insects which will pollinate alfalfa effectively occur most freely in areas of old sod and around brush, stone piles, and the like. They are rarely abundant enough in cultivated fields in this region to give a satisfactory set of seed. The area in question should provide almost ideal conditions for this work.” R.A. Brink to A.F. Gallistel, October 15, 1946, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

Plans for married student housing were slow to come to fruition even though the University met its need for new faculty housing with the construction of University Houses in 1948.<sup>44</sup> Discussions of placement, number, and architecture of an apartment complex began as early as 1953 but construction did not begin until 1956.<sup>45</sup> The first unit of Eagle Heights was built on land previously used by the School of Pharmacy as a garden, just south of the Eagle Heights Farm where the rest of the apartments would eventually be constructed.<sup>46</sup> Students moved into the apartments in 1957 and set about traversing and using the land around them in unexpected ways.<sup>47</sup>

Residents perceived the open lands around them as vacant and used them for their own purposes.<sup>48</sup> This was no surprise, as from 1956 to 1966 the area was under constant construction and boundaries were fluid.<sup>49</sup> Over this decade, residents parked in cow pastures because parking lots weren't paved.<sup>50</sup> Students were annoyed by roads filled with mud from the digging.<sup>51</sup> While some lands surrounding the apartments were

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<sup>44</sup>Jim Feldman, *The Buildings of the University of Wisconsin*, (Madison, WI: The University Archives, 1997), 292-294.

<sup>45</sup>E. B. Fred to Governor Kohler and the Members of the State Building Commission, April 22, 1954, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI; Lee Burns, *Tentative Suggestion for site location for married student project*, February 25, 1954, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI; Minutes of Meeting of Faculty Committee on Married Student Housing, November 21, 1956, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>46</sup>The College was less concerned by this development than it was by the placement of University Houses. In 1955 it had moved its agricultural research away from Madison to the 2,000 acre Arlington Farms research station. Jenkins, *A Centennial History*, 144-145.

<sup>47</sup>John Carlton, *Feature Story*, from the University of Wisconsin News Service, Madison, WI, September 9, 1959.

<sup>48</sup>Other community garden histories relate how vacant urban land in the 1970s financial crisis prompted people to garden. Michela Pasquali, *Loisaida: NYC community gardens*, (Milano: A+M bookstore, 2006), 23.

<sup>49</sup>Eagle Heights' apartment units were built in the following years: 100s in 1957, 200s in 1958, 300-600s in 1959, 700s in 1963. Bonnie Kroll, "Eagle Heights: Past, Present, Future," *Eagle Heights Newsletter* (November 1964): 1-2.

<sup>50</sup>"Remember?" *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (October 1965): 3

<sup>51</sup>Norman Deffner, telephone interview by author, March 1, 2010.

reserved for building, other lands were cultivated by the College of Agriculture or controlled by the Arboretum.<sup>52</sup> Students picked fruit from the Eagle Heights Orchard and trampled agricultural fields which complicated the College of Agriculture's desired management. The College decided to give up the Orchard in 1958 because of its expense, distance from other land holdings, and the fact that “[t]he location of the Eagle Heights orchard in the middle of 750 family apartments is almost certain to be a problem in itself.”<sup>53</sup> Newell Smith (Director of the Division of Residence Halls) assured Dean of the College of Agriculture Rudolph Froker that he would deal with any student frustration caused by the loss of the orchard.<sup>54</sup> People also walked where they were not supposed to. They traversed the fields in the northeast corner of Eagle Heights Farm and therefore limited the College of Agriculture's cultivation choices: “[t]he only crops that would be satisfactory are corn or hay since they are relatively simple to grow and not easily damaged by people entering or crossing the fields.”<sup>55</sup>

### *Austere community*

Students past experiences and current finances influenced how they used the land around them. Students moving into Eagle Heights were frugal since they grew up at the

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<sup>52</sup>Biological Division Committee on Natural Areas on the Campus , *Biologically Important Natural Areas On The Campus*, August 16, 1955, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>53</sup>Newell Smith to Neil Cafferty (University of Wisconsin Business Manager), March 17, 1959, Glenn S. Pound files, 90/80, Box 4, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>54</sup>Rudolph Froker (Dean of the College of Agriculture) to President Elvehjem, June 3, 1959, Glenn S. Pound files, 90/80, Box 4, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>55</sup>R.J. Muckenhirn to A.W. Peterson (Vice President of Business and Finance), August 27, 1959, 24/1/1, Box 440, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

end of the Depression and through austerity measures of World War II. One early gardener, Don Smith, grew up in rural Haskell County, Texas, in a place that wasn't connected to the electrical grid until he was 12. His family "didn't get a telephone until after I was long gone from the farm and we didn't have paved roads or gravel roads while I was living there either. That all came later."<sup>56</sup> In the early 1960s, married graduate students lived on annual incomes of approximately \$4,000.<sup>57</sup> For the most part, only one spouse was in school while the other took care of the house and perhaps worked extra jobs.<sup>58</sup> According to Margot Garcia, an early gardener, "you know, it's not as if you're going hungry, but there's certainly no extra food. I knew the cost of all food down to the penny and had my three stores I went through from one place to the other." She was amazed when her mother had no idea how much a dozen eggs cost. Garcia herself bought tiny eggs from the College of Agriculture's pullets and meat from the butchery classes.<sup>59</sup>

While all Eagle Heights residents were married, with young families and few financial resources, they came from a variety of backgrounds.<sup>60</sup> Don Smith remembers that, "being a southerner, I like black-eyed peas, and they weren't in any of the grocery stores. I don't know if they are now or not but people in Wisconsin at that time

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<sup>56</sup>Don Smith, telephone interview by author, March 9, 2010.

<sup>57</sup>A.W. Peterson to Roger Schrantz (Wisconsin State Building Commission), *Proposal for additional married student housing to be constructed by the University of Wisconsin on the Madison Campus*, September 28, 1965, 24/9/3, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>58</sup>In 1962, only 23 resident couples had both partners enrolled. Newell Smith to M.G. Toepel (Chief, Legislative Reference Librarian), May 24, 1962, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>59</sup>Margot Garcia, telephone interview by author, August 18, 2009

<sup>60</sup>The one awkward moment I had in an interview revolved around my marital status: a moment of surprised silence ensued after I told one person, who asked what my husband did, that I was not married but lived in Eagle Heights.

considered black-eyed peas to be cow feed and not human food. So at that point you weren't able to get them in the grocery stores."<sup>61</sup> Residents included Californians who had to adjust to the fact that tomatoes weren't perennial in Wisconsin's cold climate and people who came to school after serving in the military or from working for years as chemists.<sup>62</sup> One night, Garcia and her husband decided to raid the corn field south of University Bay Drive. It seemed to be a great idea, another piece of Garcia's food-scrimping repertoire – a good idea, that is, until they pulled hot corn out of the boiling water and realized that it was feed corn.<sup>63</sup> A clear sign they were not from here, not used to reading this land.

In spite of their diverse backgrounds, Eagle Heights' residents formed a strong community out of their shared living spaces. As graduate students they had many needs and desires in common and the spaces provided by Eagle Heights offered them a way to share them. All had moved to Madison for school. They left familiar places for a new landscape, new work, and little pay. The apartment buildings provided areas for organizing. People posted mimeographed signs in laundry rooms, chatted as they watched children play in sandboxes, and passed neighbors while walking through shared hallways. When they wanted to go out they just asked the couple across the hall to babysit. They'd put the kids to bed and prop the door open which allowed neighbors to hear any howling children from their own apartment.<sup>64</sup>

The spaces within Eagle Heights, providing ways for people to talk with one

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<sup>61</sup>Smith, interview.

<sup>62</sup>Richard Lawton, telephone interview by author, August 21, 2009.

<sup>63</sup>Garcia, interview.

<sup>64</sup>Lawton, interview.

another about shared needs and desires, enabled them as well to imagine creating a garden. The first garden plots were rooted firmly within the community and physical landscape of Eagle Heights. Before 1960, some residents cultivated land in the University Houses garden plots although many gardeners do not remember the faculty gardens.<sup>65</sup> Constructing garden space served several purposes. A personal garden plot would provide financial savings, food for much of the year, and recreation.<sup>66</sup> After conversations on the bus to and from campus agronomy graduate students decided that they could set up a collective garden area to be used by themselves and other residents.

### *Shared intentions*

In 1960, students laid out garden plots just north of the 300 units (Figure 2).<sup>67</sup> Staking out individual plots on shared land only involved knowing the Pythagorean Theorem. 3-4-5 or 30-40-50 and you have a right angle which allows you to draw straight lines and form equally sized plots. Don Smith and others knew the routine well as they had laid out many plots for their research. As agronomists, they knew who to ask about plowing because of their connections to the College of Agriculture. The organizers collected a quarter from residents interested in participating. The income went directly to the College of Agriculture for spring plowing and discing so that gardeners would not

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<sup>65</sup>“Council seeks garden chairman,” *The Project* (March 1963).

<sup>66</sup>Garcia, interview; Lawton, interview; Gerald Cowley, telephone interview by author, August 5, 2009; Memo to the Campus Planning Committee, Subject: Request of land for gardens for residents of married student housing from Bob House, March 1966 (n.d. but with March 1966 correspondence), 07/221, Box 113, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>67</sup>Cowley, interview; 1961 aerial photo in University Bay Project files, 6/12/1, Box 2, moved to Steenbock photo archives, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

have to dig the quackgrass out of their 25-by-25 foot plots.<sup>68</sup>

Residents decided to rent a garden plot for myriad reasons but financial savings topped many lists. As Garcia states, “of course we were living on very little money. We had one hundred dollars a month, two hundred a month, and a hundred of it was for rent. So anything we could do to, we had two children, to expand our, to stretch our dollars, was very welcome. So we went up and found them and started participating in the gardens.”<sup>69</sup> The local supermarket El Rancho figures prominently in many gardener memories as you could rent a freezer locker when you bought a side of meat – and then fill it with fresh vegetables from the garden.<sup>70</sup> Gardeners grew food with “a few people who had flowers out there I don’t remember. I couldn’t swear to that.”<sup>71</sup>

While the gardeners gardened for personal reasons, they soon changed through their interactions with the produce they grew and the ground they grew it in. Gardeners grow plants, and in the process incorporate non-human parts of place into themselves and their human communities. Residents filled their plots with vegetables; hoed weeds through the summer; and harvested millions of ripe tomatoes. Vegetables took over many residents' lives at the end of the season, several months after over-enthusiastic planting of tomatoes and zucchini. Why plant two when you could plant six tomatoes?<sup>72</sup> More plants seemed like a good idea until your neighbors locked their doors and pretended you weren't there when you tried to give them away.<sup>73</sup> And you'd learn quickly that one

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<sup>68</sup>Smith, interview.

<sup>69</sup>Garcia, interview.

<sup>70</sup>Tom and Pat Palmieri, telephone interview by author, February 5, 2010; Barry Rumack, telephone interview by author, February 23, 2010.

<sup>71</sup>Cowley, interview.

<sup>72</sup>Garcia, interview; Cowley, interview.

<sup>73</sup>Cowley, interview.

zucchini plant was enough after trying to eat your way through foot-long squash and “everybody was on everybody's doorstep trying to get rid of it.”<sup>74</sup> The weeds grew along with the desired plants: “you know if you went away for a week or two, I mean you would ask someone to water for you but you could come back and you would just hardly be able to find your plants. They'd just be overwhelmed.”<sup>75</sup> Gardeners’ experiences in the Gardens revolved around their relationship with the plants that they grew, the soil they hoed, and the water they lugged.

The first commons to emerge in the Gardens, then, was that of shared intentions. All participants had equivalent goals for the parcel of land that they rented: to grow plants of some kind. While each gardener practiced gardening in her own way, all of the garden plots required certain material inputs: space, soil, and water. Gardeners could meeting physical cultivation needs together because they had similar goals for the vacant land they bound into common property. They materially altered the landscape and, in the process, created a collective governance system to ensure all individuals had access to successful gardens.

### *Governing spaces*

The first collective management issue residents faced was how to provide individuals with personal spaces. Residents wanted their own garden plots: common property filled with private places. The loose group of volunteers who arranged for plowing from the College and delineated plots out of the common space became the

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<sup>74</sup>Palmieri, interview.

<sup>75</sup>Garcia, interview.

Garden Committee. The common resource of space was, and is, central to its governance role. The physical management of the Gardens followed the same seasonal routine for decades after the initial plowing. In the spring, gardeners waited for the College of Agriculture's schedule to clear and the ground to dry so that Experimental Farms employees could come and plow and disc the land. The Garden Committee and other volunteers staked out plots and residents began gardening in their assigned spaces. The Committee, in the first years, did little during the growing season. By the end of September, the Committee would decide on a clean-up day, asking gardeners to participate by clearing their plots of debris and preparing abandoned plots for the fall plowing. From 1960 to 1962, the Committee dealt with how to provide land at two different scales. It first reshaped the plot layout to accommodate gardeners' movements through the field of plots. Beginning in 1961, the Committee had to find new vacant land for the common gardening space.

The first garden area was composed of connected gardens without walkways between them: a layout that threatened personal plot success. The initial configuration apportioned every part of the landscape to individual gardeners and left no shared areas. Gerry Cowley recounts that, "well, the gardens were just kind of jammed together up there and you kind of had to tippy toe through other people's gardens to get to yours. It was just a little more primitive."<sup>76</sup> While Smith and other agronomists had experience with research plots they did not consider how gardeners would move through the garden area. Gardeners cutting across plots became a collective concern because all gardens were in danger of being trampled.

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<sup>76</sup>Cowley, interview.

The need for paths led to new plot arrangements when the Gardens expanded to the Eagle Heights Orchard area in 1961 (Figure 6).<sup>77</sup> That year, gardeners used both their initial garden area and new land. Expanding the Gardens' area provided enough space for everyone interested in gardening. It also prepared them for losing the first garden location to apartment construction due to begin in 1962.<sup>78</sup> That year, the garden area expanded to about five acres, or 350 to 370 plots (Figures 7 and 8). In the orchard area, the volunteer crew laid out blocks of four gardens with paths surrounding them rather than entirely contiguous plots.<sup>79</sup> The Committee maintained the shared walkways. The Garden Committee provided these public spaces and, eventually, requested gardeners use them in ways that would not infringe on individual plots. In the first two years, the Committee's leadership decisions only dealt with the material landscape of the Gardens.

In May of 1963, the Committee extended its governance role to regulate people's actions as well as the Gardens' physical spaces. They requested gardeners follow certain garden etiquette guidelines and curb their own actions for the good of all gardeners:

2) paths must be used (by children, too!) and hoses, if used, kept on the paths; 3) common sense must be used in planning gardens so that your crops do not encroach upon your neighbors plots or upon the path; 4) no one is permitted to change the boundaries of his plot, or to "absorb" a seemingly vacant one without committee approval. This is a must, if we are to be fair to those waiting for a plot.<sup>80</sup>

The Garden Committee asked gardeners, while tending their "individual gardens,"<sup>81</sup> to be cognizant of how their actions (and plants) affected both gardening neighbors and

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<sup>77</sup>Don Smith, "Garden News," *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, No. 2 (April 1961).

<sup>78</sup>Newell J. Smith to Rudolph Froker, December 29, 1961, 24/1/1, Box 509, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI..

<sup>79</sup>Cowley, interview.

<sup>80</sup>George Moffat, "Garden Committee News," *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (May 1963).

<sup>81</sup>Don Smith, "Garden News," *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, No. 2 (April 1961).

residents of Eagle Heights who desired to be enter the gardening community.

### *Soil*

With fertile, dark soil, plants grew with abandon in the Gardens. You'd plant a bean one day, go back the next morning and it would have two leaves, head back to harvest something for dinner and the same bean plant would have four leaves.<sup>82</sup> Soil is essential to all gardens: but how would you feel if your plants came up beautifully, slowly emerging from the ground, then on the first hot day they died? An invisible enemy, one that you couldn't take care of with your fingers or a pesticide, one that was invisible because it was in the soil your plants depended upon.

The plot layout may have improved when the Gardens expanded to the Eagle Heights Orchard area. The new land, however, proved to be problematic in unexpected ways. All the gardeners worked the land. But in several plots no weeds appeared which reduced the owner's weeding labor and caused jealousy among other gardeners. Then one day, every plant in those plots died. Committee members headed to the College of Agriculture to find out what was going on and discovered that horticulturists had been researching herbicides and “they’d really dosed up some study plots. And herbicides were still working.”<sup>83</sup> In aerial photos of the apple orchard site, you can see white areas where the soil supports no vegetation (Figure 8).

That there was “plant poison present in the soil”<sup>84</sup> proved to be a communal problem for many reasons. Volunteers laid out plots every season because of the plowing

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<sup>82</sup>Garcia, interview.

<sup>83</sup>Cowley, interview.

<sup>84</sup>Ian Wright, “Nos Jardins,” *The Newsletter* (June 1962): 1-2.

which meant that individual garden boundaries were never in the same place. Cowley remarked that, although they had good intentions, the Garden Committee did not manage to mark the dead zones adequately after the 1961 season. Some plots were still affected in 1962 because the Committee had no idea of the dead zones' boundaries.<sup>85</sup> Both imprecise lay-out and failed marking of poisoned soil meant that any gardener could potentially receive land on which plants could not grow. Determining how to ensure gardeners did not receive land in the dead areas required committee organization and physical planning. The Committee responded to this by guaranteeing a refund to affected gardeners: acknowledging that they had not provided equal access to the common resource of fertile soil.

In 1963, the Committee banned herbicide use because of their struggles the past two years with soil.<sup>86</sup> The need to ban herbicides also came about because of individual plot ephemerality. For while a plot was yours for a season it would be another's the next year. Herbicides are species-specific; if used, they could prevent a future gardener from cultivating what he wanted to.<sup>87</sup> People were collectively responsible for how their actions would affect other gardeners: not only through space but time as well.

### *Water*

Water is essential to gardening and in 1962 gardeners decided to build an irrigation system as "it would get dry out there."<sup>88</sup> The pipe's physical infrastructure sent

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<sup>85</sup>Cowley, interview.

<sup>86</sup>George Moffat, Garden Committee News, *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (May 1963).

<sup>87</sup>Cowley, interview.

<sup>88</sup>Cowley, interview.

water flowing to all gardens: a common resource that strengthened the plots' spatial connectivity. The water system required financial inputs and new kinds of collective labor. The Committee provided hoses beginning in 1960 but residents had to link these hoses up to the spigots outside apartments and lug water from the end of the hose.<sup>89</sup> Far from efficient, this watering system also did not connect gardeners in the same manner that a full irrigation system did. The Garden Committee decided to pay the city to tap a water main outside of apartment 206. This proved to be a disaster, as the main cracked and the gardeners had to pay \$500 for repairs: "It left us pretty near broke. We complained to the city that it was their line ... You have to pay, they said, misfortune is not something you are immune to because you're poor."<sup>90</sup> Despite construction problems, gardeners managed to install the system that sent water flowing through pipes to individual plots.<sup>91</sup> From then on, the Garden Committee would continue to struggle with this irrigation.

For many, the network of pipes symbolized the Gardens more than its location.<sup>92</sup> As a capital investment, the physical infrastructure was not something gardeners could find elsewhere. The pipes required continual maintenance because they broke during the cold winter. The system added to the Garden Committee's labor as it needed to be set up in the spring and taken down in the fall before the first freeze. People labored together

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<sup>89</sup>George Moffat, "Garden Committee News," *The Newsletter* (May 1963); Lawton recalls that "The big problem I remember is water, those initial stages, and you have a dry period didn't want your flowers, plants to deteriorate, you had to carry water out in buckets. Pretty hard to do. And it was hard, to get a hose long enough, hose was expensive, hoses long enough to reach out into the gardens. You could've gotten, there were spigots on the outside, but you would have a hose that would go a certain distance and then carry buckets from the end of your hose to the garden."

<sup>90</sup>Smith, interview.

<sup>91</sup>Ian Wright, "Nos Jardins," *The Newsletter* June 1962: 1-2; "A note of thanks to the garden committee and the university," *The Newsletter* (August 1962): 3.

<sup>92</sup>Robert House, telephone interview with author, July 31, 2009.

over the pipes, sharing work to ensure continued access to water.

Maintaining the watering system also required the Garden Committee increase their requests for people to act in specific ways. In 1963, the Committee thanked gardeners for “their cheerful cooperation in past observation of the 'rules' which made this sort of communal project a success, especially in participating in the conservation of water during the 'drought.’”<sup>93</sup> The Garden Committee raised fees to continue to pay for the irrigation system in 1963. The financial requirements of physical infrastructure linked gardeners together with shared economic concerns.<sup>94</sup>

The members of the Garden Committee gained credibility as community leaders through the first five years of gardening. They assumed the role of governing the Gardens' commons for equitable distribution and plot success: they increased regulations and formalized meetings; created 100's representatives to assign plots to each apartment unit; and routinized the gardening season (discing, planting, clean-up and plowing). From 1960 to 1965, the commons in the Gardens evolved from being grounded in shared intentions for individual plots to collective rules governing gardening behavior. The Committee only enforced these rules by invoking feelings of personal responsibility. This leadership, which emerged to regulate shared garden space, proved necessary for the continuance of the Gardens in 1965.

### *Formalizing property*

University planning continued to deal with a growing student population while

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<sup>93</sup>George Moffat, “Garden Notes,” *Newsletter*, (October 1963):1.

<sup>94</sup>George Moffat, “Garden Committee News,” *Eagle Heights Newsletter* (May 1963).

gardeners reformed vacant space into personal garden places. The Department of Housing expected the married student population to increase from 3,830 in 1962 to 5,680 in 1969; they therefore planned on increasing apartment capacity by approximately 150 flats each year.<sup>95</sup> Construction of the 700 units in 1962 moved the gardeners from their first location, yet before it began they had been able to expand to the vacant orchard area in 1961.<sup>96</sup> Further proposed construction included apartments interspersed amongst the existing buildings; the old Young Farm east of Lake Mendota Drive; and in the orchard area. With no formal property rights, gardeners precariously held the land they had cultivated for five years. Indeed, in 1965, University communications still described the land as “the orchard area” even though the College of Agriculture removed the trees in 1959.<sup>97</sup>

In the mid-1960's, University-student relations were fraught with tension as students demanded more power in University governance structures.<sup>98</sup> Activists fought to protect student rights: many gardeners believed they had a right to garden space the University was not respecting. There was disagreement within the Committee, though, about the best way to make the University provide them with space. Half of the Committee wanted to protest publicly and show the rest of the student body what the

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<sup>95</sup>Newell Smith to M.G. Toepel (Chief, Legislative Reference Librarian), May 24, 1962, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>96</sup>Ian Wright, “Nos Jardins,” *The Newsletter* (June 1962): 1-2; Clarke Smith (Secretary of the Regents of the University of Wisconsin) to Newell Smith, January 18, 1962, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>97</sup>Newell Smith to Robert Atwell, August 25, 1965, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>98</sup>E. David Cronon and John W. Jenkins, eds., *The University of Wisconsin: A History. Volume 4, 1945-1971, Renewal to Revolution*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 455.

University was denying them.<sup>99</sup> Bob House, Committee chair at the time, convinced other members to wait while he negotiated with the Department of Housing, the Campus Planning Commission, Planning and Construction, and the College of Agriculture to gain new garden space.

Gardeners knew that the orchard area was slated for development several years prior to 1965 but that did not make losing plots any easier.<sup>100</sup> Bob House began to work in the fall of 1965 to find new land for garden plots. He identified the hillside east of Lake Mendota Drive as being ideal for a garden area: it was close enough to walk to and large enough to accommodate the 500 plots gardeners used.<sup>101</sup> House, however, faced an uphill battle for the land; this was the land the College of Agriculture gained control over in 1946, some of the last acreage it had on the Madison campus.

The College was struggling to maintain its image and had no incentive to give land to students wanting to garden. When Glenn S. Pound became Dean of the College of Agriculture in 1964, he immediately began to combat national distrust of agricultural institutions. Public worries about agricultural chemical use exploded with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*; growing agricultural regulations by the Food and Drug Administration accompanied people's misapprehensions.<sup>102</sup> Congress increasingly focused on urban problems; it removed money from traditional agriculture assistance programs with the Food and Agriculture Act of 1965.<sup>103</sup> Dean Pound promoted scientific research and believed agricultural production had to increase in order to feed the

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<sup>99</sup>Robert House, telephone interview by author, June 4, 2010.

<sup>100</sup>Ian Wright, "Nos Jardins," *The Newsletter* (June 1962): 1-2.

<sup>101</sup>House, interview, June 4, 2010.

<sup>102</sup>Jenkins, *A Centennial History*, 159-160.

<sup>103</sup>Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 355.

world.<sup>104</sup>

House and others justified their demands for new land by arguing that the gardens provided financial savings, educational opportunities, and relaxation. The gardens were also a source of cultural food for foreign students. House asked that the College rent them land. The gardeners would be willing to pay up to \$65 an acre “without seriously decreasing the economic value of the gardens to the families.”<sup>105</sup> They received support from James Edsall, Director of Planning and Construction, as well as Edward Hopkins, a planner in UW Planning and Construction, and L.E. Halle, Director of Housing.<sup>106</sup> On April 4, 1966, Dean Pound sent a letter to J.V. Edsall confirming the lease of the land. The agreement stipulated that the lease was only for one year and had to be renewed annually; \$65 had to go to Experimental Farms for loss of the hay; the lease would not be renewed if “the students permit these garden plots to become unsightly patches of weeds;” students had to plant perpendicular to the hill's slope; and water would not be provided.<sup>107</sup>

Gardeners gained access to new land but it was the gardening resources they managed collectively that continued to hold them together. To move the Gardens, gardeners relocated both the landscape of individual plots and the irrigation infrastructure

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<sup>104</sup>Jenkins, *A Centennial History*, 160.

<sup>105</sup>Robert House, Memo to the Campus Planning Committee, Subject: Request of land for gardens for residents of married student housing, March 1966, 07/221, Box 113, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>106</sup>Robert House to J.V. Edsall (Director of Planning and Construction), April 30, 1966, 07/221, Box 113, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI; L.E. Halle (Director of the Division of Residence Halls) to Glenn Pound (Dean of the College of Agriculture), March 21, 1966, 07/221, Box 113, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI; “Eagle Heights Gardeners are in debt to the garden committee,” *Eagle Heights Newsletter* (May 1966): 1.

<sup>107</sup>Glenn Pound to J.V. Edsall April 4, 1966, 07/221, Box 113, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

to ensure the flow of common water would continue. Bob House remembers the weekend he spent directing crews and organizing labor to move the pipes to the hillside. He, Barry Rumack, and Norm Deffner worked together to attach the water line to a fire hydrant near the 800 units; jackhammered their way through cement; and laid pipes through a culvert under Lake Mendota Drive to reach the plots. Dealing with water held the Gardens together: a collective resource essential to plant growth.<sup>108</sup>

In 1960, gardeners bound themselves into a community when they began cultivating individual plots on shared land. The Garden Committee emerged as the governing body for this collective space. The Committee initially dealt only with physical land management: organizing for the common land, its preparation, plot layout, and clean up. From 1960 to 1965, the Garden Committee steadily increased rules regulating gardener's use of space but did not enforce them. When the Gardens entered into a formal property arrangement with the College of Agriculture this began to change. Their lease required certain land management practices: the gardeners would lose access to their common property if the lease agreement wasn't followed. With the lease, weeds began to take on a social life of their own in the Gardens.

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<sup>108</sup>House, interview, July 31, 2009.

### **May 1966 – 1981: Property and mobile plants**

In 1966, the Gardens moved to the hillside east of Lake Mendota Drive (Figure 2, Figures 9, 10, 11, and 12). With this move, gardeners entered into a formal property relationship with the College of Agriculture. The lease stipulated that gardeners manage the Gardens' landscape in certain ways: it specified plot layout and required gardeners to control chaotic weeds. Representing the Gardens to the College legitimized the Garden Committee's governance role but the Committee continued its lax enforcement of gardening rules. Gardeners took collective responsibility for the Gardens' material resources. They needed to reform their management practices, however, due to the new physical landscape and surrounding property arrangements. In this period, gardeners saw the Gardens as an integral part of the Eagle Heights residential community.

In this period, as before, the lands surrounding the Gardens influenced how gardeners saw the plots. Ownership and management policies of surrounding areas changed through the 1970s. The construction of the 900 units of Eagle Heights drew attention to management of the Campus Biological Areas when “bulldozing for construction of new units ... resulted in removal of significant numbers of trees from the Eagle Heights Woods.”<sup>109</sup> The Campus Biological Areas Committee recommended that lands encompassing, but not including, the old Young Farm be protected through increased Arboretum supervision and a small budget.<sup>110</sup> As one of the last open spaces

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<sup>109</sup> Report of the Campus Biological Areas Committee of the Graduate Biological Division January 14, 1967, Lakeshore Nature Preserve website, [http://www.lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu/plans/benchmark\\_documents.htm](http://www.lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu/plans/benchmark_documents.htm), accessed 1/5/11.

<sup>110</sup> Report of the Campus Biological Areas Committee of the Graduate Biological Division January 14, 1967.

not designated as biologically significant, the Gardens were vulnerable to campus development. Planners indicated the Gardens were a possible site for future graduate housing and the 1970 campus plan designated the hillside for recreational playing fields.<sup>111</sup>

Cultural changes influenced the gardeners in the late 1960s and 1970s. The social revolutions these decades overturned the domestic culture of the 1950s. In the 1960s, “everybody was flower people.”<sup>112</sup> The modern environmental movement solidified. Activists pushed the federal government to begin protecting environmental health and called for individuals to take control of their own ecological impacts. People advocated for self-sufficient lifestyles as they reacted to worries about the environment's fragility, concentrations of economic power, nuclear weapons, and social justice issues.<sup>113</sup> Activists called for small-scale, appropriate technology that *Whole Earth Catalogue* epitomized.<sup>114</sup> Organic foods burgeoned; individuals connected organic agricultural practices with personal nutrition, counter-culture lifestyles, and environmental health.<sup>115</sup> Ecological research traced energy, nutrient, and chemical flows through discrete

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<sup>111</sup> *Open Space working paper, Campus Plan, February 1971*; The Prime Biological Areas map, from the Campus Biological Areas Committee of the Graduate Biological Division 1/14/1967, indicates the Gardens' area as a 17 acre possible housing site, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI; Mike Oberdorfer, telephone interview by author, July 15, 2010; Campus Planning Commission minutes, March 3, 1970, 40/1/3-2, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>112</sup> Palmieri, interview.

<sup>113</sup> Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: Transformation of the American environmental movement*, (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1993), 97; Andrew Kirk, “Appropriating technology: The *Whole Earth Catalogue* and Counterculture Environmental Politics,” *Environmental History* 6 (July 2001), 374-394.

<sup>114</sup> Andrew Kirk, “Appropriating technology: The *Whole Earth Catalogue* and Counterculture Environmental Politics,” *Environmental History* 6 (July 2001), 374-394.

<sup>115</sup> Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty*, 183-185.

systems.<sup>116</sup> People who went “back-to-the-land” connected farming practices to concepts of holistic, balanced ecological systems.<sup>117</sup> During the 1973 oil crisis, food prices rose and people reevaluated their consumption habits.<sup>118</sup> Community garden movements began in urban centers: neighborhood residents gardened in vacant lots to save money and create “clean, safe green areas.”<sup>119</sup>

*Alterations in space, water, and soil*

“Mary, Mary, quite contrary,  
Where will your garden grow?  
A field we've got - -  
You'll have your plot,  
So get out your seeds and hoe!”<sup>120</sup>

In April of 1966, the Committee celebrated winning new land for garden plots and the continuation of their collective water, soil, and space. For House, this victory bound the gardeners together: “In my era you had the luxury of having very, very highly motivated people who had just succeeded in getting the ground ... so there was a real camaraderie that went after in [sic] the very early years.”<sup>121</sup> Beginning in 1966, the Committee was responsible for maintaining common resources in a manner that matched both gardeners’ and the College’s perceptions of the Gardens as a place. They also grappled with the physical pieces of place in making management decisions.

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<sup>116</sup> Randal S. Beeman and James A. Pritchard, *A Green and Permanent Land: Ecology and Agriculture in the Twentieth Century*, (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 103

<sup>117</sup> Randal S. Beeman and James A. Pritchard, *A Green and Permanent Land: Ecology and Agriculture in the Twentieth Century*, (Lawrence, KA: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 103 and 107; Julie Guthman, *Agrarian Dreams: The paradox of organic farming in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 4-6.

<sup>118</sup> Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty*, 205-206.

<sup>119</sup> Pasquali, *Loisaida*, 21.

<sup>120</sup> Garden Committee, “Gardens for '66!” *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (April 1966).

<sup>121</sup> Robert House, interview, July 31, 2009.

Water access proved to be a persistent physical and financial problem for the Committee after the Gardens moved in 1966. The irrigation system's water pressure was not strong enough for all gardeners to use water simultaneously because of the hill's slope. To deal with this, the Committee instituted even and odd watering days for areas of the Gardens.<sup>122</sup> The Garden Committee organized information to manage pipe set-up and clean-up by producing numerous maps, instruction sheets, and materials lists.<sup>123</sup> One year in the mid-1970s, Mike Brugger set up the entire irrigation system by himself. The pipes had frozen that winter which left the Garden Committee scrambling to provide water to gardeners. Brugger handled each 8-foot long, 2-inch diameter pipe as if it were nothing as he repeatedly climbed the hill to lay another section. He both installed the pipe and scrounged it up somewhere: "Mike got all the plumbing supply places to provide what we didn't have for free, I don't know how he did it, maybe he stole it. I never asked him, but he got it, he got it assembled."<sup>124</sup> The collective right to water continued along with its attendant responsibilities.

The Garden Committee's regulations protected individual plots within the Gardens' shared landscape. At the end of each season, however, came a time when the Gardens became everybody's property. The Committee warned: "Sept. 30<sup>th</sup> is the date by which gardeners should clean the stakes out of their gardens or put up a sign indicating their intention to continue harvesting. Plots without stakes will become COMMUNITY

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<sup>122</sup> The Garden Committee, "Notice to Gardeners," *Eagle Heights Newsletter* (June 1968), 3; The Garden Committee, "1968 Eagle Heights garden instruction sheet," *Eagle Heights Newsletter* (February 1968).

<sup>123</sup> *Garden Operation (1971)*, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; "Gardening," *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (June 7, 1974), 3; *Garden Committee: Responsibilities of the Pipes Crew 1979*, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; *Eagle Heights Garden: Pipe Inventory 1973*, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>124</sup> David Emerich, telephone interview by author, June 29, 2010.

PROPERTY.”<sup>125</sup> Gardeners cleaned up the Gardens in the middle of October by removing tomato cages, corner stakes, and debris. The Gardens became open to all when the landscape was no longer divided into plots. Gardeners loved the gleaning season. Abandoned plots -- full of forgotten winter squash, carrots, and brussel sprouts -- provided food for gardeners who participated in the Gardens’ clean-up. The Palmieris “stacked [their] pile of winter squash in the corner of [their] kitchen and literally ate [their] way through that pile all winter long.”<sup>126</sup> Timothy Kolosick relied on the clean-up. He remembers “my wife and I put amazing amounts of vegetables in the freezer that weekend ... we never grew brussel sprouts, because we knew on cleanup day there would be plenty of brussel sprouts available.”<sup>127</sup> Personal needs, rather than the protection of common goods, led to gleaning. When plots dissolved the Gardens’ commons disappeared for the winter.

The Gardens’ commons were seasonal; a gardener could lose the products of his gardening labor if he was unaware of their temporality. Jeffery Richards missed all of the warnings at the end of the gardening season. The Garden Committee had announced the Gardens’ closing date in the *Eagle Heights Newsletter* and had placed signs at the Gardens’ entrance. Anthony Wright then informed Experimental Farms that “the coast was clear.” So when Richards went out to his plot at the end of October in 1971, ready to harvest the last winter squash, he found a field covered with manure. When he expressed his anger in a letter to Donald Peterson, director of the Experimental Farms, Peterson responded: “It is regrettable that these announcements escaped your notice. If indeed

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<sup>125</sup> News from the Garden Committee, *Eagle Heights Newsletter* (September 1967), 10.

<sup>126</sup> Tom and Pat Palmieri, email to author, January 27, 2010.

<sup>127</sup> Timothy Kolosick, telephone interview by author, November 16, 2009.

there were others whose gardens suffered a similar fate as yours, it may behoove the Garden Committee to consider other ways of informing its constituency.”<sup>128</sup> The lack of awareness regarding the removal of common rights to individual plots led to this manure mishap. The Committee requested the manure, however, to enhance shared access to fertile soil.

Manure mishaps complicated some gardener’s harvests. Mobile manure, spread to fertilize the soil, shows that the Gardens’ commons overlap in myriad ways. The day the letter arrived in his office, Committee chair Dave Emerich wished he weren’t a part of maintaining fertile soil in the Gardens. The letter, signed by his major professor, cited the gardeners for “improperly taking care of the land.”<sup>129</sup> Every year, Experimental Farms plowed the field and applied manure. In the spring of 1974, they had laid fertilizer on frozen ground. Heavy rain followed the application. The manure flowed down off the hillside, into the swale, past the Jackson residence, and into Lake Mendota. Gardeners requested fertilizer every year despite high phosphorous and nitrogen levels in the soil.<sup>130</sup> While the Gardens were not punished for this manure mishap, it did affect the gardeners’ relationship with Experimental Farms. V.W. Matthias (superintendent of the Madison and Arlington Experimental Farms) clearly did not appreciate the Gardens’ aesthetics. He wrote to Richard McCabe, coordinator of the University Bay Project, that “[t]he gardens have caused this department greater problems than most the entire Experimental farms ... A good inspection throughout the growing season will give you an idea of some of the

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<sup>128</sup> Donald Peterson to Jeffery Richards, November 9, 1971, Krishna Ramanujan personal papers.

<sup>129</sup> Emerich, interview.

<sup>130</sup> Soil test results beginning April 7, 1971, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

headaches we encounter.”<sup>131</sup> The College expected the gardeners, who were bound by the lease, to conform to correct agricultural land management practices.

*“Unsightly patches of weeds”*<sup>132</sup>

Weeds became a common problem when the Gardens relocated to land managed by the College of Agriculture.<sup>133</sup> The lease externally defined gardeners as a cohesive community: one with shared intentions for garden plots whose success the College would measure through weed control. Dominant agricultural paradigms defined expectations of the property relationship. The contract placed new demands on the Garden Committee and altered how it governed shared resources. The lease required gardeners manage weeds collectively. External demands for weed-free plots, though, did not yield collective ideas of place or identical gardening practices.

Dean Pound agreed to lease the gardeners land within the intellectual framework of production-oriented agriculture. Since World War II, agriculture in the United States

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<sup>131</sup> V.W. Matthias (Associate Professor and Superintendent, Madison and Arlington Experimental Farms) to Richard McCabe (Coordinator, University Bay Project) March 12, 1974, Krishna Ramanujan personal papers; Richard McCabe to Donald R. Peterson, March 6 1974, Krishna Ramanujan personal papers.

<sup>132</sup> Glenn Pound to J.V. Edsall April 4, 1966, 07/221, Box 113, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>133</sup> Mark Fiege, “The Weedy West: Mobile nature, boundaries, and common space in the Montana landscape,” *The Western History Quarterly* 36 (Spring, 2005): 22-47. Fiege states that “Weeds that arose on one piece of land and then spread to adjacent and nearby areas instantly became the concern of a community of people ... In a *weed commons*, people took collective action against troublesome plants ... In terms of rights, what was important was the right to proscribe or prohibit certain practices that enabled plants to spread (26-27).” Fiege never explicitly says that a weed commons can only emerge if all members have the same goals for the land. He notes that the number of weeds present in the Montana landscape increased over time but does not clearly state that this increase was likely due to land use changes, and shifting definitions of what vegetation areas *should* contain. His weed commons is spatial: “Many forms of common property, however, were also inherently spatial. In these cases, a commons was a problem of space, not just of social obligations or abstract rights (26).” Social obligations are inextricable from spatiality; in my commons, how gardeners manage space forms the basis of social obligation. See Timothy Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, ideology, and transgression*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) for how we define correct actions in place.

had been undergoing dramatic changes. Farms increasingly relied on mechanized labor; synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides; and seeds bred to thrive with these chemical inputs.<sup>134</sup> Mechanization allowed farmers to cultivate monoculture fields through a season as it reduced labor requirements and synthetic pesticides prevented insects from devouring these homogenous fields. New farming practices made weeds increasingly out-of-place and 'unsightly' in the eyes of agriculturalists. The lease reflected soil conservation ideals from the 1930s. University extension agents expounded on soil conservation to prevent erosion when faced with the ecological collapse of the Dust Bowl. Agriculturalists promoted plowing perpendicular to a hill's slope to decrease soil loss. Strip plowing required by the lease created the plot layout and landscape still present in the Gardens: a landscape "laid out by ... soil conservation agricultural engineers."<sup>135</sup>

Weeds transgress our physical intentions for a piece of land and therefore are both social and biological entities. You can infer what people want an area to be by what plants are defined as weeds (what vegetation is out-of-place in a landscape).<sup>136</sup> The presence of weeds indicates an uncared-for space: an abandoned plot or one supervised by a negligent gardener. While what plants are defined as weeds depends on where you are, agricultural weeds do share common physiological characteristics. They thrive on disturbed soil and

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<sup>134</sup>Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 327.

<sup>135</sup>Hurt, *American Agriculture*, 291-292; V.W. Matthias (Associate Professor and Superintendent, Madison and Arlington Experimental Farms) to Richard McCabe (Coordinator, University Bay Project) March 12, 1974, Krishna Ramanujan personal papers.

<sup>136</sup> Timothy Cresswell uses people's physical transgressions of place to comment on dominant ideologies and power structures. When someone does something that is out-of-place, they are transgression appropriate social (and spatial) behavior. Cresswell only addresses people's transgressions. In a garden, you can use plant transgressions to identify incorrect gardening practices. Weeds are plants that transgress a garden's appropriate use; they are out-of-place and indicate a gardener who allows weeds overwhelm the correct (in-place) vegetation. Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place*.

spread through vegetative reproduction or large seed loads.<sup>137</sup> For the College of Agriculture, weeds signified gardeners gardening incorrectly. To the Garden Committee, weeds represented a new management problem as their presence might endanger access to garden space. And for gardeners, weeds were what they always had been: something to hoe and reflective of personal gardening practices. The lease required gardeners to manage weeds but this does not mean students suddenly began to clear weeds as soon as they emerged from the soil. These rambunctious plants became a common problem because weedy plots meant that no one would have access to land the next year.

Weeds were an individual problem before the Gardens moved to the hillside east of Lake Mendota Drive. Other gardeners may have “noticed if [plots] were weeded or not,”<sup>138</sup> but by the end of the season many gardeners abandoned plots when they either moved or became enmeshed in a busy school year. Gardeners viewed weeds as just another part of the landscape and as another sign of the seasons. Some gardeners believed a weedy plot indicated a lack of personal commitment to the Gardens: “You could see some were active in the gardens and others were a little more lax in how they allowed the natural components of the earth to grow.”<sup>139</sup> Others remember how readily a neighbor’s weeds physically infiltrated their plot.<sup>140</sup> But before 1966, gardeners had not regulated their relationship with these boundary-transgressing plants. Weeds became a common problem as a result of the Gardens’ external property relationship. Chaotic weeds gave the Garden Committee new ways to justify their management of other

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<sup>137</sup>Barbara Pleasant, *The Gardener’s Weed Book: Earth-safe controls*, (Pownal, VT: Storey Communications, 1996); Fiege, *Irrigated Eden*, 55; Robbins, *Lawn People*, 41.

<sup>138</sup>Garcia, interview.

<sup>139</sup>House, interview, July 31, 2009.

<sup>140</sup>Deffner, interview.

internal commons.

The College of Agriculture's expectations of garden aesthetics made weeds an area of common concern. The lease did more, though, than identify gardeners by their weeds. The Committee, particularly the chair, spoke for all gardeners when communicating with the College of Agriculture and the Division of Housing. The Committee gained leverage over other commons in the Gardens by representing the Gardens to University departments. The Garden Committee's expanded governance role required it maintain a good relationship with the Experimental Farms. This required meetings with D.R. Peterson and V.W. Matthias about gardener's actions: discussions that ranged from how to stop gardeners from tramping through alfalfa fields to spring plow dates.<sup>141</sup> Relations with the College were, generally, good. After a January 11, 1968 meeting, Bob House noted: "mood of session – friendly and conversational."<sup>142</sup> By 1968, the Committee felt confident in the Gardens' hold on the land. Representatives reported that "Peterson now supports our purposes and use of gardens. Why? May be holding land for future uses by Ag school. May be impressed with our energy and work. Both. Others."<sup>143</sup> These external discussions trickled into how the Committee managed the Gardens and communicated with gardeners.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> B. Kuhlow notes, *Spring 1968*, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; Notes for meeting between Bob House and Baure (Gardens reps) and Peterson and Matthias (Farms), January 11, 1968, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; Mike Brugger, telephone interview by author, November 11, 2009; "Gardens Delayed," *Eagle Heights Newsletter* (May 20, 1978):1.

<sup>142</sup> Notes for meeting between Bob House and Baure (Gardens reps) and Peterson and Mathias (Farms), January 11, 1968, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>143</sup> Notes for meeting between Bob House and Baure (Gardens reps) and Peterson and Mathias (Farms), January 11, 1968, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>144</sup> House and Peterson discussed the second entrance to the Gardens at their January meeting, the Garden Agreement that year notes "9) Please use only the far North and far South entrance. The University is

After just two years under the new property relationship, the Garden Committee instituted measurable indicators of rule compliance for commons beyond weeds. Without measurable guidelines, the Committee could not enforce rules as it could not guarantee equality in its determination of a gardener's transgressions. From 1966 to 1967, the Committee justified weed regulations using lease expectations. In 1966, the Committee stated that "each of us will have to be doubly careful about keeping our plots weed-free" because land rights depended upon weed-free spaces.<sup>145</sup> In 1968, the Committee negotiated for increased garden area from the College of Agriculture because of residential demand for plots.<sup>146</sup> That year, it meticulously outlined rules governing herbicides, animal poisons, water, and permissible gardening materials.<sup>147</sup> With increasing demand for plots, gardeners needed to sow seeds by June 10. For children's safety, rat and animal poisons were banned. Rules restricted water use by limiting gardeners' watering to even or odd days. And weedy plots were defined as gardens with weeds "higher than most plants." Tall weeds gave the Committee license to reassign your plot.<sup>148</sup>

While there were rules in place, many Committee chairs do not remember enforcing them. After the set-up, Mike Brugger said "it was just tend to your own garden

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NOT responsible for any injury received [sic] crossing at other points." Notes for meeting between Bob House and Baure (Gardens reps) and Peterson and Mathias (Farms), January 11, 1968; 1968 Eagle Heights Garden Instruction Sheet, *Eagle Heights Newsletter* (February 1968).

<sup>145</sup> The Garden Committee, "Gardens for '66," *Eagle Heights Newsletter* (April 1966), 1-2.

<sup>146</sup> Donald Peterson to Tom Palmieri April 17, 1968, Krishna Ramanujan personal papers; B. Kuhlow, *Notes on Eagle Hgts Garden Comm. Notebook*, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>147</sup> 1968 Eagle Heights Garden Instruction Sheet, *Eagle Heights Newsletter* (February 1968).

<sup>148</sup> 1968 Eagle Heights Garden Instruction Sheet, *Eagle Heights Newsletter* (February 1968).

until next year.”<sup>149</sup> He reveled in the seasonal, independent energy of gardening:

We didn't fuss the ground much ... It was almost like there was so much energy a person was going to put into that garden in a year. And some of 'em put all that energy in the first day, and maybe the second week and third week. But by the time the weeds really started growing and other things, they had run out of energy and the weeds took over and they really didn't have much to harvest.<sup>150</sup>

Timothy Kolosick recalls that he walked the Gardens to see which plots were abandoned but then either did nothing or asked neighboring gardeners to take them over. For Kolosick, everyone “had other fish to fry” in the fall and plots “went down. So it was, you know, the pot dared not call the kettle black.”<sup>151</sup> Without active enforcement the weed commons did not replace the right of equal access to personal garden places.

### *Mobile plants and people*

The Gardens' physical imprint on the landscape, as well as its aesthetics, concerned the College of Agriculture. Weeds are plants out-of-place, but all agricultural fields contain some of these undesirable plants. The lease, therefore, defined how gardeners should manage weeds, not how gardeners should eradicate them. Weeds left unchecked could infiltrate surrounding cultivated lands, threatening the College's alfalfa protein research.<sup>152</sup> Additionally, rocks, sticks, and roots thrown into adjacent fields could damage mowers. The Committee attempted to regulate gardener's actions within the landscape when it warned “A BROKEN ALFALFA CUTTER THIS YEAR MEANS

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<sup>149</sup>Brugger, interview.

<sup>150</sup>Brugger, interview.

<sup>151</sup>Kolosick, interview.

<sup>152</sup> V.W. Matthias to Richard McCabe, March 12, 1974, Krishna Ramanujan personal papers.

NO GARDENS NEXT YEAR!”<sup>153</sup> The College was also concerned about people like Tom and Pat Palmieri, who scared up pheasants as they walked through the agricultural fields.<sup>154</sup> All of these border crossings affected lands adjacent to the Gardens. The gardeners themselves, though, were also worried by mobile nature entering their plots.

While weeds could leave the Gardens and damage the College’s crops, gardeners materially grappled with non-garden nature that infiltrated the Gardens. The Gardens’ landscape flowed into the agricultural fields to their north and east, but a nature preserve encompassed the College’s cultivated lands. The visual landscape of plots that “remind[ed] many of ... peasant villages in many developing nations” was out-of-place in the natural surroundings.<sup>155</sup> The natural areas around the Gardens contributed to people’s sense of place. The smell of burning tires permeates Timothy Kolosick’s memory of the Gardens: a landscape of smoldering tires lit just enough to keep the varmints away. Individuals filled tires with soil, cultivating squash within the rubber barrier; it was a matter not only of protecting plants, but also making your plot just slightly less welcoming than the neighboring plot. Invading varmints determined, according to Kolosick, the order in which plots were assigned. The best plots were located in the middle of the field, which were furthest from the Gardens’ edges where marauding rodents entered.<sup>156</sup> Committee members got to choose their plots first, claiming those in the middle to be far away from mobile, undesirable nature. Gardeners

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<sup>153</sup> “Notice to Gardeners,” *Eagle Heights Newsletter* (June 1968), 3.

<sup>154</sup> Notes for meeting between Bob House and Baure (Gardens reps) and Peterson and Matthias (Farms), January 11, 1968, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; Palmieri, interview.

<sup>155</sup> “UW students rent plots for vegetable gardening,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, Sunday, October 11, 1970.

<sup>156</sup> Kolosick, interview.

struggled with non-garden nature, not allowed to use chemicals to deal with animals because of the many children present: “You ask what I raise? I raise chipmunks – great, big, fat chipmunks.”<sup>157</sup> Gardeners decided what nature to allow and what was undesirable: delineations necessitated by the permeability of the Gardens’ boundaries.

*Personal places in an ecological landscape*

Shifting commons cannot simply be explained by Committee management of gardeners’ physical transgressions as gardeners had personal relationships with the Gardens. Over the late 1960s and through the 1970s, changing ideas of food, agriculture, and the environment reformed the place of the Gardens for many people. Gardeners connected their garden labor to all parts of their lives: their residential community, past gardens, and social ideals. Changing economic circumstances and environmental ideologies caused gardeners to redefine their collective responsibilities.

Gardeners from 1966 through 1981 placed the Gardens firmly within their residential community. The Gardens were a family event: a place to be with other graduate students, sharing gardening knowledge and produce. Residents of Eagle Heights, living in a “small town on campus,”<sup>158</sup> formed an assembly to bring student voices into running of the apartments; they advocated for and gained increased bus service;<sup>159</sup> they began a food coop;<sup>160</sup> they ran daycares out of their apartments;<sup>161</sup> and

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<sup>157</sup> “Garden Plots Help Cure Shopping Blues,” *Capital Times*, July 26, 1973, pg 43.

<sup>158</sup> “Eagle Heights: Small Town on Campus,” *The Badger Herald* November 30-December 3, 1973, pg 2.

<sup>159</sup> Eagle Heights Council Meeting Minutes, November 3, 1969, Eagle Heights Community Center archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>160</sup> Mike Oberdorfer, interview; Multiple residents to Fritz Lutze, June 16, 1975, Eagle Heights Community Center archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>161</sup> Delmar and Betty Jo Jenke, interview by author, April 7, 2010.

they gardened.<sup>162</sup>

For Mike Brugger it was that community, and not the Gardens themselves, that motivated his active chairmanship. His purpose in chairing the Garden Committee was to provide a community service – not to a separate community of gardeners, but to his neighbors in Eagle Heights. Along with being garden chair, Brugger also worked on the food coop and started a pediatrics clinic.<sup>163</sup> While chair, Brugger made the Garden Committee a subcommittee of the Eagle Heights assembly “for the purpose of overseeing the operation of the Eagle Heights gardens.”<sup>164</sup> As head of both groups, he signed the agreement twice -- once for each of his leadership roles.<sup>165</sup> Brugger, focused on the community, did not see the Gardens as an avenue for environmental activism. He recalled that “organic really wasn't talked about at that point ... I get more concerned about livestock manures and the potential for bacteria there then putting commercial fertilizer on ... for me, it was more focused on food ... chitchatting about how things are going. Very seldom got into some of the more philosophical things.”<sup>166</sup> The Eagle Heights administration also felt responsible for the Gardens’ upkeep and continuance. Fritz Lutze, himself a gardener at University Houses, served as a liaison between the gardeners

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<sup>162</sup> A directory of groups and contacts for Eagle Heights and University Houses (compiled January 24, 1977), Eagle Heights Community Center archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>163</sup> Brugger, interview; Brugger to Pound, July 1, 1975, Eagle Heights Community Center archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; Eagle Heights Assembly Meeting Minutes, August 3, 1975, Eagle Heights Community Center archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>164</sup> *Eagle Heights Garden Committee, Definition & Proposal*, July 14, 1975, Eagle Heights Community Center archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; Eagle Heights Assembly Meeting Minutes, August 3, 1975, Eagle Heights Community Center archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>165</sup> *Eagle Heights Garden Committee, Definition & Proposal*, July 14, 1975, Eagle Heights Community Center archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; Eagle Heights Assembly Meeting Minutes, August 3, 1975, Eagle Heights Community Center archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>166</sup> Brugger, interview.

and University bureaucracy.<sup>167</sup>

The ways some Eagle Heights gardeners viewed their practices were very much in keeping with quality-of-life movements that appeared in the 1970s.<sup>168</sup> The counterculture claimed personal actions within a landscape could reduce social anomie and equalize power structures. For the Palmieris, “[the Gardens were] the way we did it. We didn’t go off smoking pot, but we did organic gardening.”<sup>169</sup> The Gardens were a part of a self-reliant lifestyle for Carol Oberdorfer: “the *Whole Earth Catalogue* was out and people were just beginning to realize a need for sustainable use of the land and gardens ... You know, I baked bread and we had a food coop, and in a way the garden was part of the same, the same kind of movement.”<sup>170</sup> Phil Vergamini “overheard some fellow gardeners discussing the financial merits of working their own garden versus the hours of labor involved. I couldn’t help mention the mental stress that can be relieved and the exercise that is achieved by hoeing away at ‘Old Mother Earth.’ Enjoy your gardening.”<sup>171</sup> The Gardens were a place, for Timothy and Helga Kolosick, to practice their future life. As Timothy Kolosick recounted, “we were convinced that my first job was going to be as a music professor at a small liberal arts college somewhere in rural America. You know, it’s where a lot of people begin. And that we would then have acreage and she would

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<sup>167</sup> Brugger, interview; Fritz Lutze to Richard E. Zach (Planning and Construction), April 30, 1973, Eagle Heights Community Center archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>168</sup> Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 7; Laura Lawson notes that “increasing concerns about environmental conditions and dependencies on wasteful systems were also prompting people to take control of their immediate living environment through gardening,” and “[t]o counteract a perceived loss of control over their daily lives, people looked for ways to break out of the consumer culture and be more self-reliant.” Lawson, *City Bountiful*, 216.

<sup>169</sup> Palmieri, interview.

<sup>170</sup> Carol Oberdorfer, telephone interview by author, July 15, 2010.

<sup>171</sup> Phil Vergamini, “Garden News,” *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (July 1970), 4.

raise children and goats, sort of the kid farm, I would do professoring in town.”<sup>172</sup>

Kolosick's views mirror the back-to-the-land movement, which was focused on self-sufficiency and environmental health.

During the 1970s, the Committee's land management began to incorporate ecological health and landscape connectivity. The Gardens weren't founded on ecological principles; yet people brought these ideals to the landscape, and by doing so, materially reformed them. Ecological ideas percolated into how the Committee managed material spaces in the Gardens. In 1971, Norma Sadler “wanted the Gardening Constitution rewritten to outlaw all D.D.T. pesticides and chlorinated hydro-carbons and to encourage biological control of pests.”<sup>173</sup> This resulted in a change to the rental conditions, which stated that “the use of insect sprays, especially those containing DDT and other chlorocarbons is discouraged. Spray only if one of your crops is really threatened. Then use a biodegradable spray such as Malathion. Don't leave chemical containers in the garden. Children may be poisoned.” In 1971, the Committee also requested that gardeners limit their use of fertilizers because of the landscape effects they could have: “fertilizing on the soil surface will give you a garden of weeds and will promote nutrient runoff into the lake.”<sup>174</sup> That year, the Committee's guide to organizing plot assignment and physical set-up indicated that “organic gardeners might be allowed to be grouped together.”<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Kolosick, interview.

<sup>173</sup> E.H. Chronicle April 1, 1971, 25/00/9, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>174</sup> *Rental conditions, 1971*, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>175</sup> *Garden Operation (1971)*, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community

Gardeners' perceptions of connections between plots and a larger landscape changed the commons. All gardeners had the right to not be affected by another gardener's use of chemicals, and protecting this right became a collective responsibility. Ecological interpretations of the Gardens began when the Committee discouraged use of DDT and remarked on the flows of fertilizer into Lake Mendota. Plots were no longer individual spaces: rather their borders were permeable to other gardening practices. Even the irrigation system came to be viewed as a possible threat. If a hose nozzle was left sitting in a pool of water with chemicals in it, reduced water pressure could suck the water back into the irrigation system. Water and chemicals could then be released into other plots. The Garden Committee decided, therefore, to install anti-siphon valves on every spigot; a great expense that required they increase plot prices.<sup>176</sup>

People continued to garden for financial reasons. The energy crisis and food price inflation in the early 1970s prodded many residents to garden. Gardening was a way to save money in the economic crunch.<sup>177</sup> Gardeners' collective responsibilities expanded to shared needs beyond the Gardens' borders. A spate of news articles from 1973-1975 focused on gardening's financial savings.<sup>178</sup> Gardeners "are beating the supermarket blues," declared one story.<sup>179</sup> This publicity caused the collective work undertaken by the Garden Committee to change. Donations flooded in to help the Gardens' finances and

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Center.

<sup>176</sup> Kolosick, interview; Eagle Heights Assembly Minutes, February 4, 1979: 4, Eagle Heights Community Center archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>177</sup> Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty*, 157; Lawson, *City Bountiful*; Thomas J. Bassett, "Reaping on the Margins: A century of community gardening in America," *Landscape* 25 (1981): 1-8.

<sup>178</sup> "Vegetable Gardens: Whatever the Reason, They're Sprouting Here," *Wisconsin State Journal*, Friday, June 8, 1973, Section 6, pg 1; "Garden Plots Help Cure Shopping Blues," *Capital Times*, July 26, 1973 pg 43; "Even a mini garden will give maximum results," *Capital Times*, Monday April 15, 1974, Features pg 1.

<sup>179</sup> "Garden Plots Help Cure Shopping Blues," *Capital Times*, July 26, 1973 pg 43.

one woman donated hundreds of old canning jars. David Emerich, Committee chairman, drove out to get them and arrived back at Eagle Heights with a truck full of jars. Word had traveled “through the pipeline, the phone line,” and “some [jars] never even, I pulled into the driveway there were some people waiting for them so they went right from my car to their arms and disappeared so I didn’t even have to take many up to the apartment. So there was a legacy of jars from that woman that helped a lot of people.”<sup>180</sup>

### *Diverse knowledge*

Communitarian impulses of the 1960s did not translate into a cohesive community in the Gardens. Each person used the space for their own purposes; indeed for many people, diversity was integral to the Gardens as a place.<sup>181</sup> Gardeners continued to view the Gardens as a space for individuals to practice their own gardening styles. Mike Oberdorfer placed the Gardens through scent: “there were some Koreans with a garden near us ... they were fermenting vegetables that they had harvested from their garden ... it had a very strong, characteristic odor.”<sup>182</sup> Foreign students could “grow part of their culture that they had left temporarily.”<sup>183</sup> Personal cultivation experiences formed the basis of an informal knowledge commons.<sup>184</sup>

When gardeners walked through the Gardens, they also talked to the gardeners around them; they learned why people did things a certain way and perhaps decided to do

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<sup>180</sup> Emerich, interview.

<sup>181</sup> Mike Oberdorfer, interview; Garcia, interview; Bosland, interview; “UW students rent plots for vegetable gardening,” *The Milwaukee Journal*, Sunday, October 11, 1970.

<sup>182</sup> Mike Oberdorfer, interview.

<sup>183</sup> Mike Oberdorfer, interview.

<sup>184</sup> Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom, *Artifacts, Facilities, and Content: Information as a common-pool resource*, (Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, Indiana University, 2001).

things differently the next year. Mike Brugger recounted “there was a lot of sharing back and forth ... some of us were in agriculture, some of us had gardened before, others came from cities, thought it would be neat to garden. Do you put the seed this way or that way so it will grow the right way? And we'd have fun with those questions if we wanted to, but usually we didn't.”<sup>185</sup> There were some gardeners who didn't know how to tell buttonweed (*Abutilon theophrasti*) from desired plants, cultivating several beds of weeds.<sup>186</sup> Dan Arp walked through the Gardens and asked what various plants were so that “when it was ready to harvest someone would say here you asked about this, here's some, this is how you cook it, try it in this.”<sup>187</sup> Gardeners learned to like okra, or at least understand that people from Oklahoma like okra.<sup>188</sup>

Gardeners learning from each other formed a knowledge commons in the Gardens. Learning how to garden was a part of gardening on shared land and protecting this right was part of protecting individual gardens. In 1975, Mary Schmiesing began writing “Gabby Garden,” a garden hints article for the *Eagle Heights Newsletter*.<sup>189</sup> Tim Kolosick attempted to formalize this commons when he became chair. In 1979, Kolosick held a “Gardeners' Forum” to “discuss techniques and problems. These would include: companion planting, mulching, use of compost, pest control, clay soil, etc.”<sup>190</sup> Kolosick viewed the Gardens as a landscape within which he could practice a future lifestyle; collective learning fit into his perception of the Gardens' place.

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<sup>185</sup> Brugger, interview.

<sup>186</sup> Kolosick, interview.

<sup>187</sup> Daniel Arp, telephone interview by author, June 29, 2010.

<sup>188</sup> Jenke, interview; Arp, interview.

<sup>189</sup> Mary Schmiesing, “Gabby Garden,” *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (May 3, 1975).

<sup>190</sup> “Chairman found for Garden Committee,” *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (March 17, 1979).

Gardeners' shared responsibilities grew when they entered into a property agreement with the College: weeds and other mobile nature traversed the Gardens' boundaries, requiring gardeners form new collective regulations. While the Gardens' relationship with its surroundings changed the commons, so too did gardeners' personal experiences and ideologies. New ecological and community ideals altered people's perceptions of the Gardens and, therefore, how they managed their collective space.

The farm crisis of the early 1980s, a result of government supports and farm over-production, hurt the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS).<sup>191</sup> The Experimental Farms Committee recommended that the Experimental Farms charge for "services rendered to units outside of CALS."<sup>192</sup> While the original lease required gardeners to pay \$65 an acre, in 1981 Experimental Farms informed the gardeners they would be charged for all services including plowing, discing, pulvimulching, harrowing, rock-picking, and manure spreading. For the 12-acre Gardens this would total \$1212, an enormous cost increase.<sup>193</sup> The Committee reacted by altering its structure: a new organization that changed gardeners' collective responsibilities.

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<sup>191</sup> Jenkins, *A Centennial History*, 189; Hurt, *A Brief History*, 356.

<sup>192</sup> C.F. Koval to Neal Jorgensen, Re: University Housing Gardens, December 16, 1981, Krishna Ramanujan personal papers.

<sup>193</sup> C.F. Koval to Neal Jorgensen, Re: University Housing Gardens, December 16, 1981, Krishna Ramanujan personal papers. Ironically, while the College threatened the gardeners with increased prices, the cost increased only in 1980 and 1981. By 1982, Experimental Farms was again charging around \$500 each year. See yearly invoices from Experimental Farms (1980-1994), Krishna Ramanujan personal papers.

**1982 – 1995:  
Collective lands and a cohesive community**

From 1982 to 1995, gardeners gradually incorporated both a cohesive gardening community and interconnected landscape into what the Gardens should provide. Through the 1980s, participation in the Gardens gradually waned. The physical and social landscape of the Gardens altered as gardeners grappled with ever-present capital costs and fewer participants. In 1982, gardeners centralized the Garden Committee. This began a trend of increasingly formal governance structures and rule enforcement. A new Committee structure allowed gardeners to modify the Gardens' physical landscape: gardeners formally delineated an organic gardening section of the Gardens in 1982. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the Committee managed the Gardens as a cohesive, ecological landscape. By the early 1990s, the gardeners were reaching out to people who were not residents to fill empty garden plots.<sup>194</sup> Meanings gardeners ascribed to the Gardens changed during this time as well. People wanted not only to grow food, but to grow food in a way that met their environmental ideals. The organic section was the first collective materialization of new social ideologies.<sup>195</sup> The Gardens' physical landscape and gardeners' social beliefs became increasingly intertwined.

While gardeners' focused on internal collective resources during this time, alterations in boarding lands still affected them. The lands surrounding the Gardens changed in this period with economic constraints and land purchases. In the 1980s, University of Wisconsin departments faced tightened budgets. The College of

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<sup>194</sup> Steve Youngs, *Chairman's Duties*, 1988, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>195</sup> Pam Culviner, "Gardens – In January?" *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (January/February 1982), 1.

Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) faced deteriorating facilities, a growing gulf between the Agricultural Experiment Stations and the University of Wisconsin Extension, and declining student enrollment due to a distrust of scientific farming.<sup>196</sup> CALS tripled the fees of the Gardens because of tightened budgets and its always-present need for land.<sup>197</sup> In order to charge for its services, Experimental Farms defined the Gardens as outside of CALS. The University 1986 Campus Development Plan included the Gardens as multipurpose open space: “areas that may be viewed as community parks and significant residual spaces that are not part of the grounds of individual buildings.”<sup>198</sup> The University purchased what is now Wally Bauman Woods in 1984 to prevent development of Lake Mendota’s shoreline. In 1989, the University finalized negotiations for purchasing Second Point. This purchase gave the University ownership of entire Picnic Point area.<sup>199</sup> By 1993, the University’s Physical Plant maintained the orchards and fields at the base of Picnic Point, not CALS.<sup>200</sup>

In the 1980s, gardeners’ perceptions of the Gardens changed with new environmental, community, and agricultural ideas. In this decade, Environmental Justice activists critiqued traditional environmental groups for their focus on wilderness protection. They claimed people’s daily environments were no less worthy of protection than remote areas; they also argued pollution disproportionately affected the poor and

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<sup>196</sup> Jenkins, *A Centennial History*, 192-193.

<sup>197</sup> Pam Culviner, “Gardens – In January?” *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (January/February 1982), 1; C.F. Koval to Neal Jorgensen, Re: University Housing Gardens, December 16, 1981, Krishna Ramanujan personal papers.

<sup>198</sup> UW Madison, Planning and Construction, Multipurpose Open Space, figure 4.D7, Campus Plan 1986, University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.

<sup>199</sup> Final report of the Campus Natural Areas Task Force, “Appendix 1. Brief History of the Campus Natural Areas,” October 25, 1999: 14, Lakeshore Nature Preserve website, [http://www.lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu/plans/benchmark\\_documents.htm](http://www.lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu/plans/benchmark_documents.htm), accessed 1/5/11.

<sup>200</sup> University of Wisconsin Arboretum, *Arboretum Manual*, 1993: 17.

people of color, making environmentalism a problem of social inequity.<sup>201</sup> Food choices became more about what not to eat than what to eat.<sup>202</sup> Various strands of alternative agriculture (from organics to biodynamic) made inroads into mainstream culture over the course of the decade.<sup>203</sup> Gardening activists in inner-cities weaved together concepts of nutrition, cultural diversity, protection of home environments, and community empowerment when they promoted community gardens.<sup>204</sup>

### *Designating organic spaces*

In 1982, the Garden Committee delineated an organic section of the Gardens: a physical change made possible by the Committee's social reorganization. Previously, the Committee had been made up of those volunteers that came and helped on wither opening and closing day. As many as 60 people could be considered Committee members and receive choice plots.<sup>205</sup> Hundred's representatives bolstered the ranks of these volunteers. Representatives assigned plots in specified rows to gardeners who lived in their Eagle Heights' hundreds unit.<sup>206</sup> With decentralized management, the Committee could not delineate one section of the Gardens for organic gardening since people who desired to garden organically came from all over Eagle Heights. With increased land-use costs, Committee reduced its size and changed the registration process: applications would now be sent to the Community Center to be distributed by several volunteers.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 266, 269.

<sup>202</sup> Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty*, 207

<sup>203</sup> Beeman and Pritchard, *A Green and Permanent Land*, 131.

<sup>204</sup> Warner, *To Dwell is to Garden*.

<sup>205</sup> The Garden Committee, "Gardeners," *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (October 1968), 10.

<sup>206</sup> Burt Ramoz, "To the Garden Committee," *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (July 12, 1974), 1.

<sup>207</sup> Pam Culviner, "Gardens – In January?" *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (January/February 1982), 1.

Centralizing plot distribution was the first move towards collective landscape management. With the new governance structure, the Committee could segregate an organic section of the Gardens. Gardeners demand for organic plots came from new concepts of personal and environmental health. Instituting an organic section extended gardeners' collective responsibilities into people's practices and plots.

The Committee had regulated some chemicals prior to 1982. It justified these rules, however, because of the effect substances could have on other gardeners. The Eagle Heights Orchard's dead zones prompted the Committee to ban herbicides. Herbicides could prevent future gardeners from growing certain plants and, therefore, they infringed on the collective right to successful gardens. The Committee didn't do anything about insecticides because “at that time everybody in agriculture used insecticides pretty randomly, well they used that [sic] a lot anyway, so I don't remember having any problem with insecticides.”<sup>208</sup> Lack of Committee regulation was not because people did not use insecticides, since “we would use whatever it took to get the produce in, but we were also aware not to overdo the use of pesticides [insecticides]. So we were cautious about how much we used. Part of it was because the darn stuff was expensive.”<sup>209</sup> Many gardeners remained unconcerned about chemical cultivation.

A collective organic section was novel, but organic practices had been a part of personal cultivation techniques for decades. While Don Smith recalls that “organic gardening was a term that wasn't there in 1962. In fact, it probably didn't exist for 10 or 15 more years,” Tom and Pat Palmieri were reading *Organic Gardening and Farming* in

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<sup>208</sup> Rumack, interview.

<sup>209</sup> Arp, interview.

the late 1960s.<sup>210</sup> Residents were asking the Committee for organic sections as early as 1971.<sup>211</sup> These personal preferences were not a part of the Gardens' landscape governance until the early 1980s. In 1982, Pam Culviner reported in the *Newsletter*: "You can begin to dreaming now of vegetables which are pesticide-free – if you choose this area, your neighbor won't be spraying stuff near your garden."<sup>212</sup>

What did it mean, though, to designate a section of the Gardens as organic, and why did people choose to garden there? The Committee ruled that in the organic rows, gardeners could not use synthetic inputs.<sup>213</sup> The material practice of organic cultivation stems from several social movements. Many consider J.I. Rodale to be the initiator of organic practices in the United States. He drew on work done by Sir Albert Howard and Lady Eve Balfour in the 1920s and 1930s. Early organic practitioners focused primarily on soil health, which led them to expound on organic matter and compost. People connected organic with 'natural' and 'whole' foods in the 1960s as health concerns became centered on food processing and agricultural inputs.<sup>214</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, back-to-the-land enthusiasts embraced Rodale and his magazines *Organic Gardening* and *Prevention*. They linked communal living to alternative farming and personal health.<sup>215</sup> Finally, the modern environmental movement shaped people's perceptions of organics. Wendell Berry's ecological agrarianism connected ecological flows to family farm survival while appropriate technology proponents pushed for human-scale tools for all

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<sup>210</sup> Palmieri, interview.

<sup>211</sup> Smith, interview; *Garden Operation* (1971), Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>212</sup> Pam Culviner, "Gardens – In January?" *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (January/February 1982), 1.

<sup>213</sup> Garden Committee, *1987 Garden Application*, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>214</sup> Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty*, 199.

<sup>215</sup> Guthman, *Agrarian Dreams*, 4-6.

parts of life.<sup>216</sup>

Individuals chose to garden organically for myriad reasons. Organic gardeners reference personal health, environmental health, or counterculture ideologies to explain their practices. Timothy Kolosick linked environmental health and alternative lifestyles. At the same time, he also complained of unwanted animals in the Gardens: only certain types of nature were allowed in these plots.<sup>217</sup> Some gardeners, despite a belief in nutritional food, rejected organic methods. Nondee Jones recalls that

The one time I tried to grow organic food and I used my broccoli and there were all these little green worms in it, and I called [my friend] Gabrielle on the phone and she said Nondee, you're supposed to soak it in salt water to get the worms out, and I said I don't care what you're supposed to do, if I know there were worms in here to begin with, I'm not eating the broccoli.<sup>218</sup>

Organics, then, had multiple meanings for gardeners because of its many social connotations.

The Committee needed to regulate material pieces of the landscape to provide chemical-free plots to organic gardeners. It placed the organic section at the top of the hill so that chemicals from non-organic rows would not be carried into them by rain. As Julie Ott recalls, "if it was higher up, the organic plots, there wouldn't be runoff, which is why the lower ones would have been the pesticide ones."<sup>219</sup> The organic rows expanded and contracted throughout the 1980s, mirroring the number of people interested in organic gardening. In the first years, the existence of an organic section relied on an

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<sup>216</sup> Kimberly K. Smith, *Wendell Berry and the Agrarian Tradition: A common grace*, (Lawrence, KA: The University Press of Kansas, 2003); Guthman, *Agrarian Dreams*, 8.

<sup>217</sup> Kolosick, interview.

<sup>218</sup> Jones, interview.

<sup>219</sup> Julie Ott, telephone interview by author, November 6, 2009.

organic representative on the Committee. This indicates gardeners did not consider access to organic plots a collective right.<sup>220</sup> Through the 1980s, the need for an organic representative faded. The organic section became just another part of the Gardens' landscape – a landscape the Committee increasingly managed as an interconnected whole.

### *A collective landscape*

Bright orange calendula flowers and deep maroon beet tops lay scattered amongst amaranth leaves and grass stems. The weed whacker's indiscriminate cutting sent Evelyn Barbee looking for who had ruined the front edge of her plot, leaving plants and weeds strewn about. The garden worker was not hard to find, still working his way along the Gardens' paths. With only a hand-held cutter, the fast growth of the grasses would make him begin again at the bottom as soon as he reached the top of the hill. When Barbee demanded to know why he had destroyed her crop, the worker swore at her and she “was glad that [she] had a cultivator with [her], because [she] became concerned for [her] physical safety.”<sup>221</sup> The Garden Committee assured Barbee that the worker would remain away from her plot. Julie Ott, Committee chair at the time, was just glad that “nothing more serious came of it. And she was very upset. And well, that's the policy though. Sorry, lady!”<sup>222</sup>

The altercation between the paid worker and individual gardener, caused by rule

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<sup>220</sup> Judy Bosland, “Garden News,” *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (April 1984), 5.

<sup>221</sup> Evelyn L. Barbee to Eagle Heights Gardening Committee, July 21, 1993, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>222</sup> Ott, interview.

enforcement, was the result of new Committee weed management that focused on weed's landscape effects. Previously, the Garden Committee had not enforced weed rules with any regularity despite their inclusion in gardening regulations since 1966. Evelyn Barbee's stunned reaction to her plants' destruction indicates that even by 1993 the Committee did not always enforce gardening rules. Throughout the 1980s, the Committee altered how it justified weed regulations.

Weeds' ecological characteristics shaped the Committee's new conceptualization of these boundary-crossing plants. Neither neighboring nor future gardeners should have to grapple with weeds. The Committee identified weeds as a communal problem because of their physical characteristics. Flying weed seed threatened the entire field and buried rhizomes destroyed neighborly relations. Weed physiology proved plot boundaries were permeable, and “[r]ambunctious weeds become a problem for everyone.”<sup>223</sup> The Committee gradually redefined weed suppression as an internal, collective responsibility -- rather than a problem CALS required the gardeners address -- because the plants threatened all gardeners.

George Kuhr, a chairman who “wanted hard and fast rules” when others “were, well, you know everybody has different ways and means and ideas and stuff and so on,” pushed forward changes in the Garden Committee's weed enforcement.<sup>224</sup> In 1981, he warned gardeners: “RETRIBUTION IS COMING! ... The Garden Committee does not suffer rank weeds gladly ... Gardeners who don't keep a tidy garden this year may not be

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<sup>223</sup> Judy Bosland, “Garden News,” *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (May 1985).

<sup>224</sup> Egan, interview.

issued a lot next year.”<sup>225</sup> Weeds, for Kuhr, symbolized gardeners who tended their plots incorrectly (Figure 13).<sup>226</sup> Kuhr's admonishment marked weeds as a threat to the community. Weeds were dangerous not because gardeners could lose their land but because they could physically disrupt another garden.

Weed rules increasingly reflected the fact that weeds could hurt successful gardens and were tuned to prevent weed spread between plots. In 1984, the first rule on the gardening agreement was “Keep your garden tidy and relatively weed free!!! The Grounds Committee will take ‘Drastic Action’ against offending plots.”<sup>227</sup> The Committee would post a yellow flag to warn gardeners their weeds were getting out of hand and stake a red flag in plots with knee-high weeds. If not cleaned within 10 days, the red-flagged plot would be mowed.<sup>228</sup> In 1985, the Committee tweaked the flag system slightly. When weeds were higher than two feet the Committee would place a yellow flag in the plot. A week later, the flag would change to red if the weeds remained; a week after that, and “your plot will be *completely* chopped down.”<sup>229</sup> In 1987, rules identified cultivated species as weeds: gardeners now defined Jerusalem artichokes, mint, and comfrey as unwanted plants. The Committee asked gardeners to limit their gardening choices: “in consideration of future gardeners, perennials ... should not be planted.”<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> “GARDENERS BEWARE! RETRIBUTION COMING!” *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (August 1, 1981).

<sup>226</sup> George Kuhr, email to author, February 10, 2010.

<sup>227</sup> Gardening Agreement, *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (April 1984).

<sup>228</sup> Eagle Heights Garden Committee Meeting minutes, May 20, 1984, Eagle Heights Community Gardens, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>229</sup> Judy Bosland, “Garden News,” *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (July 1985).

<sup>230</sup> *Eagle Heights Community Gardens Gardening Agreement 1987*, Eagle Heights Community Gardens, Eagle Heights Community Center. That perennial, cultivated plants can be considered weeds shows the social construction of weeds. Fiege, in *Irrigated Eden*, remarks that crops became weeds when they

The Committee's continual adjustment of weed regulations stretched into other commons: its rejection of weeds was another manifestation of gardeners' shared need for fertile soil. If they prevented weed growth, gardeners would stop the plants from flowering and sending seeds across the Gardens. If the weeds seeded, though, the seeds would land in soil where they could survive, dormant, for years.<sup>231</sup> Weeds created contaminated soil that would hinder future cultivation.

The Garden Committee, to encourage weeding, began to make changes to the Gardens' shared spaces. The Committee tried to provide physical resources to help gardeners grapple with their weeds. It formed a compost pile in the southwest corner of the field and also purchased a wheelbarrow so that gardeners could lug weeds away from their plots.<sup>232</sup> Gardeners rarely did this, though, which left Committee members to bemoan the piles of weeds in paths: "Are you annoyed at having to climb over weed piles in garden pathways? Don't dump yours there either."<sup>233</sup> They decided more signs were needed and that they should offer alternatives to putting weeds in paths.<sup>234</sup>

Gardeners' collective responsibilities for space and weed suppression combined in 1983 when the Committee asked gardeners to keep 6 inch paths clear on either edge of their plots. These paths would provide "badly needed aisles."<sup>235</sup> The landscape of long, plowed rows was not amenable to people wanting to cut through plots to see a neighbor

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moved into places farmers didn't want them (57). In the Gardens, these plants are out of place through time as well as through space.

<sup>231</sup> S.R. Radosevich, J. Holt, and C. Ghersa, *Ecology of Weeds and Invasive Plants*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley-Interscience, 2007): 152.

<sup>232</sup> Mike Riebe, "Garden News," *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (July 1986).

<sup>233</sup> Steve Youngs, "Garden News," *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (August 1988).

<sup>234</sup> *Minutes of the February E.H. Garden Committee Meeting 1987*, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>235</sup> Judy Bosland, "Garden News," *Eagle Heights Newsletter* (May 1983), 3.

or shorten their walk home. Just as in 1961, gardeners reformed plot layout to facilitate people's movements through their shared space. This time, though, new walkways relied upon regulating gardeners work within their private plots: a rule the Committee could not effectively enforce.

Despite material alterations and complicated flag systems, the Committee did not enforce weed rules with any regularity. According to Steve Williams, "You'd lose small children [in the weeds]. There were patches, we always had a weed policy but it wasn't enforced very well, so that was a problem, the enforcement. We had different chairman and different attitudes."<sup>236</sup> Joe Cooper reported that "it was a jungle out there."<sup>237</sup>

The Committee managed the Gardens as a cohesive, ecological landscape beyond their struggles with weeds; a landscape in which personal plot improvement could be met with new collective gardening resources. Through the 1980s, the Committee managed an increasing number of common goods it acquired to improve both individual plots and the cohesive cultivated landscape. A connected, biological landscape became a part of Gardens' management when in 1984, "in an effort to attract insect-hungry birds, bird houses will be placed around the garden."<sup>238</sup> In 1987, the application map indicated the slope of the land, a cold frame, bulletin boards as well as the leaf pile with a hand-drawn cart next to it (Figure 14).<sup>239</sup> That year, the Committee began to plant raspberry bushes by the mulch pile in the Gardens' southwest corner and added six more in 1988.<sup>240</sup> By

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<sup>236</sup> Williams, interview.

<sup>237</sup> Joe Cooper, interview by author, February 23, 2010.

<sup>238</sup> Judy Bosland, "Garden News," *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (May 1984), 6.

<sup>239</sup> 1987 Garden application, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; Minutes of the February E.H. Garden Committee meeting 1987, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>240</sup> Garden meeting minutes, June 12, 1988, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights

1991, the Committee was leaving an entire row fallow to “help the ever increasing erosion problem.”<sup>241</sup> The Committee also asked that gardeners take personal responsibility for the Gardens.

The communal resources would not improve the Gardens without gardeners’ individual labor and dedication. The Committee, therefore, encouraged gardeners’ participation and personal choice. In 1984, all gardeners could choose the location of their plot.<sup>242</sup> In the following years, the plot application included an increasingly detailed map so that gardeners would know where the organic rows were, which row would be fallow, and what plots were affected by the hill’s slope. Gardeners could order hay bales, lug mulch, and use a communal cold frame: the Committee encouraged all of all personal actions as they would improve the collective resources.

### *A community within the landscape*

The Garden Committee, while calling for gardeners’ cooperative effort, became increasingly formal. The 1982 demolition of a large Committee allowed new landscape formations and a centralized organizational structure. By 1987, Committee members signed up for specific roles including chair, vice-chair, treasurer, refreshments, publicity, registration, row captains, and set-up and clean-up captains.<sup>243</sup> Members agreed to attend at least 6 meetings through the growing season. As the Gardens were not year-round, the

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Community Center; Steve Youngs, telephone interview by author, April 17, 2010.

<sup>241</sup> 1991 Eagle Heights Community Garden Plot Application, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; 1992 Eagle Heights Community Garden Plot Application, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>242</sup> Judy Bosland, “Garden News,” *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (April 1984), 5.

<sup>243</sup> Eagle Heights Garden Committee Member Descriptions 1987, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

Committee took a two-month hiatus in December and January. The Committee applied for 501c4 status in 1993 because “we were paying people, and we wanted to make sure we were on the up and up with the IRS.”<sup>244</sup>

The Committee’s struggles with gardener participation, and their more formal meetings, made the group into a small community within the Gardens. Members provided leadership and read certain social interactions onto the shared landscape. Gardeners wanted gardens but few wanted to participate in the common governance system. Many Committee chairs mentioned that they became chair because no one else wanted it. People were willing to serve on the Committee in some capacity but not in the leadership role.<sup>245</sup> One year, Julie Schneider reported, “we were down to like two of us, and so I went and plastered flyers in every building that said if we don’t get five more volunteers on the committee ... we are canceling the Gardens.”<sup>246</sup> Unsurprisingly, more people immediately appeared to help.

In the early 1980s, the Gardens remained entrenched in the Eagle Heights community. The place of the Gardens, for Terry Egan, was one of balancing neighboring plot needs to make “the Gardens more for residents” by ensuring that certain people had plots in specific places.<sup>247</sup> Garden Committee chairs relied on Howard Schuck (an Eagle Heights building manager and gardener) for his ability to access University resources and his institutional memory.<sup>248</sup> The Division of University Housing continued to provide

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<sup>244</sup> Ott, interview; *By-Laws, Eagle Heights Garden Committee*, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>245</sup> Ott, interview; Youngs, interview.

<sup>246</sup> Julie Schneider, telephone interview by author, November 16, 2009.

<sup>247</sup> Egan, interview. Egan noted that she would place people who were never good neighbors on the outside or in areas not assigned to others.

<sup>248</sup> Schneider, interview; Williams, interview; Eric Olmanson, interview by author, January 28, 2010.

certain services to the Gardens because the Gardens were an essential service for their residents.<sup>249</sup>

At the same time, gardeners saw themselves as removed from other residents. Gardening, for Nondee Jones, “soothes [the] soul ... and I think everybody that was into gardening was that kind of people. They were people who enjoyed cooking and growing their own food.”<sup>250</sup> She differentiated herself from her neighbors by saying that even at that time she was paying attention to nutrition and the kinds of foods her family ate. Throughout the 1980s, the gardening community separated from the residential community.<sup>251</sup> When faced with decreasing participation the Committee actively recruited gardeners from outside of Eagle Heights and emphasized an internal gardening community.<sup>252</sup>

Gardeners believed that their shared physical space should engender a cohesive community. One set-up day the volunteers stood in a circle and sang “Inch-by-Inch, row-by-row ...” because “somebody thought that it was important to try to build that community, even on that day ... and if that isn't pretty 60s when you think about it, I don't know.”<sup>253</sup> This never happened, though, in the Gardens in the 1960s: the event was an individual's interpretation of what type of community should inhabit this space. Committee members felt a nostalgia for past communities, imagining that people used to

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<sup>249</sup> *Eagle Heights/Harvey Street Garden Committee Agreement, 1994 Proposed Changes to Agreement*, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>250</sup> Jones, interview.

<sup>251</sup> Steve Youngs, *Chairman's Duties*, 1988, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center. Changes Julie Sanderson made to this document in 1990 show that the chairman no longer had to attend meetings of the Eagle Heights Council.

<sup>252</sup> Steve Youngs, *Chairman's Duties*, 1988, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; applications beginning in 1990 reference the “COOPERATIVE” effort needed to maintain the Gardens.

<sup>253</sup> Ott, interview.

come together to work the Gardens in a cooperative fashion. Katherine Edison said “I thought that I lived at the end of an era ... it was the end of the 60s era cooperative movement, and the university was just kind of gobbling it all up and saying we're just going to run it.”<sup>254</sup>

In the mid-1980s, gardeners began to perceive the Gardens as a place that should grow more than food. In 1986 gardeners held the first annual bonfire in order to witness “the ritual burning of this year's garden residues in the hope of a successful year to come.”<sup>255</sup> People perceived garden plots as more than just spaces filled with vegetation. Almuth Koby gardened because she “liked the idea of self-sufficiency ... Some seasons are horrible, and regardless I don't mind it too much because it shows we work in tandem with nature, we are not superior. And I really like the humbling affect of gardening too.”<sup>256</sup> Julie Ott began gardening partly because she wanted to learn how to preserve heritage vegetables through seed saving.<sup>257</sup> Brandywine tomatoes appealed to Steve Youngs, “kind of lumpy looking ... We'd get seeds going in the window of the apartment and then get them out there [sic] was probably the only way to get them.”<sup>258</sup> Plants provided aesthetic and social fulfillment: “I saw yellow cherry tomatoes so numerous and dense they looked like treasure flowing from a ruptured coffer.”<sup>259</sup>

From 1981 to 1995, gardeners re-envisioned the Gardens commons. With declining participation and new cultural ideals, the Gardens became a place not only to

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<sup>254</sup> Schneider, interview.

<sup>255</sup> *End of the Year Bonfire Bash in E.H. Gardens* 1987, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>256</sup> Almuth Koby, telephone interview by author, February 15, 2010.

<sup>257</sup> Ott, interview.

<sup>258</sup> Youngs, interview.

<sup>259</sup> Steve Scoville, “Avant Garden,” *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, (November 1994), 4.

grow food, but to grow food using specific practices in a shared, interconnected landscape. This new interpretation of place led to new collective responsibilities and shared land management. In previous periods, successful gardens needed access to space, soil, and water. Throughout the 1980s, biological movements and community ideals proved plot boundaries were permeable. Gardeners had the right, then, to have plots free from some transgressions (chemicals, weed seed) and connected to others (a social community, birds, and pollinators). The Committee increasingly managed the Gardens as a holistic social and material landscape.

The Committee centered gardening regulations on landscape maintenance through personal practices. Yet the physical, seasonal routine did not change to match rhetoric centered on personal techniques and socially-conscious gardening practices: the field was still plowed; weeds were still spread from one plot to the next; and soil that may have been synthetically fertilized was pulled by the disc (Figures 15 and 16). Encouraging personal plot enhancement didn't work when “you want the same plot as last year but it might have moved a couple of feet in one direction or the other. Because that's just how set-up went.”<sup>260</sup> Separate soil regime and weed loads would enhance common goals of successful personal plots. At the end of the 1994 season the Garden Committee took a poll on closing day: should the Gardens become all organic? The majority of workers said yes.<sup>261</sup> For the 1995 season, the Garden Committee decided to expand the organic section and, in 1996, they designated all plots as organic.<sup>262</sup> The Gardens, in 1996 and

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<sup>260</sup> Ott, interview.

<sup>261</sup> Eagle Heights Community Gardens Committee Meeting Agenda, February 5, 1995, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>262</sup> Eagle Heights Gardening Agreement, 1995; Robert Gifford, telephone interview by author, November

1997, underwent considerable physical changes that in turn reformed how people viewed the Gardens as a place.

**1996 – 2002:  
A permanent and political landscape**

In 1996, the Committee required that all gardeners follow organic practices. That year as well, a civil engineering class came and surveyed the plots. The students created a meticulous plot layout that ensured all plots were of equal size despite the Gardens' topography and curving rows. CALS did not plow that fall and the Gardens officially came under no-till management in 1997. No-till cultivation freed gardeners' labor for common space improvement. The Committee could now hold mid-season community workdays for material maintenance. Reformed land management practices reverberated back into Committee governance structure and informed how later gardeners perceived the Gardens as a place. Some gardeners perceived the Gardens as a sustainable landscape: a microcosm of healthy, unified human and biological communities. The landscape engendered gardeners' political activism in 1999 when they faced the possibility of losing garden space.

At the same time the Gardens were undergoing drastic landscape changes the lands around them were being allocated to new departments for new purposes. For decades, CALS had controlled the land surrounding the Gardens.<sup>263</sup> In 1996, this land came under the jurisdiction of the Campus Natural Areas (CNA) which was a subcommittee of the Arboretum. Increased management included the publication of the Kline-Bader report which laid out an ecological restoration plan for the area.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, *Inventory of Land Holdings and Needs, Experimental Farms and (supplement) Plan for Development and land need Arlington experimental farm*, Prepared for the Board of Regents, October, 1971, Experimental Farm Records 1856-1970, 1996/003, Box #3, University of Wisconsin Campus Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library.

<sup>264</sup> Virginia Kline and Brian Bader, *UW-Campus Natural Areas Management Plan, 1996*, UW-Madison

Arboretum ecologists began clearing Frautschi Point in 1999. Public outrage at the wood's destruction led the Arboretum to evaluate their management of the Campus Natural Areas.<sup>265</sup> In 2000, the Campus Natural Areas Planning Task Force recommended that the CNA become an independent entity.<sup>266</sup> Along with changes in the CNA, the University planned on increasing its utility capacity. By 1999, the Campus Planning Committee was examining the possibility of enlarging the Walnut Street Heating Plant. If this occurred, CALS greenhouses and test plots would be shaded and researchers would need to find new field locations.<sup>267</sup>

In this period, separate ideas of environmentalism, agricultural production, and individual lifestyles entwined into new formations. Gardeners connected these cultural ideologies to the Gardens' place. At the beginning of the decade, public perceptions of the environment -- and what environments people should be preserving -- began to change. Environmental Justice advocates gathered at the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991. This was the first collective action by these dispersed, local environmentalists: bringing protection of home environments into national consciousness.<sup>268</sup> Alternative modes of agricultural production gained public attention

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Arboretum; Dave Newbart, "Back to nature," *Clipsheet of the University of Wisconsin, Madison*, Thursday October 24, 1996.

<sup>265</sup> Linda Wang, "UW savanna restoration project elicits concern," *Daily Cardinal* February 2, 1999; Glenda Denniston, interview by author, October 7, 2009; Krishna Ramanujan, "Deforestation plants campus controversy: Committees argue over future of Frautschi Point," *The Daily Cardinal*, Thursday February 24, 2000, pg 3.

<sup>266</sup> *Final Report of the Campus Natural Areas Planning Task Force Purpose and Principles of Organization and Operation*, Prepared by the Report Writing Subcommittee (Paul Zedler, Chair, Tom Brock, Ann Burgess, John Harrington), January 10, 2000.

<sup>267</sup> John Wiley to David Shiffert, email, December 3, 1999, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>268</sup> Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 3. Scholars in the mid-1990s argued that all landscapes were worthy of protection. See William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, getting back to the wrong nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon, (New York: W. W.

when the federal government passed the Organic Foods Production Act in 1990. The act mandated national organic agricultural standards.<sup>269</sup> The word ‘sustainable’ came into common usage in the 1990s and people emphasized the need for both environmental and social stability.<sup>270</sup> Community garden programs grew as city-wide nonprofit organizations gained public attention. People linked gardening spaces to environmental and social health: connecting environmental ideologies to agricultural critiques.<sup>271</sup>

### *A defining personality*

Eric Olmanson opened the garage door one morning preparing for a long day of weed-whacking the Gardens' paths. Rather than the usual array of wrenches, hammers, and old plumbing parts he stood face-to-face with the carcass of a deer hanging from the rafters. That's one way to begin a day in the Gardens. Bob Gifford, Committee chair, had strung the deer up the day before, preparing to clean it and pack it away for the winter. The deer contained a little more meat than was on the raccoon Norm Deffner caught and ate 30 years before, but the land was still providing more than vegetables to the gardeners.<sup>272</sup>

Gifford, whose presence permeated the Gardens, led gardeners through a radical reshaping of the Gardens' landscape. During his chairmanship, the Garden Committee decided to make the Gardens all organic in 1996 followed by the first no-till season in

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Norton & Co., 1995), 69-90.

<sup>269</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agriculture and Trade Analysis Division of the Economic Research Service, *Provisions of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990*, ed. by Susan L. Pollack and Lori Lynch, Agriculture Information Bulletin no. 624.

<sup>270</sup> Beeman and Pritchard, *A Green and Permanent Land*, 112 and 163.

<sup>271</sup> Lawson, *City Bountiful*, 238-245.

<sup>272</sup> Deffner, interview; Author's walk with Eric Olmanson, summer 2010.

1997: the plots became permanently marked after 30 years of annual plowing. Gifford justified material changes to the Gardens by equating poor physical management with a disengaged social community. According to Gifford, gardeners managed the land as “half garden and half commercial agricultural field,” which created “a declining sense of enjoyment, participation, in something good because of the way we were managing it.”<sup>273</sup>

Gardeners’ evolving perceptions of what the Gardens should be prompted the landscape changes that began in 1996. They saw the Gardens as a landscape in which land stewardship and community cohesion were interdependent. The Garden Committee undertook the material changes in order to increase sense of ownership; encourage individual garden success; and release labor for common space maintenance. For Gifford, tending common spaces (paths, weed piles, mulch piles) would allow gardeners to succeed in their individual endeavors and this personal gardening enjoyment would reverberate back into community cohesion.

Gifford’s physical experiences in the Gardens made him a proponent of the organic and no-till landscape. Gardeners remember the fortress he built around his four plots in the 500s: a perfect roost for red tailed hawks surveying the Gardens for mice.<sup>274</sup> He was the first “awesomely inspired gardener” Dave Shiffert met, “with six garden plots and you know his goal was to grow and store all his own food, and you know, he was always just so excited to be out there and talk about it.”<sup>275</sup> Gifford saw large land management problems in the Gardens. Gardeners’ poor maintenance created eroding

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<sup>273</sup> Gifford, interview.

<sup>274</sup> I mentioned to Steve Williams that Gifford seemed to be a “go getter” and he replied “Ha. That was an issue,” Williams, interview; Walk with Howard Schuck and Steve Williams, June 6, 2010; Author’s walk with Eric Olmanson, summer 2010.

<sup>275</sup> David Shiffert, interview by author, August 25, 2009.

paths and expansive weed problems, both of which decreased pride in the shared space. Because of his practical reading of the Gardens' landscape, Gifford grappled primarily with the material problems these new management procedures posed: how to control insects organically; how to provide non-synthetic fertilizer for plots; how to harness the work freed from annual set-up and clean-up. He desired, as all previous chairs had, to facilitate equal access to successful gardens. Yet he went further, as he believed the improvement of common lands was integral to his work in the Gardens. People's sense of ownership would increase if they could retain their plots and garden year-round. Common labor on shared projects would bind the gardeners to the land and therefore to each other. Gifford's work in the Gardens flowed from a basic belief in connections between social communities and their physical surroundings.

### *An organic garden*

The Committee disagreed on whether to make the Gardens completely organic despite its expansion of the organic section in 1995. The group was split, "there was half the committee that did not think they could grow plants at all without chemicals. And they were very strong, and it came down to a swing vote, so you know, we were trying to get people on the Committee who were organically interested. And we did, and I think we passed by like one vote."<sup>276</sup> Bob Gifford only wanted to make the Gardens organic if he could garden without synthetic inputs. He supported the shift after he completed a successful organic growing season.<sup>277</sup> Organic cultivation created new collective

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<sup>276</sup> Williams, interview.

<sup>277</sup> Gifford, interview.

responsibilities for the Committee as it needed to provide certain materials to gardeners if it was going to require they use specific practices.

The Committee became responsible for weed suppression, insect control, and soil fertility when it circumscribed gardeners' cultivation practices. The Committee easily replaced herbicides as these had been banned since 1963. It continued to provide carts and mulch for weed control, and to call for diligent weeding by gardeners. The Committee decided to release parasitic pedio wasps over the Gardens to deal with a growing Mexican bean beetle population.<sup>278</sup> People discussed the possibility of bee hives to increase pollination in 1997 and Gifford finagled lake weed deliveries from the city for fertilizer.<sup>279</sup> The paths, as always, needed to be maintained so that people could bring mulch to their plots and lug Canada thistle and pigweed away.<sup>280</sup>

At this time, gardeners perceived organics differently than gardeners in the early 1980s. Gardeners still connected organic practices to personal and environmental health. The distinctions between garden and "non-garden nature," however, were dissolving.<sup>281</sup> Gifford directly linked the move to organic gardens to an increase in birds and resident wildlife: birdwatchers began to appear in the spring and fall, and a family of red tailed hawks set up residence in the trees bordering the Gardens.<sup>282</sup> Katherine Edison saw the

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<sup>278</sup> Eagle Heights Garden Committee meeting minutes, June 4, 1995, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; Eagle Heights Garden Committee meeting minutes, September 10, 1995, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>279</sup> Eagle Heights Gardens Agenda with additional information (notations in handwriting), June 8, 1997, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; Gifford, interview. The Committee had also provided lake weeds to the gardeners in the 1970s. See "Madison students beat high food costs," *Parade* October 28, 1973.

<sup>280</sup> Eagle Heights Garden Committee Agenda, April 2, 1995, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>281</sup> Gifford, interview.

<sup>282</sup> Gifford, interview.

Gardens as “your way to have some, some contact with nature and maybe real life,” as she would go “up there in the evening ... and it's kind of twilight ... there might be some mosquitoes biting but it's still beautiful and staying until just after the sun went down and you could hear the owls and you could see the fireflies.”<sup>283</sup> Gardeners desired, rather than despised, certain animals that traversed plot boundaries. Gardeners were beginning to link personal gardening practices, landscape management, and environmental health together in new ways.

*An equal place for no-till cultivation*

A no-till landscape stemmed from, and presented complications to, the same common resource problems gardeners had been grappling with for decades. In 1995 and 1996, the Committee identified problems with gardeners' management of shared material resources. They decided one way to fix this would be to redirect opening and closing day labor towards land improvement projects. Gardeners reinterpreted space, weeds, and water: this time as problems that could be resolved using collective labor.

Concerns about the 1996 set-up began a few days before the annual event. Garden Committee members stood in the gray light of the shed and stared with dismay at the plans Gifford held. He had convinced a civil engineering class to survey the land for their final project, plotting the Gardens' layout to within a fraction of an inch.<sup>284</sup> No one was particularly thrilled to begin laying out the civil engineers' exacting boundaries.

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<sup>283</sup> Katherine Edison, telephone interview by author, October 27, 2009. Edison gardened in the early 1990s before the switch to an organic-only landscape. Her views on nature within the Gardens, however, are still indicative of personal understandings of nature and the Gardens at the time.

<sup>284</sup> Gifford, interview.

Compared to the long-used strings, these plans appeared impossible. The sketch provided each gardener equivalent land rather than the approximate areas previously allocated: it formed triangle plots around curves and accounted for topography. But the meticulous plans were not amenable to the tools or time the Committee had. Steve Williams remembers “it was a disaster. It took us forever that day to do that. We were better off, yeah that was a major discussion in the garage that day ... Committee melt down ... half the Committee wanted to bring out the strings and start over ... Then we marked them all and looked at them, and oh well, and it is still that way to this day.”<sup>285</sup>

Gifford felt the Committee had to equalize plot size before the Gardens could become no-till. The civil engineering exercise was a matter of equitable space distribution: “So that solved the issue of getting an equitable and permanent boundary structure for the garden plots that would allow some sort of permanence.”<sup>286</sup> There couldn't be a permanent plot layout if the plots were always “approximately” a certain size. The collective project would be useless because some gardeners would have more space than others and would gain more from their labor.

No-till management abruptly ended the Gardens' seasonality. Before 1997, rules restricted access to personal plots as long as gardeners tended the area. These rules, however, were only valid between set-up and clean-up day. After mid-October, anyone could take from the plots. When it erased the cycle of ownership, the Committee needed to communicate that plots belonged to a gardener for the entire year and that there would no longer be open access to the Gardens. At the end of the 1997 season, it placed signs

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<sup>285</sup> Williams, interview.

<sup>286</sup> Gifford, interview.

around the Gardens and markers on plots “reserved” for the next year.<sup>287</sup>

No-till management released labor for common space improvement, not just upkeep: “That freed up a whole bunch of potential labor to actually do improvement projects.”<sup>288</sup> In 1997, the first set-up day without plot lay-out, the Committee supervised gardeners building sandboxes, replacing boundary stakes, picking up trash, and placing wood-chips on paths.<sup>289</sup> “Path reclamation”<sup>290</sup> became one of the first maintenance problems the Committee tackled with collective labor. Thirty years of semi-annual plowing had dug cliffs into the path's eastern sides and gardeners aggravated the slumping slope with efforts to dig weeds out of the cliff faces. Gardeners needed paths to move through the Gardens.<sup>291</sup> Paths also housed the irrigation system. Loosing paths, therefore, threatened myriad common resources.

Weed management changed when the Gardens became no-till. Plots, especially those not tended by a gardener who would stay for more than a season or two, could become overrun with weeds.<sup>292</sup> No-till allowed some plots to remain impeccable, while others to descend into weedy messes: the plow no longer equalized weed seed banks. Weeds in paths as well as plots became a shared issue, since plants in these common spaces could potentially spread to individual plots. In 1997, a work day crew was

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<sup>287</sup> Eagle Heights Garden Committee minutes, October 12, 1997, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>288</sup> Gifford, interview.

<sup>289</sup> Eagle Heights Garden Committee minutes, April 13, 1997, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>290</sup> Eagle Heights Garden Committee Agenda, April 2, 1995, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>291</sup> Eagle Heights Garden Committee meeting September 10, 1995, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>292</sup> Williams, interview.

devoted to the removal of comfrey in the 500s.<sup>293</sup>

No-till management concerned the Experimental Farms, for it moved the Gardens beyond conventional agricultural practices.<sup>294</sup> The Gardens, managed without annual plowing, would become full of weeds not controlled by tillage.<sup>295</sup> When Gifford broached the subject with them they “were actually notably concerned ... because I thought they figured that the whole thing would turn into a wild weed patch and which turned out to be unfounded, it was actually better afterward.”<sup>296</sup> The gardeners were “on their own,” according to Tom Wright, when “they had the bright idea they wanted to turn sustainable, organic, whatever you want to call it.” With all of the raised beds, ditches, and trellis debris, it had been a chore to till but at least the weeds were kept down and returned to the soil for the next year.<sup>297</sup> Experimental Farms had some control over the non-garden plants of the Gardens through tilling: a measure of control removed not only by gardeners management decisions but by new land allocations in 1996.

At the same time the Gardens were undergoing drastic landscape changes, the lands surrounding them were being allocated to new departments. For decades, CALS had controlled the land surrounding the Gardens.<sup>298</sup> In 1996, this land came under the jurisdiction of the Campus Natural Areas, part of the Arboretum, which already

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<sup>293</sup> Eagle Heights Garden Committee Agenda, April 2, 1995, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; Eagle Heights Garden Committee June 8, 1997, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>294</sup> In 1996, the Gardens’ land was no longer managed by Experimental Farms. With their long relationship, however, the Farms still felt ownership over the hillside. It is likely a work crew would have just appeared to plow without the gardeners’ request if Gifford had not told them to stop.

<sup>295</sup> Tom Wright, telephone interview with author, June 28, 2010.

<sup>296</sup> Gifford, interview.

<sup>297</sup> Wright, interview.

<sup>298</sup> College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, *Inventory of Land Holdings and Needs, Experimental Farms and (supplement) Plan for Development and land need Arlington experimental farm*. Prepared for the Board of Regents, October, 1971, Experimental Farm Records 1856-1970, 1996/003, Box #3, University of Wisconsin Campus Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library.

controlled surrounding wooded areas.<sup>299</sup> The Kline-Bader report laid out an ecological restoration management plan for the area. Suddenly, the Gardens were surrounded not by agricultural fields but by land destined to be tall grass prairie and oak savanna. New intentions for the land redefined what practices and plants were allowed and which were out-of-place in a natural landscape. In 1997, Cathie Bruner, the CNA manager, attended a Committee meeting to talk about the CNA as well as to ask the gardeners for help weeding garlic mustard in the tree islands and nearby areas.<sup>300</sup>

The Committee embraced the Gardens' new place within this collection of open spaces. It emphasized its connections to the Campus Natural Areas in the 1997 application:

The Gardens are surrounded by a campus natural area of woods and a field which will someday be restored to native prairie. The entire area has extensive walking trails and is home to a wide variety of birds, many of which nest and feed in the Gardens. Last year most newly-erected birdhouses were home to bluebirds, tree swallows, and wrens. Owls, bats and hawks contribute to the enjoyment of the area.<sup>301</sup>

By the beginning of the 1997 season, the Committee was fully invested in connections between the physical landscape and community engagement. In a radical reworking of the application gardening rules were divided into “Gardening within a Community,” “Gardening within your Rented Plot,” “Garden Committee Property,” and “General.” Gardeners were required, for the first time, to make a communal contribution as

In order to be proper stewards of the land some work needs to be done to

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<sup>299</sup> Virginia Kline and Brian Bader, *UW-Campus Natural Areas Management Plan, 1996*, UW-Madison Arboretum; Dave Newbart, “Back to nature,” *Clipsheet of the University of Wisconsin, Madison*, Thursday October 24, 1996.

<sup>300</sup> Eagle Heights Gardens Agenda with additional information, June 8, 1997, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>301</sup> Eagle Heights Community Gardens Plot application packet, cover letter, February 19, 1997, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

benefit both the land and our ability to garden it in a sustainable manner ... the volunteers of the Garden Committee are not able to perform these tasks themselves. Therefore, gardening in the Eagle Heights Community Gardens needs to be a group effort ... you are required to contribute to the communal effort.<sup>302</sup>

Rather than just set-up or clean-up day, there would be a variety of workdays throughout the season. Collective work was essential to maintain shared land in particular ways and the shared project would encourage individual gardening pride and ownership.

Distinctions between the Gardens and the surrounding lands were vanishing. Erasing property lines, and flows of plants, animals, and people between the CNA and the Gardens, created new communal responsibilities.

### *Political lands*

The hillside is full of gardeners on summer evenings. People stand and water their plots, harvest lettuce for a late dinner, or just take a walk to escape a day of work and children. David Shiffert, Committee chair, took advantage of the quiet bustle by walking the rows. He left concern in his wake. Telling people, “hey, in an hour, the University wants to call a meeting in the Community Center, and I’ve got to be frank they are talking about getting rid of your plot, and your plot, and your plot.” An hour later, around 60 gardeners packed into a small room facing John Harrington and Cathie Bruner who were going to explain a new landscape plan for the Campus Natural Areas. Shiffert recalls “so that is how it started with not a little bit of controversy and a lot of people

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<sup>302</sup> 1997 Eagle Heights Community Garden Plot Application, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

uninformed and feeling like they weren't being invited to plan.”<sup>303</sup>

It actually all started a few years before that meeting. The Gardens, always connected to surrounding lands, became more so as the Campus Natural Areas underwent physical changes and governance reorganization. The 1996 Kline-Bader report, outlining restoration goals, was not enacted until 1999.<sup>304</sup> And people were upset with the results. Clear-cutting in parts of Frautschi Point raised alarm among people used to walking through the woods.<sup>305</sup> Individuals questioned whether the Arboretum was the correct campus entity to govern the CNA due to the CNA's connection to the campus's physical plant and the Arboretum's preoccupation with its main land holdings. The Arboretum charged the Campus Natural Areas Task Force with deciding the best management strategy for the CNA. It reported on January 10, 2000, the best option would be to separate the CNA from the Arboretum.<sup>306</sup>

Shiffert, a master's student in the Conservation Biology and Sustainable Development program in the Nelson Institute, received hints that committees were restructuring land management around the Gardens at the end of the 1999 garden season.<sup>307</sup> He wrote Chancellor Wiley to determine if what he had heard was accurate:

Talk of native prairie restoration which would abut the north and east edges of the gardens passed through the grapevine, and we were very supportive of the idea. We have heard that Agricultural Research and

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<sup>303</sup> Shiffert, interview.

<sup>304</sup> Erik Christianson, “Campus wilderness areas need maintenance to survive,” *Wisconsin Week* May 13, 1998: 5.

<sup>305</sup> Linda Wang, “UW savanna restoration project elicits concern,” *Daily Cardinal* February 2, 1999; Glenda Denniston, interview by author, October 7, 2009.

<sup>306</sup> *Final Report of the Campus Natural Areas Planning Task Force Purpose and Principles of Organization and Operation*, Prepared by the Report Writing Subcommittee (Paul Zedler, Chair, Tom Brock, Ann Burgess, John Harrington), January 10, 2000.

<sup>307</sup> David Shiffert to Chancellor David Ward, November 19, 1999, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

Campus Planning have an interest in the “old hayfield” ... we are not excited about the possibility of fertilizer and pesticide application right next to us.<sup>308</sup>

For Shiffert, there was no place for chemical run-off near organic gardens. Gardeners deserved a say in the land reforms occurring around them because of their engaged community and longstanding land tenure.

The Gardens were more than a garden to Shiffert: the hillside was a place of community activism and a model for new ways of living sustainably. The place represented “ecology in its finest sense.”<sup>309</sup> A self-proclaimed “prairie enthusiast,” he joined the Garden Committee in 1997 and by 1999, as seems to have happened with all chairs, unintentionally became the face of the Gardens to outside interests. Before moving to Eagle Heights he and his wife had never gardened but “people start giving you tidbits of information when you don't know how to grow anything, and people start giving you plants and giving you seeds, and you know, the whole community garden part of it just, is what hooks people so fast.” Shiffert was not only captured by the people but by the landscape itself: “And I've always maintained that the land's what draws that type of energy as well ... the land has a way of, of, really drawing you in and kind of taking a hold of you, and for me, I had never experienced that before, and man it took hold of me really hard.”<sup>310</sup>

Gifford's leadership in material reformations of the Gardens made Shiffert's perceptions of the Gardens possible: the permanent plots and community workdays

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<sup>308</sup> David Shiffert to Chancellor David Ward, November 19, 1999, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>309</sup> Shiffert, interview.

<sup>310</sup> Shiffert, interview.

created a place he could read as sustainable. His understanding of the place reflects new forms of environmentalism that related human health to landscape health and placed people within ecosystems.<sup>311</sup> Shiffert's own studies also informed his reaction to the campus planners. He was writing a thesis on community engagement and the planning process he saw unfolding in front of him did not engage all stakeholders. For him, this was the antithesis of correct communal management.<sup>312</sup>

Shiffert believed collective engagement was necessary in order to influence the planning process. The Gardens could not remain just a garden, instead gardeners needed to present themselves as a community with a future plan. They needed to show how their land use was a model for sustainable living, gardening education, and community cohesion. To this end, Shiffert began a long-range planning process with some members of the Committee in November of 1999.<sup>313</sup> Preserving the physical landscape required a cohesive gardening community: “community building” was the focus of the November 1999 Committee meeting. Such a topic would have been foreign to gardeners in previous decades.<sup>314</sup>

Idealizations of the Gardens, and the need to prove the areas' worth to campus planners, led to numerous collective activities. Karen Ramanujan led a children's garden;

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<sup>311</sup> Timothy Vos, “Visions of the middle landscape: Organic farming and the politics of nature,” *Agriculture and Human Values* 17 (2000).

<sup>312</sup> Shiffert, interview.

<sup>313</sup> Eagle Heights Garden Committee, Meeting Minutes from November 1999, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>314</sup> Eagle Heights Garden Committee, Meeting Minutes from November 1999, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center. Shiffert wrote “The Eagle Heights residents who founded the gardens back in 1962 may have underestimated the energy it would take to sustain their initiative!” This is only true of the ways that Shiffert ran the Gardens: a place entirely removed from what the Gardens were in the 1960s. David Shiffert, “Garden Committee 2001,” *Eagle Heights Garden News*, (Oct-Dec. 2000).

volunteers held gardening demonstrations; translators communicated with gardeners who did not speak English; John Jeavons gave a workshop on biointensive cultivation; Shiffert began a garden newsletter.<sup>315</sup> Shiffert attempted to draw a cohesive community out of people who simply gardened side-by-side because he read the landscape as a place for community engagement. He envisioned an arbor meeting space -- a physical manifestation of his community ideas -- as the “least we [could] can do [was] build something that [would] make people remember what those ideas were.”<sup>316</sup> Not all gardeners understood this communal concept and they wondered why the Gardens needed a long term plan and how gardeners would use the meeting space.<sup>317</sup>

The campus plans began to take on a physical reality beginning in 2001. CALS would indeed lose test plots to the Walnut Street plant. The Campus Natural Areas Committee (CNAC) told researchers the only space for test plots was the north ends of the 500 and 600 rows of the Gardens as space on top of the hill had been reserved for Biocore Prairie. The Prairie, begun in 1997 as a part of the Biocore curriculum, requested that the CNAC “eliminate the garden peninsula (1200 and 1300 rows that overhand the main garden area) to minimize garden edges as a weed source to the prairie restoration area.”<sup>318</sup> Gardeners raised concerns about losing garden area as well as run-off from CALS. They began to brainstorm people to whom they could turn for help in

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<sup>315</sup> Email from David Shiffert to the Garden Committee, February 24, 2000, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; Eagle Heights Community Gardens Quarterly Newsletter, Premier edition, April 2000, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>316</sup> Shiffert, interview.

<sup>317</sup> Gardeners’ planning meeting, October 11, 2000, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>318</sup> Special garden meeting about proposals by CALS/CNAC to reconfigure EHCG, July 23, 2001, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

holding onto their garden space.<sup>319</sup>

At the October 2001 meeting of the CNAC, Campus Natural Areas and Facilities, Planning, and Management presented several options for reconfiguring garden space to make room for CALS as well as Biocore prairie expansion. CNAC needed to provide CALS with space and maintain as much area in natural vegetation as possible because “demand on the CNA and our campus open space is increasing.” All parties were giving up some land, and therefore the “Gardens will need to be reduced in size as well.”<sup>320</sup> The Garden Committee presented their plan which contained no net reduction in garden area by changing the Gardens’ configuration. Three other options presented reduced the Gardens considerably, one leaving the Gardens at only 4.6 acres.<sup>321</sup> The consensus of the meeting seemed to be Option #1 which reduced the Gardens’ area by 18%: removing the finger plots and the north ends of the 500 and 600 rows.

Loosing land to CALS seemed a “fait accompli” as the power plant would be built; loosing space to the prairie which was already more than twice the area of the Gardens was a little more distasteful.<sup>322</sup> The gardeners were more concerned, though, with the University’s move to take control of the Gardens’ governance structure. One gardener stated, “the matter of how many plots will be lost is dwarfed by a far more urgent matter – the loss of control of garden policies by the garden committee to the

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<sup>319</sup> Special garden meeting about proposals by CALS/CNAC to reconfigure EHCG, July 23, 2001, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>320</sup> “Campus Natural Areas: Land use options for Eagle Heights Community Gardens and CALS research plots,” Facilities planning and management power point, December 10, 2001, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>321</sup> “Campus Natural Areas: Land use options for Eagle Heights Community Gardens and CALS research plots,” Facilities planning and management power point, December 10, 2001, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>322</sup> John C. to Spencer Black, December 22, 2001, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

CNA.”<sup>323</sup> Gardeners understood that different interests needed space on limited campus land but such acquisitions did not need to involve governance supervision.

The CNA plan would place restrictions on who could garden, how many plots they could receive, and how long a gardener could occupy space in the Gardens.<sup>324</sup> It was not longer just about the land, but “a value's conflict, and it hinges on the question of what is the best use of space and who gets to use it. It's a question of community.”<sup>325</sup> It was a question of community: both human and biological and the ways that they determine one another. A gardener wrote to Chancellor Wiley:

The Gardens' relatively informal organization, and the rich interpersonal ties that develop as a result of that informality, has been a blessed relief from the dehumanizing formality and bureaucracy that pervades so many other aspects of life as a graduate student ... additionally, the gorgeous natural setting – the magnificent multicultural mosaic of gardens displaying the gardening styles of dozens of countries, in which human-scale human effort merges with nature to produce something far more beautiful than even the prairie and forest that surround it – is a tonic for the stressed-out soul. This, at least as much as any painstakingly-restored museum piece prairie, is what “nature” really looks like, for human beings are a part of nature, as long as they live with it rather than against it.<sup>326</sup>

This is rhetoric past gardeners would never have used. It expands the Gardens from a place to grow food to one in that inextricably combines nature and humanity.

Gardeners' mailing campaigns, meetings with state representative Spencer Black,

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<sup>323</sup> John C. to Spencer Black, December 22, 2001, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>324</sup> “Campus Natural Areas: Land use options for Eagle Heights Community Gardens and CALS research plots,” Facilities planning and management power point, December 10, 2001, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center; “Cast out of the gardens: Proposed changes could shrink access to UW community plots,” *Isthmus* 12-21 through 12-27, 2001.

<sup>325</sup> “Cast out of the gardens: Proposed changes could shrink access to UW community plots,” *Isthmus* 12-21 through 12-27, 2001.

<sup>326</sup> Kevin Barrett to Chancellor Wiley, January 8, 2002, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center

and long-term planning did not stop Option #1 from going through. The changes were to be instituted over the course of five years.<sup>327</sup> For organizational oversight, the CNAC only requested that any governance structure include a member of the CNAC and that the Gardens submit an annual report. Wiley approved the CNAC recommendations and also created a Garden Oversight Committee (GOC) to “develop broad policies and procedures ensuring fair and equitable use of the gardens,” leaving the Garden Committee to “implement and enforce appropriate gardening principles and guidelines for garden plot use.”<sup>328</sup> This limited the Committee’s ability to determine resource users but allowed them to continue control of common spaces and collective resources.<sup>329</sup>

The conflict over garden space from 1999 to 2002 resonates with various interpretations of community, of nature, and of land use rights. The negotiations stemmed from how gardeners perceived the Gardens as a place both for growing food and for integrating humans into ecosystems. Shiffert read the Gardens as a place that was full of myriad natures and communities, all reinforcing one another. The commons of these Gardens were more than successful garden plots. Shiffert believed gardeners were collectively responsible for managing material spaces in a way that transformed social communities. The Gardens’ landscape, therefore, was a model for new ways of living.

Wiley’s final decision introduced various scales of governance into the Gardens. The GOC would deal with land use changes and participation demographics while the

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<sup>327</sup> John Harrington to Chancellor Wiley, *Campus Natural Areas Committee Chair’s Report to the Chancellor*, February 21, 2002, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>328</sup> John Wiley to John Harrington, April 12, 2002, Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>329</sup> See Hess and Ostrom (2001) for various levels of user control of common resources.

Committee would continue to be in charge of the Gardens' daily affairs. Yet these scales interact: the Committee was composed primarily of community members and not students and the new priority system limited garden tenure and restricted gardeners from outside the university. Thus internal governance could indeed begin to fail without long-term gardeners who held deep connections to the land and knowledge of institutional change.

**2003 – 2010:  
Natural commons**

New management plans for land bordering the Gardens, and Committee interpretations of common areas, increased gardeners' collective responsibilities for shared plants and spaces. Officially part of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve, the Gardens must balance internal community needs with the Preserve's physical requirements. Prompted by collective resource deterioration (including path erosion and perennial weeds), the Committee vigorously reinvented the workdays Bob Gifford began in the 1990s. When gardeners rented a plot, they agreed to either work for a three-hour session or pay a no-workday fee. To use the labor of approximately 500 gardeners effectively, by 2010 the garden worker and registrar were leading 40 workdays a season – up from about 3 workdays a few years before. The Committee instituted weed juries in 2007. These groups of gardeners walked the Gardens and identified weedy plots. Juries sped abandoned plot turnover; reduced perennial weed problems; and identified gardeners who needed help. In this period, gardeners added many common spaces to the Gardens: contractors built the arbor envisioned by David Shiffert in 2004; gardeners planted fruit trees in 2007 and 2010; and workday crews terraced the hillside with stone walls in 2009 and 2010. During this time, people increasingly viewed the Gardens as a place that should create community, foster diversity, engender conservation, and provide healthy food.

The Gardens' location within a nature preserve, rather than amidst agricultural fields, required that gardeners deal with new problematic plants and shared spaces. The Campus Natural Areas (CNA) separated from the Arboretum in 2000, and from 2002

until 2006 underwent a master planning process. The CNA wrote a cohesive management plan for the wide array of landscapes it operated. Because of the diverse land-use histories of these open spaces, the CNA planning committee renamed the CNA the Lakeshore Nature Preserve (commonly known as the Preserve) in order to “declare more clearly its location, its integrity as a single unit, and its protected status as a natural green space in the midst of an otherwise urban campus.”<sup>330</sup>

Gardeners linked ideas of food, agricultural practices, and human health. In the 2000s, food and sustainable agriculture became hip.<sup>331</sup> People talked about how to grow, preserve, cook, and digest food. Wal-Mart began to sell organic, local produce.<sup>332</sup> People believed changing agricultural practices was a way to solve both social and environmental problems.<sup>333</sup> The environmentalist paradigm placed people within ecosystems: concepts included resiliency, social-ecological systems, and sustainability. Community garden programs ranged from school gardens to job training programs to urban farms.<sup>334</sup> Gardening advocates, more thoroughly than before, linked community cohesion with land stewardship.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> *Lakeshore Nature Preserve Master Plan*, Lakeshore Nature Preserve Committee, March 2006, 2.

<sup>331</sup> One gardener replied to the question why garden: “A third advantage to be honest if shallow is the popularity boost I get from giving away home-grown vegies [sic]. People dig it. It’s hip.” Online survey by author, 2009.

<sup>332</sup> Stephanie Clifford, “Wal-Mart plans to buy more local produce,” *The New York Times* October 14, 2010.

<sup>333</sup> “I came to gardening because of a commitment to environmental responsibility and a realization that agriculture has taken a heavy toll on the environment,” Online survey by author, 2009.

<sup>334</sup> Lawson, *City Bountiful*, 264-286.

<sup>335</sup> Contemporary community garden advocates craft prose such as this: “Community gardening has been a lifesaver for many people ... Community gardens can be neighborhood crossroads. Gardens foster bonds of friendship and support among diverse people, shape the life of a neighborhood, and provide needed community services. Residual benefits include safer neighborhoods, leadership development, and economic revitalization ... Community gardening also provides vital experience with the natural world and demonstrates the value of plants and people in a harmonious relationship ... The presence of a community garden often leads to improved community services, like police support or sanitation pick-up, or amenities like street lights.” Ellen Kirby and Elizabeth Peters, eds., *Community Gardening*,

*Which nature?*

How people define ‘nature’ – and whether we consider gardens natural or not – altered the Gardens’ commons when the CNA separated from the Arboretum. When surrounded by cultivated fields, CALS interpretations of correct agricultural practices percolated into the Gardens’ physical management. In 1996, ‘natural’ land replaced the cultivated landscape: at this point, ideas of what ‘nature’ belonged in a nature preserve began to trickle into the Gardens’ commons. When the CNA became separate from the Arboretum, under its own joint governance committee, people’s definitions of nature altered the Gardens because they were to be managed as a part of this nature preserve.<sup>336</sup>

To prepare a management plan, the Preserve Committee had to first define what the mission of the Preserve should be – what types of nature belonged in this place. The cohesive maintenance of these lands depended on identifying overarching goals and intentions for the landscape. A coherent vision required complex negotiations since over 300 acres of open spaces with a wide range of land-use histories make up the Preserve. The Preserve Committee decided that the Preserve’s mission was threefold: to protect ecological communities; signature landscapes; and the educational value of the area. The Preserve should be a place for

Rethinking a city’s relationship to the natural systems in which it is embedded to make human and non-human communities more mutually supportive and sustainable. The Preserve should be interpreted so that visitors will better understand the history of these lands, their human uses,

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(Brooklyn, NY: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 2008), 9-10.

<sup>336</sup> Krishna Ramanujan, “Deforestation plants campus controversy: Committees argue over future of Frautschi Point,” *The Daily Cardinal*, Thursday, February 24, 2000, pg 3. The debates over land rights in 2001-2002 were also about what nature belonged. Land tenure, however, does not change internal commons in the same way that governance policies in this period do.

and the changing natural communities that have existed here over time.<sup>337</sup>

The Preserve Committee purposefully crafted this mission statement to include preservation of cultural landscapes such as the Gardens, Picnic Point apple orchard, and the archeology kiln. The Preserve should contain not only native vegetation, but landscapes that display our intimate relationship with non-human nature.

The “working landscapes” thus gained a place in the Preserve – one that required, however, different maintenance strategies than the prairie or forests.<sup>338</sup> Today, Cathie Bruner, the field manager of the Preserve, views the entire area as a garden. Preserve staff and volunteers weed unwanted vegetation and plant native species in the areas people commonly see as not human-mediated.<sup>339</sup> The “working landscapes,” however, needs to incorporate governance of the many people who physically alter the land.<sup>340</sup> Despite the fact that hundreds of individuals cultivate the Gardens each season, Bruner views it as a cohesive landscape and leaves internal governance decisions to the Garden Committee.<sup>341</sup>

The Garden Oversight Committee (GOC) connected the Gardens' internal landscape to Preserve goals. Chancellor Wiley formed the GOC in response to concerns about over who was gardening and the University's lack of control.<sup>342</sup> While the gardeners viewed this as a takeover of their internal governance structure, in a way the

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<sup>337</sup> Lakeshore Nature Preserve Guiding Principles, Revised June 7, 2005, Lakeshore Nature Preserve website, [http://www.lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu/plans/benchmark\\_documents.htm](http://www.lakeshorepreserve.wisc.edu/plans/benchmark_documents.htm), accessed 1/5/11.

<sup>338</sup> Cathie Bruner, interview by author, October 15, 2010.

<sup>339</sup> Bruner, interview; Denniston, interview.

<sup>340</sup> *University of Wisconsin-Madison Lakeshore Nature Preserve Master Plan*, The Lakeshore Nature Preserve Committee, March 2006. The Plan's “Existing Use” map indicates that the Gardens are a “higher intensity use zone” (18).

<sup>341</sup> Bruner, interview.

<sup>342</sup> John Wiley to John Harrington, April 12, 2002, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

GOC simply formalized the Gardens' longstanding relationships with the Division of Housing and Experimental Farms. Gardeners had always relied on equipment, water, and workers from University departments. The GOC was granted the ability to govern decisions made by the Committee. While two Garden Committee members serve on the GOC, they are non-voting members.<sup>343</sup> Decisions, however, are usually made through consensus, and the non-gardener members value the gardeners' opinions as they know more about the Gardens.<sup>344</sup> Along with monthly meetings, the GOC takes an annual tour of the Gardens. Just as Experimental Farms judged the Gardens' success by the visual presence of weeds, the appearance of the plots affects members' ideas of how well gardeners are caring for the Gardens.

The Preserve's management policies spatially expanded the gardeners' weed problems. Weeds, continuously moving through the Gardens, also traverse the boundaries between the Gardens and the rest of the Preserve. Weeds, in the rest of the Preserve, are non-native plants that may hinder native vegetation's growth. Preserve volunteers dig comfrey from the wood's edges – comfrey likely planted by organic gardeners in the 1970s or 1980s to break up the soil.<sup>345</sup> With the Preserve's management policies, not only do weeds spread outwards from the Gardens' boundaries but into new spaces within the Gardens. Cathie Bruner expects gardeners to care for all of their common areas including the tree islands and overgrown vegetation along the access roads. Gardeners are

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<sup>343</sup> John Wiley to John Harrington, April 12, 2002, Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>344</sup> Steven Backues, interview by author, August 20, 2009.

<sup>345</sup> Conversations by author with Roma Lenehan and Glenda Denniston; Judy and Paul Bosland indicated that there was little comfrey in the Gardens when they were gardening there in the early 1980s. Bosland, interview.

responsible for keeping the islands free of invasive plants.<sup>346</sup> These uncultivated spaces are not ones gardeners would have any reason to weed: they are beyond plot boundaries and weeds here do not interfere with their plantings. The registrar and garden worker sent several workday crews to clean out the trees in 2010. But gardeners do not really view weeds there as their concern.

*Weeds: social and physical communities*

No-till management affected the Gardens' land in ways Gifford had not anticipated by physically altering the common problem of weeds.<sup>347</sup> Before 1997, tillage equalized the Gardens' weeds by pooling everyone's soil. When the area became perennial, diverse gardening practices created drastically different gardening spaces. In some plots, gardeners decreased the weed seed bank through multi-year weeding labor. Other gardens, cultivated by transitory students, slowly filled with quackgrass roots and fragrant creeping charlie. These untended areas, unsupervised by the Committee, provided spaces for a "steady outward march of perennial weeds." Weeds that could, if left unchecked, make the Gardens "ungardenable."<sup>348</sup> By 2007, the Gardens "had a huge weed problem and ... a very significant plot abandonment problem."<sup>349</sup> The weeds in these Gardens were a problem not only for current gardeners but also for future gardeners and the problems they would have to face.

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<sup>346</sup> Denniston, interview.

<sup>347</sup> Gifford's plan in no-till was to reduce the weed problems in the Gardens: "Thorns and thistles were listed in the Bible as a consequence of sin and I think that comfrey and mint should have been listed too." Gifford, interview. Without conscientious weeding efforts by every single gardener, however, the perennial weeds took (deep) root and became more problematic.

<sup>348</sup> Robin Mittenthal, email to Garden Committee, n.d. (October 2008).

<sup>349</sup> Will Waller to author, email, November 12, 2010.

Gardeners saw fences – permeable structures along plot borders – as part of the weed debate because of weeds’ ability to materially cross plot boundaries. In 2008, Robin Mittenenthal did not intend for his suggestions about fences to become a contentious topic amongst the Garden Committee. Over its email listserv, the Committee hotly debated whether there should be a rule prohibiting fences between plots and paths. Fences were “weed nests,”<sup>350</sup> some members contended, spaces gardeners found hard to cultivate and so left untended. As weeds beneath boundary fences occurred on plot borders, these plants could spread to neighboring gardens and become invaders that provoked gardener’s ire. Gardeners ignored their plot borders: these were liminal spaces and so individuals felt their neighbors were actually responsible for the flowering thistles or mats of quackgrass.<sup>351</sup> The discussion about fences revolved around the ways in which people should manage their plots so that weeds did not run rampant: traversing plot bounds and harming well-tended gardens.

The Committee's discussion began with the ways in which fences physically exacerbated weed pressures. It soon expanded to what fences symbolized and whether fences conveyed the right message about ‘community’ in a community garden (Figure 17). Discussing fences was not about physical boundaries but about how physical borders reverberated back into social interactions. Fences in these Gardens were (usually) wobbly constructions that didn’t “deter either two or four leg foragers.”<sup>352</sup> Fences delimit boundaries and symbolize property ownership. They rarely protect plants effectively. A fence says, “this is mine, keep out’ – it makes the place feel less like a

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<sup>350</sup> Will Waller, personal communication with author.

<sup>351</sup> Dentine, interview.

<sup>352</sup> Will Waller, email to Garden Committee, October 2008.

community garden and more like a collection of individual gardens. Not a union of gardeners, but an assortment of independent garden-states, guarding their independence against their neighbors.”<sup>353</sup> People believed, more than they had in the past, that this collective landscape of plots should engender a cohesive community. The Committee decided to discourage fences and remove any left in abandoned plots before they were turned over to new gardeners.<sup>354</sup>

The Garden Committee did not consider reinstituting the tillage regime to deal with weed pressures; instead of a physical problem it framed weeds as a collective social issue that small groups of gardeners could combat together. The Committee, after contentious debates as people were “deeply suspicious of any ‘authoritarian’ program [and] [t]he notion of minimum expectations was quite novel,”<sup>355</sup> instituted weed juries in 2007. These juries were collections of gardening peers drawn from workday crews. Workday leaders sent the juries around the Gardens every few weeks through the middle of the summer to identify weedy plots. The juries defined the weed commons of the Gardens in a new way: identifying weeds became a communal activity rather than one undertaken only by the Committee. Committee members had never enforced weed policies effectively as it seemed, in ways, anathema to the cooperative ideologies underpinning this collective space. Weed juries extended the responsibility of policing weeds to every member of the community. Weeds, therefore, also came to represent

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<sup>353</sup> Steven Backues, email to Garden Committee, n.d. (October 2008).

<sup>354</sup> The 2010 plot application states: “**Fences: Perimeter fences around plots are discouraged.** Fences harbor weeds and obstruct mowing. Any fences that are built must be easily movable and kept weed free. Existing fences will be removed from newly assigned plots.” Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ archives, Eagle Heights Community Center.

<sup>355</sup> Will Waller to author, email, November 12, 2010

more than poor gardening: their presence indicated failing social ties if help in weeding could have aided a new gardener.<sup>356</sup> Not all gardeners appreciated weedy plot identification. Opponents cited diverse gardening practices (not all cultures weed) as well intricate ecological communities as reasons not to police weeds. One gardener, whose plot was marked as weedy because of green garlic, remarked that “from a biodiversity perspective, the aesthetic often driving my gardening, the [weed-free] plot was an eyesore.”<sup>357</sup> Weed debates show that the collective responsibilities in the Gardens were, as always, about balancing private plots and the landscape connected by weeds.

*Naturalizing organics in a naturally cohesive community*

Individuals hold certain expectations of what a community garden should provide because of current ideologies that link gardening to environmental and social health. In the Gardens, however, each gardener brings her own idea of gardens: there is no singular community here, nor one overarching environmental or gardening belief. Gardeners in the 2000s cultivate land for a variety of reasons. Some individual’s emphasis on community engagement, land stewardship, and a desire to reconnect social and ecological systems is far removed from gardeners’ goals in previous decades. People enter this landscape “hoping to join the garden community and meet people,” as if the place contains a community you could simply bump into. People garden because they are “aspiring organic farmers;” they want “to make a positive contribution to the environment land and community,” because they “enjoy making something out of

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<sup>356</sup> Dentine, interview.

<sup>357</sup> BeeGuy, post to Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ online forum, April 25, 2009.

nothing,” since “nothing brightens [a] day like working in the garden. Nothing,” and “it’s a part of who I am and what I do.” Gardeners garden for healthy food, for exercise, or for recreation. Current ideas of gardening’s connections to environmentalism made one gardener state that “I am NOT really an organic lover nor a conservation extremist.”<sup>358</sup>

Along with desires to cultivate private plots, gardeners come to expect certain commons in the Gardens: its collective resources become ordinary despite being continually reformed. In 1996, the Committee guaranteed that the Gardens would be completely organic. By 2009, gardeners expected that the Committee would maintain the land organically.<sup>359</sup> But the organic commons became complicated when it ran into another shared problem: weeds. In 2009, the Committee suggested it apply glyphosate to the Gardens’ large patches of comfrey and Canada thistle. Some gardeners jumped at this: “I realize that the use would be limited but I believe that using glyphosate is contrary to the philosophy of an organic garden.”<sup>360</sup> Others valued weed-free areas more: “After spending hours and hours of back breaking labor every year in attempts to remove quack grass, one begins to wonder if the strict organic code is really worth it.”<sup>361</sup> One gardener referenced the responsibility the Committee had to its constituency: “I value being able to grow food organically ... I made that commitment under the existing rules and I expected the the [sic] garden committee to stand by its commitment to me to provide an organic environment.”<sup>362</sup> The Committee decided not to apply glyphosate after the barrage of

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<sup>358</sup> All quotes from online survey by author, 2009.

<sup>359</sup> Many community gardening books assume that gardeners will be organic. Ellen Kirby and Elizabeth Peters, eds., *Community Gardening*, (Brooklyn, NY: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 2008).

<sup>360</sup> bendlin, “roundup application,” post to Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ online forum, Monday June 29, 2009.

<sup>361</sup> Ben Bamberg, post to Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ online forum, Monday June 29, 2009.

<sup>362</sup> Diane, “weed control,” post to Eagle Heights Community Gardens’ online forum, Monday June 29,

gardeners' complaints. It had to contend, however, with gardeners whose weeding practices endangered the Gardens' paths.

*Individual labor in common spaces*

Gardeners' collective labor during workdays -- instituted to increase gardeners' sense of ownership and therefore land stewardship -- could only improve common spaces if managed effectively. At the beginning of the decade, the Committee did not organize workdays.<sup>363</sup> Some dedicated gardeners decided not to participate because they felt their labor was wasted.<sup>364</sup> The Committee held only a few each season, and it usually asked the workers to clean trash out of the weed pile and compost. Prompted by physical deterioration of the Gardens, the Committee revised workdays to use volunteer labor for better land management.

By 2009, paths were being lost to erosion caused both by annual plowing and gardeners' overzealous weeding practices. The Committee wanted to save the paths for two reasons: so gardeners could move through the Gardens and to preserve the water system buried beneath the grassy strips. On the 39<sup>th</sup> workday of the 2010 season, work crews constructed a wall to prevent further soil erosion from the path between the 700 and 800 rows. Building a wall would not be possible, however, without numerous workdays and increased labor by the Gardens' employees.<sup>365</sup> The number of workdays held each year increased exponentially from about 3 a year to 40 in 2010. Gardeners are

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2009.

<sup>363</sup> Will Waller and Gretel Dentine, personal communications with author.

<sup>364</sup> Cooper, interview.

<sup>365</sup> Robin Mittenthal, Memo re: possible plot fee increase for Eagle Heights and University Houses Gardens for 2011, v. 3, 9/12/10.

required to complete a three-hour workday at some point in the season or pay a no-workday fee in order to apply for a plot the next year. In 2010, these workdays provided labor for myriad projects: cleaning up abandoned plots; weeding tree islands; chopping comfrey in paths; and building walls.

From 2003 to 2010, the Gardens' commons changed due to new categorizations of bordering land and what meanings gardeners ascribed to their shared space.

Encompassed by a nature preserve, the Gardens had to find their place in a 'natural' landscape. Weeds spread from plots into tree islands because of the Preserve's land management expectations. Weeds also led the Committee to discuss what community meant in a community garden -- gardeners read the physical space as holding a unitary community of some kind. Gardeners expected certain shared resources to be readily available; however the labor involved in providing these collective goods remains invisible to many people. Commons formation -- a process of balancing individual practices in private plot with a communal, connected landscape -- continues today.

## Conclusion

I work within a Gardens littered with past commons. The Eagle Heights community that began gardening 50 years ago still dominates the Gardens. Residents wander out to pick breakfast or dinner; pull wagons down Eagle Heights Drive; and water in the twilight. The Gardens continues to be a landscape of spatially connected plots: this proximity allows us to share the materials we all need for gardening. The Garden Committee regulates (in writing if not always in practice) our use of these collective resources. Thirty years of plowing created the curving rows of plots and our irrigation system lies beneath paths that College of Agriculture mandated for erosion control in 1966. Vacuum breakers, which the Committee installed in 1980 to prevent water uptake into the pipes, remain on half of the water spigots. The arbor, a testament to ideas of community cohesion and landscape sustainability, stands at the western edge of the 600 row. The Gardens' commons have changed over time and their minute transformations created the present Gardens.

I know that the current historical moment shapes my understanding of the Gardens as a place and, therefore, the story I have told you about the Gardens' commons. Presently, people are focused on food: where it comes from, how it travels, what it says about our political leanings, and how it can be used for cultural change. Food and agriculture are in. My interest in the Gardens stems from my own desire to live differently; my ideologies align, partially, with David Shiffert's belief in landscape connectivity and the land's ability to change us. My social surroundings shape my perception of, and actions within, the Gardens: a place that could create social change and

integrates people into ecological systems. But I also believe that our experiences in place -- intimate interactions with plants, soil, tools -- cycle back into social beliefs. In my own world, the space between phenomenologists and social constructionists is minuscule.

People's tangible relationship to the Gardens alters how they see it as a place and, therefore, its commons. Processes form material places: gardening practices shape and reshape the Gardens' land.<sup>366</sup> What is physically present facilitates and constrains future actions: irrigation provides necessary water; perennial weeds hinder cultivation; erosion threatens paths, and in so doing, prompts gardeners to labor together. Gardeners in the Gardens continually reform their individual spaces with diverse practices. These actions come together into a cohesive landscape.<sup>367</sup> Individuals, though, experience landscapes while creating them. According to Dell Upton "the self constructs and interprets the body-in-space, the self *in* its surroundings. Our experience of the material world is complex and multisensory; it is a reverberating, constantly permutating tangle of I-it/it-me relationships, and it must be studied on all these levels."<sup>368</sup> Individual's actions shape the landscape and also their communities.<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> Anne Whiston Spirn emphasizes process in place creation: "Materials are shaped by processes in context -- material, formal, spatial, functional, social, and cultural ." She continues later with "Territory is established by the limits of the processes which create it ... Paths, boundaries, and gateways are conditions, not things, spatial patterns defined by processes. Paths are places of movement, boundaries limits to movement, gateways places of passage and exchange. A path is maintained by movement. Once a process ceases, space becomes a shell of past practices." Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Language of Landscape*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 99 and 119.

<sup>367</sup> For David Crouch, in an allotment "the margins of what any one individual does are not clearly defined." David Crouch, *The Art of Allotments*, 15.

<sup>368</sup> Dell Upton, "The City as Material Culture," in *The Art and Mystery of Historical Archaeology: Essays in Honor of James Deetz*, Ed. Anne Elizabeth Yentsch and Mary C. Beaudry, (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 1992), 52-53.

<sup>369</sup> Crouch states allotment gardens are "where cultivation is about human experience, self-identity and identity between people together with the cultivation of wider feelings about the environment and *how people get on with each other*" (emphasis added, 2). Spirn states that the material and social are interrelated: "Plants -- pruned, pollarded, espaliered, clipped, left freely growing -- are clues to social

My minute examination of the commons critiques scholarship that assumes collective gardening spaces automatically yield community cooperation.<sup>370</sup> Few gardeners participate in Gardens' management even though they are all, by default, members of the Committee.<sup>371</sup> In the Gardens, material transgressions strain neighborly relations. Terry Egan remembers that some gardeners "didn't like what the person next to them was doing, it was encroaching you know onto their spot ... Or their neighbor was planting something that wasn't compatible with what they want to plant, you know crossing the line. So there were some little skirmishes like that."<sup>372</sup> Many gardeners simply don't notice the work done in common spaces: the mown paths; the shared tools that miraculously never break or disappear; the irrigation system that always works; the organization involved in assigning plots and communicating with all gardeners. Gardeners' continual negotiations over the place of weeds in the Gardens are also negotiations over private rights on collective land. Commons management, in these Gardens, is about people working together for equal - but individual - garden success.

The Gardens' commons are malleable. Gardeners, however, naturalize each iteration of the commons. Gardeners expect certain resources as well as certain communal responsibilities. I can't imagine the Gardens without a water system, without leaf mulch, or without shared tools. When gardeners protested the use of glyphosate to kill perennial weeds in 2009, they argued that this was an organic place; not realizing that

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and cultural context." Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Language of Landscape*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 99.

<sup>370</sup> Troy Glover, Kimberly J. and Diana C. Perry, "Association, Sociability, and Civic Culture: The democratic effect of community gardening," *Leisure Sciences* 27 (2005): 75-92; Lawson, *City Bountiful*.

<sup>371</sup> Gene Russell, "Behind the Scenes with the Garden Committee," *Eagle Heights Newsletter* November 1969: 4-5; Schneider, interview.

<sup>372</sup> Egan, interview.

the organic landscape was relatively new and not at all predetermined. Commons become ordinary because they are physically present and appear to be unalterable. Concurrently, our ideologies predispose us to expect certain things from specific material landscapes.

The management of the lands surrounding the Gardens has always altered the commons. Many community gardening accounts portray gardens as an escape from concrete urban environments.<sup>373</sup> We identify places by what they are not: the Gardens have never been surrounded by buildings, but bordering lands do affect gardeners' perceptions of the Gardens. Residents began gardening on Eagle Heights Farm land they perceived as vacant. When the plots moved to land owned by the College of Agriculture, the fields surrounding them were cultivated as well: the Gardens shared land-use intentions and weeds with the College. Now, surrounded by the Lakeshore Nature Preserve, the Gardens are part of a restored, natural ecosystem.

The Gardens' commons change as the meanings we assign to plants and places shifts. University departments' use of the land around the Gardens has changed: each department categorized the land in new ways. When the College managed the fields, gardeners were out-of-place as they did not conform to correct agricultural practices. The Gardens don't quite fit the unaltered 'nature' some associate with the Preserve; a nature that, for others, is less beautiful than the Gardens'.

Each person finds a different nature in the Gardens. A brief encounter I had with one woman, and her appreciation of the Gardens, stays with me still. I had seen her

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<sup>373</sup> This ignores urban ecological process and nature embedded within urban built environments. See Warner, *To Dwell is to Garden*; Pasquali, *Loisaida*; Lawson, *City Bountiful*.

before, walking along the Gardens' paths, her bright orange sari contrasting with the deep green plots. She always seemed to be floating as she took slow steps towards the arbor where she would sit. She would then retrace her steps towards the shed and out of the Gardens. One day when we passed each other we smiled and began to talk. Yogini was just in Madison for a few months and would leave before the winter weather set in. She didn't have a plot, nor did her graduate student daughter. Then what brought her here? I inquired and she smiled. Look at the beautiful nature all around, she replied. I come every day to appreciate, to meditate. Yogini's back was turned to the buckthorn-and-catalpa mat along Lake Mendota Drive – making it clear that the nature she referred to was the Gardens' and not their surroundings. At other times, I have heard countless gardeners exclaim over their luck at gardening in nature. Unlike Yogini, they are referring to the Preserve's woods and prairie.

Through 50 years, the economic and social landscapes the Gardens exist within have changed radically. These shifts altered the Gardens' place and commons. Thomas Bassett, a garden historian, claims that people begin gardening collectively in reaction to social and economic crises.<sup>374</sup> Residents, however, did not begin gardening at Eagle Heights as a reaction to state failure: these plots don't fit Bassett's and other scholars' delineation of community garden movements.<sup>375</sup> Social ideologies and economic circumstances do, though, change the Gardens' place: gardeners adjust their management to meet demands of the time. The Committee instituted organic plots to meet growing social demands. Gardeners celebrated the financial savings of gardening in the economic

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<sup>374</sup> Bassett, "Reaping on the Margins," 1-8.

<sup>375</sup> Bassett, "Reaping on the Margins," 1-8; Pudup, "It takes a garden," 1228-1240; Lawson, *City Bountiful*.

crisis of the 1970s. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, gardeners held events to encourage cooperation, referencing nostalgia for past, imaginary communities. Some individuals came to the Gardens in the 2000s hoping to find an environmental community embedded in the material landscape. Cultural shifts change the Gardens' place just as much as the material pieces of the landscape.

This history is rooted in connections: between individuals and communities; between social and material landscapes; between nature and cultivation. The resources people hold collectively, and what responsibilities they have to others and the land, shift continuously. Gardeners tend their own plots, but must balance their personal goals with collective needs. Raymond Williams writes, “out of the ways in which we have interacted with the physical world we have made not only human nature and an altered natural order; we have also made societies.”<sup>376</sup> Our interactions with the material world make both individuals and societies of all sizes, and the communities that come out of the Gardens’ are no exception.

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<sup>376</sup> Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected essays*, (London: Verso, 1980), 84.

## Appendix 1. Figures



*Figure 1.* Eagle Heights Community Gardens from garden shed, May 22, 2010. Emma Schroeder.

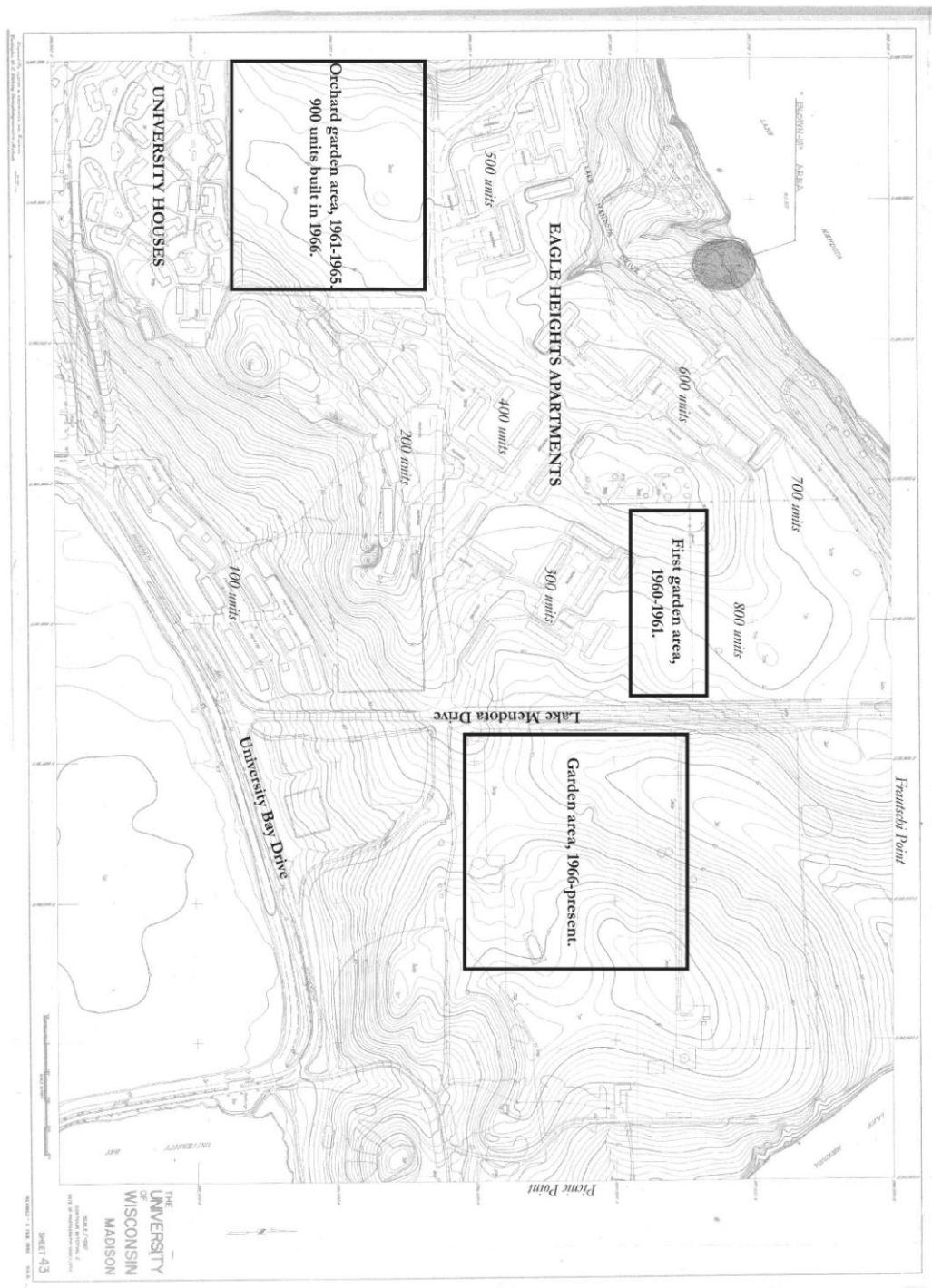


Figure 2. Map of Eagle Heights Community Gardens' locations, 1960 to 2010. Emma Schroeder on February 3, 1960 topographic map.



*Figure 3.* Fire hydrant near 800 units with water pipe attached, 1993. Barry Rumack.



*Figure 4.* Aerial photo of Eagle Heights, 1960. Gardens are visible directly north of the 300 units of Eagle Heights (see Figure 2). 8/4-8/8, University of Wisconsin photo archives.

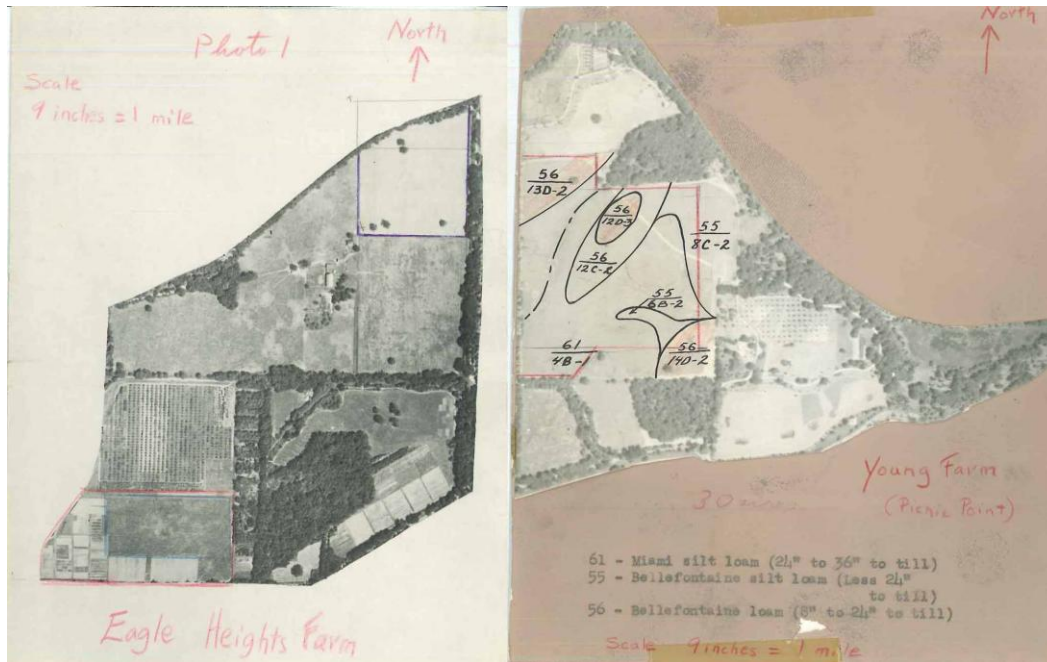
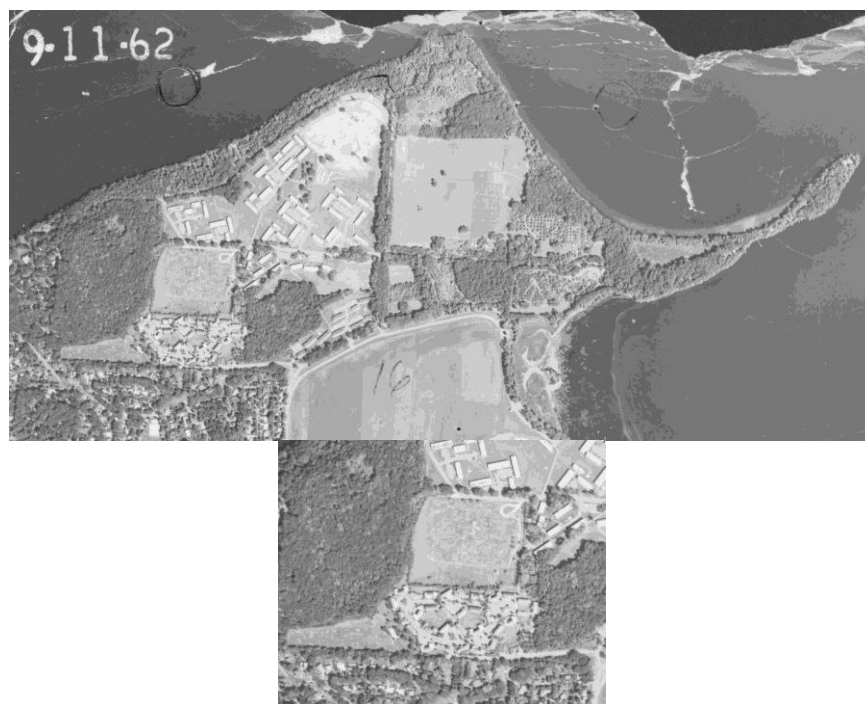


Figure 5. Maps of the College of Agriculture land exchange, 1946. Prepared by R.J. Muckenhirn, August, 1946.



Figure 6. Aerial photo of apple orchard garden area, 1961. Dead zones are visible as white areas. 8/4-8/8, University of Wisconsin photo archives.



*Figure 7.* Aerial photo of expanded garden area, September 11, 1962. Bottom photo is of the garden plots. Robinson Map Library, Madison, WI.



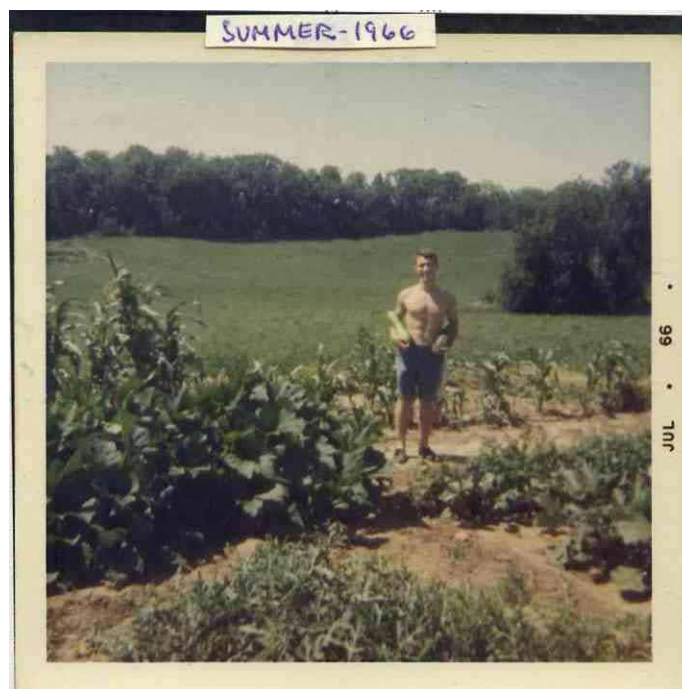
*Figure 8.* Aerial photo of orchard garden area. Dead zones are visible as white areas, identified with help from Gerry Cowley. 8/4-8/8, University of Wisconsin photo archives.



*Figure 9.* Aerial photo of Gardens on hillside east of Lake Mendota Drive, May 8, 1968. Long white rows are the newly plowed garden plots. Robinson Map Library, Madison, WI.



*Figure 10.* Gardens' set-up day, 1966. Barry Rumack.



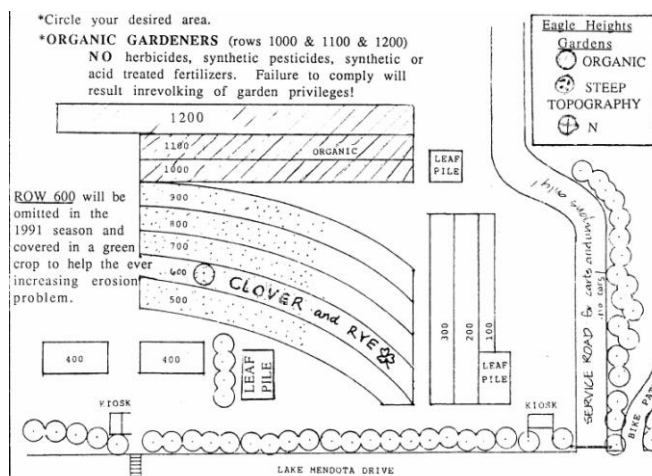
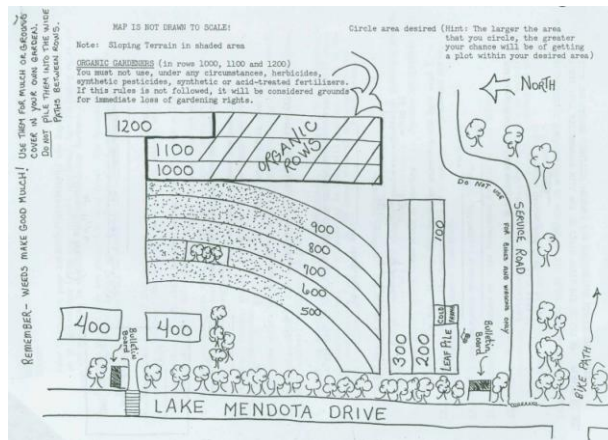
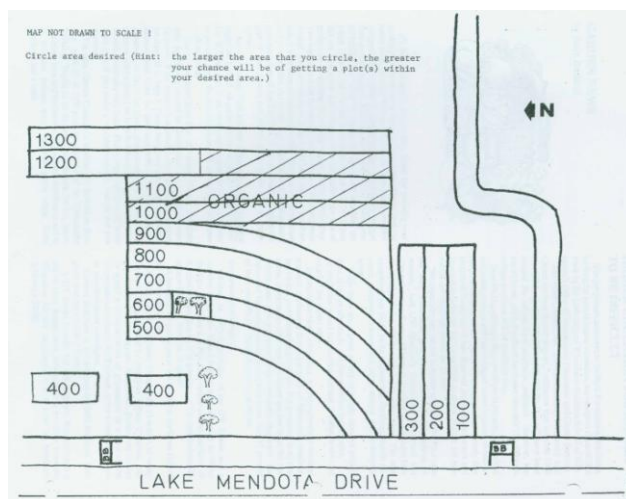
*Figure 11.* Tom Palmieri in the Gardens, July 1966. Pat Palmieri.



*Figure 12.* Carol Rumack at bottom of Gardens, 1967. Barry Rumack.



*Figure 13.* George Kuhr's plot. Potentially the first fence in the Gardens. Circa 1980.  
George Kuhr.



*Figure 14.* Maps from Eagle Heights Community Gardens' plot applications. 1984 was the first year a map was included in the application. Dates from top to bottom: 1984, 1987, 1991.



*Figure 15.* Photos of the Gardens after plowing, 1995. Robert Gifford.



*Figure 16.* Newly plowed fields, 1993. Barry Rumack.



*Figure 17.* White picket fence, April 3, 2004. Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives.

## Appendix 2. Timeline

- 1960 Eagle Heights' residents begin gardening north of 300 units.
- 1961 Gardens continue in original location and expand to orchard area north of University Houses.  
Dead zones appear in orchard gardens.
- 1962 First garden area lost to construction of the 700 units.  
Orchard garden area expands to about 5 acres, or 350-370 plots.  
Gardeners tap a water main near building 206 for irrigation.
- 1963 Committee publishes garden etiquette in *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, banning herbicides from garden area.
- 1965 University informs gardeners they will lose orchard garden area due to the construction of the 900 units of Eagle Heights.
- 1966 Robert House, chairman of the Garden Committee, successfully negotiates for new garden land. The Committee signs a lease for the land with Dean Pound of the College of Agriculture.  
Gardens relocate to hillside east of Lake Mendota Drive.  
Gardeners move irrigation system, connecting the pipes to a fire hydrant near the 800 units.
- 1968 Gardens expand to cover 8 acres of the hillside.  
First year the Committee requires gardeners to sign a rule agreement in order to rent a plot.  
Committee made up of first 60 clean-up day volunteers. These volunteers would be able to choose plots first the following season. Hundred's representatives (one for each unit of Eagle Heights) assign plots.
- 1969 Committee provides trash cans as well as workers to dump them.  
Committee arranges for mulch and for the College of Agriculture to fertilize the field.
- 1971 Committee discourages use of insect sprays, especially those containing DDT and other chlorocarbons.  
Hundred's representatives group organic gardeners together.
- 1975 Committee warns gardeners that the land could not be used for income purposes. Because of increased demand for garden plots, the Committee limits gardeners to Eagle Heights and Harvey Street residents.

“Gabby Garden,” a garden column in the *Eagle Heights Newsletter*, begins.

- 1978      Committee provides scythes for cutting weeds.
- 1980      Committee places vacuum breakers on all of the water spigots.  
Experimental Farms raises the Gardens’ rent, requiring an increase in plot fees for gardeners.
- 1982      Gardeners send applications to the Eagle Heights Community Center rather than to hundred’s representatives. This centralized the operation of the Gardens.  
Organic section forms (1200 row).
- 1983      Committee asks gardeners not to plant within 6 inches of their plot boundaries to provide aisles between plots.  
Committee instates weedy plot policy in which plots would be mowed if weeds grew higher than the plot number on the stakes.
- 1984      First year gardeners can request the same plot.  
Weed policy changes to a flag system. A yellow flag serves as a warning, replaced with a red flag after a week. A week after that, and the plot would be mowed.  
Committee installs bird houses.
- 1985      Trend of decreased garden use continues.
- 1986      First end-of-season bonfire.  
Compost pile begins.  
Committee purchases a wheel barrow and garden cart to help gardeners move compost and weeds.
- 1987      Committee bans planting of perennials including Jerusalem artichokes, mint, and comfrey.  
Share shelf begins.
- 1988      Committee plants raspberry bushes in southwest corner.
- 1991      Committee plants 600 row in clover and rye as a cover crop and to help the erosion problem. Fallow row would rotate every year.
- 1993      Garden shed built.
- 1995      Organic section expands to cover most of the Gardens.  
In-season workdays begin. Gardeners required to work 2 days: either opening

or closing day and one other.

Committee releases pedia wasps to confront Mexican bean beetle problem.  
Committee begins to provide, and care for, communal tools.

- 1996*      Committee declares entire Gardens organic.
- 1997*      Gardens become no-till.
- 1999*      David Shiffert contacts Chancellor Ward regarding possible reduction in the  
                 area of the Gardens. Provost John Wiley replies that there was no  
                 immediate threat.  
                 Shiffert begins long-range planning process for Gardens to counter-act  
                 possibility of losing land.
- 2001*      Campus Natural Areas Committee makes decision to reduce Gardens' area.  
                 Gardens lose land to CALS test plots and Biocore Prairie.
- 2002*      Chancellor John Wiley forms the Garden Oversight Committee.
- 2004*      Arbor envisioned by David Shiffert built.
- 2007*      Apple trees planted along northern border of the Gardens.  
                 Weed juries begin.
- 2009*      Gardeners begin terracing hillside (700 row).
- 2010*      Fruit trees planted along eastern border of the Gardens.  
                 Gardeners continue to terrace hillside.

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### *Interviews*

Daniel Arp, telephone interview by author, June 29, 2010.

Steven Backues, interview by author, August 20, 2009.

Judy and Paul Bosland, telephone interview by author, February 21, 2010.

Mike Brugger, telephone interview by author, November 11, 2009.

Cathie Bruner, interview by author, October 15, 2010.

Joe Cooper, interview by author, February 23, 2010.

Gerald Cowley, telephone interview by author, August 5, 2009.

Norman Deffner, telephone interview by author, March 1, 2010.

Glenda Denniston, interview by author, October 7, 2009.

Gretel Dentine, interview by author, October 1, 2009.

Katherine Edison, telephone interview by author, October 27, 2009.

Terry Egan, telephone interview by author, February 25, 2010.

David Emerich, telephone interview by author, June 29, 2010.

Margot Garcia, telephone interview by author, August 18, 2009.

Robert Gifford, telephone interview by author, November 13, 2009.

Robert House, telephone interview with author, July 31, 2009.

Robert House, telephone interview by author, June 4, 2010.

Delmar and Betty Jo Jenke, interview by author, April 7, 2010.

Nondee Jones, telephone interview by author, February 3, 2010.

Almuth Koby, telephone interview by author, February 15, 2010.

Timothy Kolosick, telephone interview by author, November 16, 2009.

Richard Lawton, telephone interview by author, August 21, 2009.

Carol Oberdorfer, telephone interview by author, July 15, 2010.

Mike Oberdorfer, telephone interview by author, July 14, 2010.

Eric Olmanson, interview by author, January 28, 2010.

Julie Ott, telephone interview by author, November 6, 2009.

Tom and Pat Palmieri, telephone interview by author, February 5, 2010.

Barry Rumack, telephone interview by author, February 23, 2010.

Julie Schneider, telephone interview by author, November 16, 2009.

David Shiffert, interview by author, August 25, 2009.

Don Smith, telephone interview by author, March 9, 2010.

Steve Williams, interview by author, February 9, 2010.

Tom Wright, telephone interview with author, June 28, 2010.

Steve Youngs, telephone interview by author, April 17, 2010.

### *Archival materials*

Eagle Heights Community Center archives, Eagle Heights Community Center, Madison, WI.

Eagle Heights Community Gardens' archives, Eagle Heights Community Center, Madison, WI.

University of Wisconsin Archives. Steenbock Memorial Library:

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College of Agricultural and Life Sciences  
9/1/1/5-3

Business Administration, Planning and Construction  
24/1/1  
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Housing, 1883-1994 (previously Residence Halls)  
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Experimental Farm Records, 1856-1970  
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Campus Development Plan, 1986  
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University Bay Project Files  
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Glenn S. Pound files  
90/80

Board of Regents Minutes

Copies of all materials used are now archived together in the University of Wisconsin Archives, Steenbock Memorial Library, Madison, WI.