May 20, 2015

May Climate Conference Recap
by Lacey Klingensmith

Our latest conference-"Urban and Suburban Carbon Farming to Reverse Global Warming"-was an inspired day of learning that empowered participants with practical knowledge and techniques for implementing local climate change solutions. The event, hosted at the Harvard University Science Center, featured more than twenty speakers with topics ranging from city-scale ecology to backyard food forests and the role of carbon flows and soil health in these systems.

Building on the metaphor of our environment as a "sick patient," academics and expert practitioners from a diverse scope of fields shared their prescriptions for healing and restoring ecosystems with biochar, cover crops, compost, and permaculture techniques. They advocate for a holistic perspective to recover our lost connection with nature. Attention was also given to the topics of invasive species, aquatic plants' potential for "blue carbon" sequestration, and to promoting urban agriculture and space for permeable surfaces.

Featured Event

Tufts Fall 2015 Climate Conference: Restoring Water Cycles to Reverse Global Warming
A panel on "Local Eco-Restoration as Climate Activism" highlighted infrastructure improvements and success stories in stormwater management including the constructed wetland at Alewife Reservation. Between sessions, the lobby buzzed with excitement as attendees chatted with vendors from various environmental businesses and organizations who were eager to showcase their work. As a final call to action, Boston's renowned activist and political leader Mel King closed with a keynote address emphasizing the importance of listening to and understanding community needs, and nurturing future environmental stewards by engaging youth in hands-on gardening activities.

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**RSVP**

**When**
Friday, October 16, 2015, 5:30 PM - Sunday, October 18, 2015 5:00 PM (EDT).

**Where**
Tufts University, Medford, MA.

**Fees**
$150 sliding scale

For more information visit [here](http://example.com) and [Register now on Eventbrite](http://example.com)!

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**Other Events**

**Microbes 'R' Us**
Saturday, June 14, 2015 from 6-9:00 PM
Cambridge, MA

Come join us for a potluck/discussion with our restoration ecologist, Jim Laurie, about some of the revolutionary ideas developed by Lynn Margulis on the deep relationship among microbes, and all life including humans.
Thank you to all participants for making this spectacular event possible! "Urban and Suburban Carbon Farming to Reverse Global Warming" represents one more achievement in our quest to change the climate conversation.

The Living Building Challenge

By Jacqueline Sussman

As the reality of Earth's limited resources further encroaches on the consumerist approach to life, some businesses and individuals are pursuing an alternative model that looks to nature for guidance on living a sustainable, yet modern, existence.
The Living Building Challenge is an international certification program that requires the most rigorous environmental performance standards for the human-built environment. Created in 2006 by the International Living Future Institute and run by the Cascadia Green Building Council, the LBC goads humans to live and work in tandem with the natural environment by providing a framework to design and construct buildings in ecologically responsible ways. The Challenge consists of seven performance areas, termed "petals": site, water, energy, health, materials, equity and beauty. The petals are subdivided into a total of twenty imperatives, with principles such as "limits to growth," "net zero energy," and "democracy and social justice." Projects are assigned imperatives that match the core purpose of the building and the community it is intended to serve.

According to the Living Future Institute, the LBC is a "philosophy first, an advocacy tool second and a certification program third." The program applies eco-philosophical principles that will encourage people to more deeply consider humans’ role in the larger environment. It promotes biophilic design, integrating natural features, such as green roofs and abundant natural light, to create a profound connection between humans and nature in the urban environment. The Challenge also draws from the approach of biomimicry-innovative methods that emulate symbiotic relationships in nature to establish more efficient and resilient ways of living.
Once building projects are built and in operation, meeting their assigned imperatives and all seven petals for a minimum of 12 consecutive months, they are eligible for full program certification and designated as being in 'Living' status. Projects that meet three or more petal requirements can also earn Petal Recognition: this partial certification applauds the efforts of those who are not yet able to reach full Living status. At present, there are over 100 project teams that are pursuing the LBC, and some have already attained full certification and Living status, including the Omega Center for Sustainable Living in Rhinebeck, New York, the Tyson Living Learning Center at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, the Hawaii Preparatory Academy Energy Lab in Kampala, Hawaii, and the Bertschi School Living Science Classroom in Seattle, Washington. The Omega Center utilizes an "Eco Machine"-a natural water reclamation system that purifies water with microscopic algae, fungi, bacteria, plants and snails-treating water using zero chemicals. The Bertschi School Living Science Classroom features an 165 square foot vertical green wall that treats all grey water produced by the building. Water travels down the wall to plants that absorb atmospheric carbon dioxide. These projects provide inspirational evidence of the vast potential of ecologically-minded design and architecture.

Although it is impossible to exist in the modern world without creating an ecological footprint, humans can evolve with the help of programs like the LBC to significantly reduce environmental harm and to nurture symbiotic relationships between people and the greater natural community around them.