

# Garden harvests community spirit

By Alice Duncan

It's Spring time and the crops are in. Wrisberg Hall has its own "back forty" in room 116; forty pounds of topsoil in a one foot by four foot by four inch plastic container, or 1/10,000 of an acre.

The 18 rows of veggies are a joint effort of roommates Dan McCoy and Tom Farrell, evolving out of a joking remark McCoy made about turning a flea-market fluorescent light fixture into a planter.

McCoy, a mechanical design student, brings five years of experience working on a farm to the project. Farrell is a city boy who unabashedly admits that "When I was a little kid I had a

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**Tom Farrell  
Marketing Major**

strawberry patch, but it never grew."

Farrell feels that his major in Marketing has been a help in the enterprise, "It lent itself to sharecropping." Approximately eight inches of their plot has been leased to Roger Lloyd, another Wrisberg resident. When asked about the lease terms, Farrell stated, "We haven't established the fee yet but I think we'll eat half of his crops."

Their plot contains chives, radishes and three types of lettuce. Root depth was a factor in this choice as well as was time. The roommates are both 12th termers and crops have to be brought in by graduation. Farrell sighed about the limitations, "We would have liked to put in pumpkins and corn." McCoy anticipates that the first harvest will be ready in about 2½ weeks.

Lloyd's plot is rather scraggly compared to the lush vegetation of the owners. Lloyd, an absentee tenant farmer and Business major, does not water them as arduously as do Farrell and McCoy. His rows are also not marked by seed packages which worries Farrell, "They don't know what they're supposed to look like."

The whole project has been "scientifically done," Farrell explained. "We checked four different types of soil." Plants are misted from a "Spray and Wash" atomizer in the morning and at night. An entire "Spray and Wash" bottle is used in the evening. Most of the growing occurs at night. Curtains are drawn around the radiator as well as the planter and the heat is turned up high. The room gets uncomfortably hot, "like a steambath," but they feel strongly enough about healthy plants to put up with the heat.

The two live on the south side of the building and their plants receive constant light. The tiny salad fixings are pulled left to right and then drawn by the overhead light fixture to complete a circular progression of light exposure every twenty-four



hours. "We have ideal growing conditions," Farrell boasts. Classical music is softly played on the radio, "when we leave." Otherwise it's The Doors.

The garden has become a community event. People drop in and check on the tender plants, ask about them, and peer intently into the planter marking their progress. About two hours a day is spent discussing the garden. Friends are allowed to water the plants.

"Most of the girls used to be scared to come into the room," Farrell stated. "And we planted

a garden and now they come in," McCoy said. This Friday the two plan to have a garden part. "Of course we'll be in our overalls," Farrell says.

Indoor gardening is not the only option for campus salad connoisseurs. Frank Williams, Housing Supervisor, says that every summer several people in Meade Heights grow vegetables. Williams prefers it if the gardens are small and planted next to the houses. "One of the biggest problems is if they make a big garden." This involves digging up the grass and in several instances students have left the Heights without resodding.

Dauphin County Parks and Recreation have already leased approximately two hundred 30x30 ft. plots on Elmerton Avenue behind the State Hospital. Their \$5.00 fee includes seeds. They are attempting to get more donated land and have established a waiting list. To get on the waiting list you must go in person to 17 North Front Street in Harrisburg and register. Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., weekdays.

Back at Wrisberg Hall the plants look healthy. Only three days old, the radishes are already over two inches in height. "We are most proud of our radishes," Farrell smiled. And you can already smell the chives.

When asked if they anticipated others in the dormitory to emulate their effort Farrell responded, "Anytime you have major innovations you can expect people to copy you." McCoy modestly summed up the experiment, "We're just pioneers on our own."



Photos by Alice Duncan