

Growing farmers and the food movement for 50 years: UC Santa Cruz celebrates 50 years of leadership in sustainable agriculture

Signature events highlight the celebration

SANTA CRUZ, CA—Fifty years after students transformed a brush-covered rocky hillside into a verdant organic garden, UC Santa Cruz is widely regarded as a trailblazing force in sustainable agriculture education and research.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of that garden, and a series of events will celebrate the valued and enduring contributions the campus has made, now under the auspices of the internationally recognized Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems.

The festivities include the arrival in April of 39 apprentice farmers and gardeners, heirs to the legacy of those who created the first garden in 1967; a three-day "First Fifty" celebration in July; and the annual Fall Harvest Festival in October; details below.

"We've led the movement toward a healthy, socially just food system for 50 years," said Daniel Press, the Center's executive director and UC Santa Cruz professor of environmental studies. "Our vision of a sustainable food system encompasses environmentally sound farming, as well as safe working conditions and livable wages for the people who work in it."

Background

Over the decades, the grassroots effort begun in 1967 by legendary English master gardener Alan Chadwick and a cohort of students has evolved into a hub of teaching, hands-on learning, pioneering research, and advocacy for people who grow, process, and distribute food.

During 50 years of growing farmers and the food movement, Center students, staff, faculty, and collaborators have:

- Pioneered organic farming methods for high-value, chemical-intensive crops like strawberries
- Created the nation's first university-based program in agroecology, a scientific approach that emphasizes the ecology of farming systems
- Trained more than 1,500 apprentice organic farmers and gardeners
- Broadened agricultural policy to include issues of social justice and worker welfare

Coverage opportunities

Strawberry research

The Center's [path-breaking research](#) on organic pest and disease controls offers strawberry growers alternatives to methyl bromide and other soil fumigants.

Undergraduate engagement

Hundreds of UCSC undergraduates learn the fundamentals of organic farming and gardening through "hands-on" classes and internships at the UCSC Farm & Garden; students can choose a concentration in agroecology and sustainable food systems offered by the Environmental Studies Department.

Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture

This year's apprentices include educators, urban farmers and gardeners, youth empowerment advocates, three graduate students, and several recent college graduates; the Class of 2017 begins April 10 with participants from across California, as well as Oregon, Washington, Arizona, North Carolina, and South Africa.

Notable apprenticeship graduates include:

- Karen Washington of Rise and Root Farm, Orange County, New York, winner of the James Beard Leadership Award, *Ebony* magazine's Power 100!, and numerous other honors
- Matt McCue, co-founder of the Farmer-Veteran Coalition and of the Shooting Star CSA in Fairfax, CA
- Jason Mark, executive editor of *Sierra* magazine and co-founder of Alemany Farm in San Francisco
- Tim Crews, research director of The Land Institute in Salina, Kansas
- Nancy Vail and Jared Lawson, founders of Pie Ranch, a Pescadero-based farm that promotes education and social justice
- Matthew Raiford, founder of Gilliard Farm in Brunswick, Georgia

"Real food" programs

The Center spearheaded UC's systemwide adoption of 20 percent "real food" purchases, driving the university's commitment to buy food that is produced in a fair, humane, and environmentally sustainable manner; UC Santa Cruz is committed to 40 percent "real food" purchases for its dining halls and other food facilities by 2020.

School food projects

The Center is improving K–12 school nutrition programs in 15 school districts in Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties.

Upcoming events include:

- April 10: Class of 2017 apprenticeship begins
- May 17: Strawberry and Justice Festival, 4-6 p.m. UC Santa Cruz Hay Barn
- June 4: Outstanding in the Field dinner; details available [online](#)
- July 28-30: "First 50" Celebration includes a Friday reception, a Saturday symposium followed by a dinner and dance, workshops, field trips, and more.
- October 1: Annual Harvest Festival, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., UC Santa Cruz Farm