

Jeffers Road Greenhouse Proposal

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The demand for community gardening in Eau Claire is readily apparent and shows no signs of slowing. In 2012 over 250 residents rented space in community garden to grow food, and an additional 800+ people of all ages put their hands in the dirt as a volunteer or member of a service organization. Both “renters” and “volunteers” regularly express interest in furthering their gardening education and skills, and membership waiting lists are common. In response to this growth, we propose a pilot project for Eau Claire: a community greenhouse. This local resource would build citizen capacity for seed starting and extended growing seasons, combined with powerful educational opportunities.

In a recent survey of 150 Chippewa Valley residents, over 100 individuals expressed interest in renting community greenhouse space to start seedlings for vegetables, herbs, and other plants. A majority of individuals also placed importance on using the greenhouse as space for classes on seed starting and gardening. The survey indicates that residents of the Chippewa Valley strongly support a community greenhouse as a functional, educational space that will enhance the region.

University of Wisconsin Extension – Eau Claire County currently runs the community garden at Jeffers Road. Each year, approximately 60 individuals rent plots on over 2 acres of land. In 2015 we expect the other 20 unrented plots to be occupied as a result of adding a second water spigot. UW-Extension provided assistance with the development of two other community garden spaces in Eau Claire. UW-Extension offers several garden programs annually to teach residents how to grow food and ornamental plants.

We have gained approval from the City of Eau Claire to construct a small eight by twelve foot greenhouse at the garden. The greenhouse will provide rental space for up to 20 individuals to start seedlings in the spring, and extend the growing season with cold crops in the fall. Each individual will receive a vertical allotment of potting shelf space, in order to minimize water runoff between different rental “plots”. Allotment of “plot” space will be random and similar to community garden plot allotment. Renters will be charged a small \$10 fee which will pay for any maintenance and materials costs. Renters will be responsible for watering and caring for their own seedlings and plants. The greenhouse will be locked to keep the location secure.

Educational opportunities and inclusivity are top priorities. A community greenhouse minimizes barriers to gardening by providing help and resources for those who wish to start crops from seed, as well as reducing the cost community gardeners must pay for plant starts. Furthermore, the educational experiences afforded by a community greenhouse facilitate an improved understanding of the entire process of food production. The ability to start garden crops from seed also allows for more choice in which varieties and crops to grow. UW-Extension Horticulture Educator Erin LaFaive will hold classes for seed starting beginners.

The greenhouse and base kit cost \$1,400*. We anticipate spending an additional \$500 to add a gravel floor, potting benches, and automatic vent openers. A community member has already donated the concrete necessary for anchoring the greenhouse to the ground, and offered to assist with constructing potting benches. We will also be soliciting donations from current Jeffers Road renters and local businesses. We have already received \$400 worth of seeds and starting trays from a general community member. The greenhouse will be self-sustaining, have no heat or electricity, and require no annual maintenance.

Eau Claire’s seven community gardens currently empower more than 1,000 community residents (both renters and volunteers) to grow nourishing and delicious food for themselves, local food pantries, and The Community Table. The majority of these gardeners would not have the resources available to grow their own food if these gardens did not exist. The impact of community gardens is powerful – through gardening, people build meaningful connections to their food, to the land, and to each other. A community greenhouse would build on these successes to enhance local food security, self-sufficiency, and sustainability in Eau Claire.

We request that you consider supporting this worthwhile project.

Greenhouse Model and Specifications

We have chosen the Grandio Ascent Greenhouse for this location. It is the highest rated small greenhouse on the market and is also the only structure that is rated to withstand a significant snow load. The kit comes with all the materials necessary to build the greenhouse. The frame consists of powder coated aluminum while the walls are 6mm twin-wall UV protected polycarbonate.

The greenhouse comes with a base which would be anchored into the ground by 6 concrete piers. The interior floor of the greenhouse would be pea gravel to provide optimal drainage. With the foundation built to specifications, other customers have reported the greenhouse withstanding 80mph winds and golf ball sized hail.

Technical Specifications

Height: 7' 6"

Width: 8' 2"

Length: 12'-1/2"

Frame: Heavy duty aluminum

Color: Powder coated green

Panels: 6mm twin-wall UV protected polycarbonate.

Door Width: 42"

Doors: Bind-resistant sliding double-doors.

Latch: Easy-latch doors with double-ball catch

Tools: Included

Hardware: Stainless steel nuts and bolts

Reinforcement: Cross-roof truss and cross corner bracing

Gutters: Built-in rain gutters

Ventilation: (4) roof vents with adjustable manual openers/latches

Frame Warranty: Lifetime

Panel Warranty: 10 years



Grandio Ascent (image shown is 8x8 model)

Site Plan

We would locate the Greenhouse on the northern end of the Jeffers Road Garden alongside one of the existing vehicle pathways.



Potential Sources of Funding	Type	Amount	Use
Eau Claire Garden Club	Donation	\$150	Automatic Window Openers
Eau Claire Master Gardener Volunteers	Donation	\$100	Gravel for Floor
Rental Fees	Fees	\$200	Potting Bench Materials
Wisconsin Farmer's Union*	Grant	\$1,400	Greenhouse and Base Kit
Community Member (already donated)	Materials donation	\$45	Concrete
Community Member (already donated)	Materials donation	\$400	Seeds, starter trays
Total		\$2295	

*The 2015 price of the greenhouse has increased to \$1700. We may still be able to get the lower priced (\$1400) option.