

SU CAMPUS AS LABORATORY

Climate Change Garden Grows on Campus

By Rachel May, January, 2014

Sustainability at Syracuse University is a collaboration between our educational mission and campus operations. Nowhere is this more visible than in the new **Climate Change Garden**, a unique resource for teaching and research at the Life Sciences Complex.



Photo by Genevieve Fridley

When biology professors Jason Fridley and Doug Frank learned of plans to install a miniature drumlin landscape outside their building, they saw it as an opportunity to test the impact of a changing climate on tree growth. The landscape architect, Kent Rieder of Hargreaves

Associates, had developed a plan for undulating land forms with a large number of trees and shrubs. With the support of Provost Eric Spina and strong advocacy from Chuck Bucci and Carmen Luppino in Campus Design, Planning and Construction, the biologists worked with Rieder and SUNY-ESF botanist Don Leopold to develop a list of 34 species for the site. Some are plants native to this area, others are more common in warmer southern climates or drier midwestern areas, both of which are potential models for the future climate of Central New York. Each grouping of plants is repeated three times, to provide more robust research data.

Fridley and Frank plan to develop classes on climate change, in which students can monitor the growing season and growth rates of the plants. They envision an online archive of data over time that will be valuable for research and teaching across the country and around the world. The project has already had an educational impact on campus: the researchers are working with buildings and grounds to think outside the box about how they fertilize the grass or salt the paths, and Chuck Bucci says he welcomes other efforts to turn the campus landscape into an educational opportunity.