



This PDF has been prepared for submission to the Tufts Digital Library as documentation of the work completed by Michaela Morse, BFA/BA'20, as part of the SMFA at Tufts Senior Thesis Program.

Senior thesis project: *SMFA Garden*

Original purpose of this document:

This proposal was submitted to the Tufts University Green Fund in the initial round of the 2019-2020 application process.

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Green Fund, 2019-2020

Deadline for initial project proposals: October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Project:** SMFA Garden

**Name of Lead:** Michaela Morse, *BFA/BA Fall 2020*

**Collaborator:** Lauren Kimball-Brown, *SMFA Library Coordinator*

**Description:**

The garden is a space which is uniquely poised to bring the natural environment into our industrial landscape and raise our awareness of environmental issues. Our proposal is to create a garden of pollinator-friendly, native plants adjacent to the SMFA atrium at 230 The Fenway, visible to all who enter as a welcoming sight of growing plants and site-specific visual media.

On a biological level, this garden would perform the environmentally crucial role of supporting local pollinators and maintaining the presence of native plants within the ecosystem. On a social level, the garden would enrich the central commons space of the SMFA and bring our community together through the invitation to collaborate on the garden's design, as well as the art objects that fill it. In the face of the present environmental crisis, gardens can offer us a space to cope and heal through their integration of nature and culture. Including the visual media that would be created to fill the garden alongside the native plants, our community would be offered a site in which to reconnect with the natural environment and better understand their role in the greater landscape.

Staff would be involved year-round to help maintain the garden and facilitate its growth. Opportunities for the whole SMFA at Tufts community to engage would be fostered throughout the year, building its social presence while increasing its ecological diversity for pollinators. We have reached out to the Tufts Pollinator Initiative of last year's Green Fund recipients, and they have offered to support us by providing seeds and seedlings. Rooted in biology, their pollinator-oriented knowledge will help us build on that project's success, and expand the gesture of gardening to the SMFA campus, as we add a philosophical approach that seeks to meet the needs of our unique community.

**People Involved:**

This proposal is a collaboration between Michaela Morse, combined BA/BFA degree student, and Lauren Kimball-Brown, SMFA Library Coordinator. We serve on the SMFA Sustainability Committee, made up of faculty, staff, and students, where early ideas of this project were discussed. We have the support of administrative staff on the committee, though the relationship of this project to the whole committee has yet to be finalized.

The project leaders of the Tufts Pollinator Initiative have already agreed to serve as a resource and a catalyst for our SMFA garden. Beyond this support, our intention is also to invite SMFA students and the greater school community to participate in the realization of the garden. This will include collaborating with instructors, studio managers, facilities workers, and the exhibitions department staff that overlap in their use of the atrium area. We would also explore the possibility of connecting with exhibitions staff on the Medford/Somerville campus.

**Budget:**

The Museum of Fine Arts owns the SMFA campus and controls its grounds-keeping, so rather than gardening directly in the landscape, we are seeking funding to install a primary container garden on the balcony just outside the SMFA atrium, as well as secondary container gardens in two other locations around 230 The Fenway.

- Estimated cost of building materials and soil for 11 containers to be built in-house = \$1800
  - This estimate includes 5 container gardens on the atrium balcony, 1 on the SMFA Library balcony, and 1 or more in the front courtyard of 230 The Fenway (final location pending approval)
- Estimated cost of seeds and plants to supplement TPI contributions = \$200
- Estimated cost of supplementary arts materials = \$1000
  - This portion of the budget will enable eager participants in the design process of the more visually-appealing aspects of the garden to dream big. We would like to offer financial support to the proposals of individuals who put forward ideas on how to build onto the container gardens in an artistic way that directly reflects the SMFA community.
- Estimated cost of social engagement = \$500
  - The amount above includes funding for the community-engaging aspects of this project. We plan to offer opportunities for students to engage throughout the year, and will require funding for events like planting in small pots for seed-starting during the winter, the creation of attractive signs for viewers to learn what plants are in the garden, and more. The funding received by the current 2019-20 Green Fund year would be implemented into the 2020-21 academic year as well.
- Estimated cost of labor = \$1000
  - This estimate covers labor costs that might occur over the course of constructing the garden, as we may require assistance from SMFA facilities staff in pickup and delivery of materials, and/or building, installing, and moving garden containers and structures.

Total funding requested = \$4500



### Timeline:

- Winter 2019-20, approximately Dec-Mar
  - Dec 2019 – Feb 2020: Put out a call for student/SMFA community proposals of garden container design and features. As project initiators, we would come up with basic logistical requirements of the garden, including staging open community sessions to understand the needs and priorities of the school population
  - Feb 2020: Incorporate seed-starting workshop and/or other related garden event into the SMFA Health, Safety, and Sustainability Day, hosted by the SMFA Sustainability Committee
  - Mar 2020 & after: Work with finalists on garden design to construct container gardens and related forms
- Spring 2020, approximately Mar-May
  - Mar 2020: Growing seedlings. Outreach to community for garden initiation in spring.
  - April 2020: Depending on last frost, begin to transplant seedlings to container gardens. Located directly next to the main building, it may be possible to safely plant earlier in the season than conventional in-ground gardens, allowing for visible greenery to appear during the academic year when the majority of the school community is most present.
  - May 2020: SMFA Senior Thesis Program (STP) Spring Exhibition. As student in the SMFA STP, project lead Michaela Morse intends to incorporate the social space of cultivating the garden into her thesis work for the program's spring exhibition. This would be the formal introduction of the established SMFA garden to the community.
- Summer 2020, Jun-Aug
  - Maintenance of the garden by school staff, overseen by Lauren Kimball-Brown. Likely assisted by Michaela, even if limited to certain periods of time
  - Aug 2020: Potential inclusion of SMFA garden into Arts @ Tufts Pre-Orientation program
  - Possibility of other summer programming at SMFA including the garden
- Academic Year 2020-21, Sept 2020 — May 2021
  - Fall 2020: In her final semester, Michaela will remain present to facilitate community engagement events and opportunities with the SMFA garden
  - Winter 2021: Inclusion of the garden in future SMFA Health, Safety and Sustainability Day
  - Spring 2021: Re-planting and continued fostering of established SMFA garden

### Benefit to Tufts Community:

The SMFA campus occupies a small footprint in a dense urban setting, and lacks shared public spaces relative to the other Tufts campuses, particularly outdoor green spaces. This garden would beautify our campus with an outdoor space for our community to enjoy, and offer a welcoming site for visitors to the school, between the many exhibition receptions, artists talks, prospective students, and others that are hosted in the building's central commons area.

The garden would be an ongoing collaborative project, providing opportunities for student artwork such as signage, container design, and outdoor sculpture, as well as offering a site for events, performance pieces, and other happenings. We could engage with multiple areas of the school, for example growing plants for the papermaking department to use for fiber, and edible plants for classes that work with and consider food in art. The garden, and accompanying visuals created by students,



would also serve to educate our community about pollinator issues, native plant varieties, and their own roles in the greater environment. Finally, we would explore the possibility of bringing representation of the SMFA garden to the Tufts Medford/Somerville campus through curated display of materials, and building dialogue with the TPI's pollinator gardens.