



**The 2023 Squire Valleevue and  
Valley Ridge Farms Annual  
Report for the Case Western  
Reserve University Board of  
Trustees**

April 2024

## 2023 Farm Annual Report

### The University Farm's Top 2023 Highlights:

- A Stakeholder Committee updated the Farm's Guiding Principles which were presented to Dean Tufts and the Provost's Cabinet.
- The Biology Department continues to increase funded research at the Farm.
- The Farm food production program increased their food harvested to pre-Covid-19 pandemic levels and offered a robust array of co-curricular classes for the CWRU community.
- The Farm hired its first Assistant Director, Melissa Ackerman.

### The University Farm has three strategic operational areas:

- Academic & Research Programs
- Conservation & Sustainability Initiatives
- Recreation & Community

### In 2023

A new Farm Stakeholder Committee was formed and met May-October 2023 to update the Farm's Guiding Principles. Fourteen stakeholder committee members were convened including representatives from Biology, Engineering, Athletics, the Leonard Gelfand Stem Center, the Siegal Lifelong Learning Center, the Center for Civic Engagement & Learning, Local Government and Community Relations, as well as Campus Planning and the Office of the Provost. The following are the University Farm's Guiding Principles:

1. Support the University's strategic initiatives, academics, research, consistent with the terms of the endowment, and with a focus CWRU's core values including diversity, equity, and inclusion.
2. As a Biology Field Station CWRU research and teaching efforts should be afforded priority use of the Farm's grounds.
3. Operate the property in a manner that protects its nature-based assets, the historic use of the property for farming, architecturally and historically significant buildings, and research potential of these assets, with a conservation philosophy.
4. Provide the CWRU Community with recreational opportunities that allow the property's natural assets to be protected and showcased for education and athletics.
5. Provide all interested CWRU students with opportunities to visit and utilize the Farm.
6. The Farm should provide a slate of annual programs and classes that are open to the CWRU community.
7. The Farm should strive to be of community benefit to Greater-Cleveland.

The Committee also updated the Farm's rules and protocols and will continue to meet two times a year to help assess operations and needs.

## **Academic & Research Program Initiatives**

- **Research Activities**
  - Since 2018 Biology has been awarded \$1.5 million in external funding for research at the University Farm, across 9 awards from 8 sources, primarily the National Science Foundation.
  - Biology has had 24 graduate students and over 20 undergraduates conducting research projects
  
- **For Credit Courses**
  - 6 Biology credit courses hosted classes at the Farm in FY23 including 51 bus trips
    - The Farm endowment pays for CWRU class and club transportation costs.
  
- **Co-Curricular Programs**
  - Dr. Benard held the annual Bioblitz, Saturday, April 29 for CWRU students to use the iNaturalist app for citizen science cataloging event called Nature Challenge
    - The group made over 220 observations, that included documentation of 11 new species for the Farm
    - The Eastern Bluebird trail research project and documentation continued into its 21st year, with 52 bird boxes, and several community volunteers performing weekly documentation and bird banding Spring-Summer.
      - 2023 was a record year for Bluebirds - 99 fledged. The total number of Bluebirds fledged over twenty seasons is now 1,274
  - Several co-curricular student research projects were conducted at the Farm as a part of the Humanity Design Corp including testing a medical waste incinerator to be used in developing countries.

## **Continuing Education**

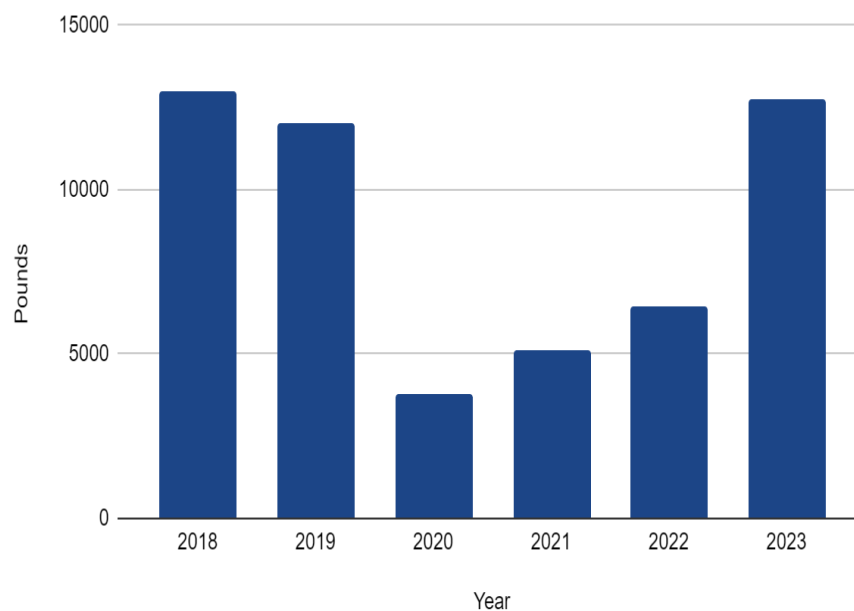
- Four Siegal Lifelong Learning programs were offered at the Farm in 2023 with 25 individual classes

## **Conservation & Sustainability Initiatives**

- **The Farm Food Program**
  - 2023 production yield was up: 12,735 lbs. harvested
    - Vendors included Bon Appetit as well as local restaurants and stores including: Spice, Patron Saint, Noble Beast, Stir, Lake Road Market, Great Lakes Brewery, The Judith, The Country Club
    - Additionally, to provide community benefit when produce couldn't be sold in a timely manner it was donated to community non-profit partners. 3,515 pounds was donated to Food Strong, MetroHealth's Food as Medicine Clinic, Archwood Market and Cleveland Metro School district.

- 14 Farm Stand sale days, open to the public were held at the Farm Greenhouse on Saturdays, July-October, from 9 am-12 pm
- The Food Program staff prepared a Spring vegetable garden seedling sale held on campus in May 2023. Over 1,000 plants were available to provide CWRU faculty and staff with plants at cost for their home gardens. The 3rd annual sale will be held May 22, 2024.
- 108 tons/216,867 lbs of compost/food waste were captured from on campus operations, keeping the material out of the landfill and turning it into a healthy soil amendment
- The 2023 beekeeping honey harvest was bottled and provided to Harcourt House which uses them as small gifts for President Kaler's events and visitors. In total 600 bottles or almost 100 lbs. of honey were provided.
- The food program hosted six CWRU undergraduate interns during the Summer 2023, who worked an average of 30 hours a week providing over 350 hours of summer help to the FFP.
- The FFP hosted 29 volunteers providing 195 hours of help to the farm staff.
- Seven food program classes were hosted with 202 participants, classes included:
  - Container gardening, Square Foot Gardening, Pickling and Canning, Mushroom Cultivation, Foraging, Nixtamal Process (making the most of your corn harvest), and a new Backyard Garden Series was offered in partnership with staff Wellness Program.
- Farm staff also began experimenting with maple tapping — and tapped 16 trees, getting about 65 gallons of maple water that produced just over a gallon of maple syrup.

Yearly Food Program Harvest (lbs)



## Recreation & Community

### 2023 Events & Visitors

- 98 Internal CWRU events were hosted at the Farm
- 35 External events were held
- The Farm received an estimated 7,000 visitors for formal programs
- The 13<sup>th</sup> annual student focused event, Farm Harvest Festival was held in September 2023, hosting over 500 CWRU students for a day long Farm and sustainability focused experience
- The CWRU Cross Country teams held their Fall meets and Conference championship at the Farm with over 300 in attendance.
- The Farm lowered event prices for CWRU departments to rent the November Meeting Center and Pink Pig spaces for retreats and workshops.
- Community members, neighbors, and alumni continue to use the Farm seven days a week, from dawn to dusk, for recreation including hiking, dog walks, cross country skiing, and picnics.

### History & Background

The farm property came to the University as the result of the following gifts:

1. The late Andrew Squire gave 277 acres in the late 1930s (Squire Valleevue Farm)
  - As is outlined in the Farm's history book — In his will Andrew Squire wanted the property to be cultivated and preserved as a farm by the University for educational purposes, and to be a place “where the practical duties of life may be taught; where teachers and students can come in close contact with Mother Earth.”
2. The heirs of Jephtha Wade II gave the University 104 adjoining acres in 1977 (Valley Ridge Farm)
  - As a condition of the Wade gift CWRU must offer a report annually to the Board of Trustees of the University and to the trustees of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History with respect to the operation of the donated property.
3. John and Elizabeth Hollister deeded five acres to the University in 1984 and another five acres in 1995.
4. In 2013, nine acres was added to the property thanks to a generous gift by an anonymous donor.

### Farm Property Attributes:

- Approximately 400 acres
- Eight ponds, with several meadows and creeks
- 200 acres of woodlots
- Teaching and research labs
- Art studio spaces
- Debra Ann November Research Greenhouse
- Three conference spaces
- Three private residences

- One overnight cottage that can accommodate 16 students
- Seven full time staff

**Funding:**

- The Farm operations are funded through the Squire Endowment, direct gifts, and small donations
- The Biology Farm Committee, comprised of Biology faculty members, oversees the Oglebay endowment for the Biology Field Station and research infrastructure investment at the Farm

