

Setting Up A Farm in America

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Picture source: www.askaprepper.com/mini-farming-1-acre/

As an American high school student, I have experienced many activities in PRISMS that are not available in China. In the spring of 2018, with the help of Dr. Yang and Ms. Jones in the school, I repaired a 10-acre farm on the campus and called on more than 10 students to participate. Because I seldom experienced vegetable growing activities in China, this project has made my life more fulfilling and meaningful. In the next article, I want to elaborate on the establishment of our farm and my feelings about this project.

In the first half of 2017, I came to the United States for only half a year. Every morning we meet with each student's specific consultant to talk about the latest situation. One morning in February, my counselor did not come to meet because of the birth of a child at home. Dr. Yang, the director of student life, took his place of him. Dr. Yang talked to us about her idea of cultivating a piece of land on campus to grow some fruits and vegetables. I was deeply attracted by this idea, mainly because I had never planted land before. I live in a very developed city in Beijing. When I came to Princeton, I felt that the campus here was very similar to my ideal pastoral life. Every day on the way to school, we would walk through the grass, while the real grass grew on the gym court. At that time, the land had been simply renovated, and I had been

looking forward to the day when I could plant the fruits of my labor on this land.

In the second half of 2017, as I was busy taking standardized examinations, the construction of farms was delayed. At the beginning of 2018, I told Mr. Yang my idea again and hoped that I could lead other students to add color to our school. So Mr. Yang helped me choose and build a farm fence. I also found Mr. Jones and some staff working in the school canteen to add to my dream.

In March 2018, our campus experienced several rare snowfalls and several power outages. In the worst case, a tree next to it was pressed against the fence. Fortunately, with the help of school maintenance staff, the farm plan was not interrupted. Before the spring vacation, I sent an invitation to all the teachers and students to plant the land together.

After spring vacation, the farm began to be formally established step by step. At the end of April, after a short week of preparation, farm activities began. On Friday, May 4, the whole school organized a foundation-laying ceremony related to Chinese culture in front of the farm. The following Saturday afternoon, everyone in the club returned to the farm and planted several landmark raspberries and blueberries with the help of Ms. Jones. Over the next week, we planted several more herbal plants. The main reason we choose these plants is that berries are mostly perennial plants, so we only need to plant them once, and then there will be crops every year. Also, since May, the weather has been getting hotter and it is unlikely to be successful to start planting seeds, so we have chosen some adult plants that are easy to grow. In addition to berries and herbs, we also planted several pots of flowers on the farm to increase diversity.

Finally, the farm was built. During the summer vacation of 2018, I arranged for Dr. Yang and Mr. Gao to water regularly. In September, when the students had just returned to school, we harvested the peppers we planted. We harvested a whole pot of fresh organic peppers, and then the whole school ate them for a lunch.

The arrival of the new semester has also plunged the farm into new problems. According to Ms. Jones, we not only harvested hot peppers, but also a

considerable amount of raspberries and blueberries during the summer vacation, but some birds took them away. In addition, cave animals bore holes in the farm floor. Because we built a completely organic farm, we could not use chemicals to drive them away. This problem has plagued us for a long time. We want to try our best to prevent similar things from happening without destroying the natural ecology. Just then, a classmate of the farm group mentioned his experience of visiting a farm outside in his school's Environmental Science class. Farmers there insert plastic forks upside down on the ground, which is said to prevent cave animals because they change direction whenever they meet something hard while digging. We can't help but try this method by placing plastic forks around the farm. The influence of cave animals was significantly reduced. Through this, we find that we can apply the knowledge we have learned from textbooks to practice on the farm, which makes us realize the importance of active learning and flexible application. For the birds, we have prepared a birdhouse to be placed on the trees beside the farm, hoping that they can be attracted by the birdhouse.

All in all, our farm is currently working pretty well, and I hope it could have a bright future with future students at PRISMS.