



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts
Brian Grant

Will present his scientific paper

**What's Really Growing in the Garden? Students' Perspectives on
Garden-based Learning**

Abstract

The widespread environmental degradation characterizing the Anthropocene is a call to address a deteriorating human-nature relationship. For much of history, humans have been deeply connected with and in respect of nature both physically and psychologically, and this bond can be renewed. Doing so is especially important for future generations, as modern youth have less opportunities to experience the natural world and more opportunities to experience the virtual world. A lack of nature connectedness in our youth has clear implications for sustainability and underscores the need for interventions aimed at reconnecting youth with nature. Primary and secondary education is a particularly valuable leverage point for such interventions, and garden-based learning programs show considerable potential to strengthen the human-nature relationship and reconnect youth with nature. While studies have indirectly linked garden-based learning and connection with nature in youth, research has not yet directly explored the relationship between the two.

My research explores garden-based learning for themes of connection with nature through a qualitative study of 12th grade students attending Desert Marigold School in South Phoenix. Desert Marigold practices Waldorf educational philosophy with the school's garden as a primary teaching tool and recreational space. I used creative ethnographic methods to give students an opportunity to visually communicate their perspectives of the garden through photography and artistic renderings. Students then verbally described and discussed their media in a series focus groups. Data were then coded and analyzed for themes of connection with nature expressed in the literature. The results illustrate that students perceive a variety of positive lessons and experiences from the garden, and support garden-based learning as a tool to reconnect youth with nature for enhanced sustainability outcomes.

Wednesday, April 10, 2019
8:45 a.m.
Wrigley Hall, Room 408

Faculty, students, and the general public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:
Scott Cloutier (Chair)
Eileen Merritt
Hallie Eakin