FARMING WITHOUT SOIL

U STUDENT'S HYDROPONICS RESEARCH AMONG 18 PROJECTS SHOWCASED AT IFELLOWS SYMPOSIUM JULY 27

Jul 25, 2016

For the last 10 weeks, University of Utah student Georgie Corkery has investigated sustainable urban farming options for Salt Lake, and she will present her work at a symposium Wednesday, July 27, at the University of Utah Guest House, 110 S. Fort Douglas Boulevard, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Corkery is among 18 undergraduate students (http://iutahepscor.org/education/ifellow.php) from universities across the state who were accepted to work as iFellows, a program designed to connect undergraduate students with faculty researchers whose work is part of the National Science Foundation funded-iUTAH (http://iutahepscor.org/index.php) project.

iUTAH, which stands for innovative urban transitions and arid-region hydro-sustainability, is an interdisciplinary research and training program aimed at strengthening science for Utah's water future. Part of that involves outreach projects that train the next generation of water scientists.

Corkery chronicled the progress of her work online (http://iutahepscor.org/education/ifellow/2016/Georgie_Corkery.shtml) and learned that research is an evolving process. She started by planting kale and peppers from seed, dealt with dying plants and gnats, was inspired by the efficiency of a local farm, transferred seedlings to a hydroponic system (without soil), and ultimately shifted the focus of her research project to specifically look at what urban agricultural setting in Salt Lake City provides the most yield using the least amount of water, energy and nutrient input.

"Being an iFellow showed me that despite my lack of scientific background, conducting research is not out of my reach," Corkery said. "In fact, due to the need for research and knowledge across disciplines, I could actually have a significant contribution to the science world if I decide to go down that path."

After the experience, Corkery is planning to pursue a master's degree in ecology once she completes her double major in environmental and sustainability studies and urban planning. She plans to use her last year to conduct another research project about historical mountain pine beetle outbreaks in the northwestern United States.

Corkery and 17 other iFellows from Utah State University, Westminster College, Brigham Young University, Weber State University and Salt Lake Community College, will present their findings individually during the conference. Presentations will focus on examining the water cycle (9:30-11 a.m.); people, places and pipes (11:10 a.m.- 12:10 p.m. and 12:45-2 p.m.); and making connections (2:10-2:55 p.m.). Corkery will present just before noon.

A full schedule of events is available from Annalisa Purser, annalisa.purser@utah.edu (mailto:annalisa.purser@utah.edu).

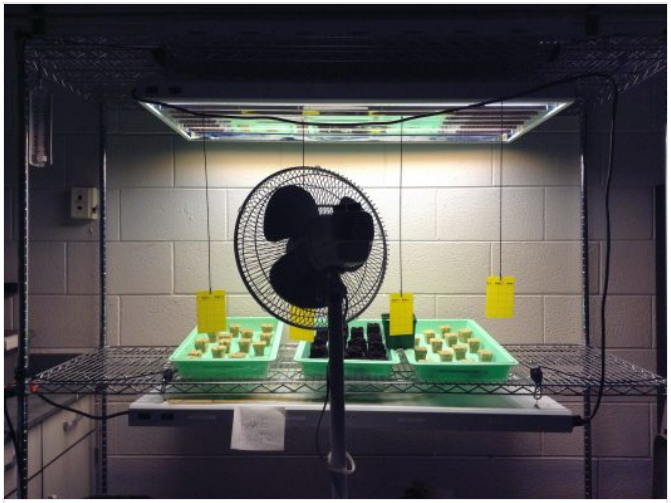

PHOTO CREDIT: Georgie Corkery

Kale and peppers growing in rock wool and soil. The fan and sticky traps (yellow papers) were used to successfully and quickly rid the starts from a potentially damaging gnat problem.

Download Full-Res Image (http://unews.utah.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/5272016.jpg)

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