

# Guest Blogger: James Wirth

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Photo from the Utah

Statesman

USU Extension Sustainability is all about helping everyday people live more healthy, happy and sustainable lives.

This is the twelfth of a series of posts that will feature real people who are making real changes in their lives to be more sustainable.

This month we are featuring James Wirth, read on to learn about his work with permaculture at USU, involvement with the USU Sustainability office and more!

### **1. Please tell us a little about yourself. Where are you from? What are your interests? What are you majoring in?**

My name is James Robert Sears Wirth. I am from Logan, Ut born and raised. My quotable interests are being in and tending to nature. I really do enjoy nurturing any environment whether it's cleaning a canyon or taking care of an over grown back yard. I am looking into different majors right now to find my best fit as I started as a Botany major in California for the last two years.

### **2. How are you involved with sustainability on campus? Please tell us about your involvement with the student sustainability office and permaculture garden.**

I have been working for the sustainability office on campus for exactly a year today as the sustainable food intern and have overseen two grants (winter biking initiative and llc sustainable housing), revised the permaculture grant to get it passed and attended two national conferences on sustainability. As a part of those conferences I was able to network with two national non profit organizations ( Real Food Challenge and Food Recovery Network ) and worked with the administrator and faculty of dining services to implement them on campus. We have started a real food assessment of USU ( finding how animal humane, local, sustainable, and fair trade our schools food sources are) and also have recovered 2400 lbs ( over a metric ton ) of food from being thrown out by dining services and instead given to free to students through the Student Nutrition

Access Center (SNAC office) and to the Cache community food pantry. In addition I have worked with sustainability club and SOSNR (student organization for society and natural resources) in starting the documentary and soup night for educating students about environmental issues and giving them free local healthy soups and bread. I was also able to organize an awesome earth day concert with local bands and beat BYU record for largest recycled cardboard castle for Aggie radio and start a garden for hill crest elementary (all on earth day). I got to also throw an earth day event with Nat Frazers class educating elementary students about local, international and organic food. Also got to have an environmental issues radio show through Aggie radio that had Ed Redd ( a Utah Republican House of Representatives member) on as well as many nationally and internationally recognized scientists on as guests. Also have gotten to arrange and sit down with our university president (Stan Albrecht) to talk about sustainability issues on campus. Also built a 50' long by 11' tall mural for the Aggie true blue reuse sale and organized the collections and donations both last year and this year.

### **3. What first got you interested in permaculture?**

I first became interested in permaculture during my time at Humboldt State University learning about sustainable agriculture and landscaping practices through one of their student housing organizations (CCAT program).

### **4. What can Logan residents expect to see when they visit the USU Permaculture garden? What planting practices are being incorporated?**

Our community members will get to see a healthy productive alternative to water consumptive Kentucky blue grass lawns and hopefully will be inspired to incorporate some of our simple practices into their own yards and gardens as well. Our planting practices are ancient in practice but are being implemented with modern technologies to make them even more efficient than the natural ecosystems it is mimicking.

### **5. What is the most rewarding thing about being involved with these programs?**

I feel the most rewarding part of being with these programs is that I have gained more knowledge through them than any class I have taken to date. It is real applicable knowledge I can use for the rest of my life as well as a killer resume builder. I could probably start my own full production sustainable farm right now if I had the time or money.

### **6. Why is living sustainably important to you personally?**

Living sustainably isn't important to me. I think people should be able to live however they desire. However through my education I have learned humans on this earth

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don't have long (less than 40 years) to change the way our society works before our world ecology is forever altered and for the love of my future family and theirs and for all generations to come and for human existence as a whole I don't see any choice in the matter on not only living and practicing sustainability but becoming a advocate and activist for it as well.

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