



PRESS RELEASE

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Grinnell College Launches Pilot Project to Adopt Organic Land Management on Popular Campus Green, Mac Field

The technical organic program plan is led by Beyond Pesticides and Osborne Organics in collaboration with Grinnell's sustainability and facilities management staff, Re:wild Your Campus, and student leadership and alumni, with support from Natural Grocers.

Grinnell, Iowa, October 8, 2024—Grinnell College has launched an organic land management pilot program on its popular 3.5 acre campus green, MacEachron (Mac) Field, in collaboration with two national organizations, Beyond Pesticides and Re:wild Your Campus, and financial backing for technical support from the natural foods store company Natural Grocers. Championed by the school's sustainability and facilities management staff, student leadership, and alumni, and horticultural expertise from the firm Osborne Organics, the organic land management plan for the site focuses on the adoption of soil management practices that support healthy resilient grass without the use of petrochemical pesticides and fertilizers. Mac Field is a central gathering spot for students studying, socializing, and intramural sports.

Beyond Pesticides, which operates the [Parks for Sustainable Future program](#), collaborates with communities across the country to transition parks, playing fields, and public and private spaces to organic land management. The program provides in-depth training to assist land managers in transitioning land management to organic practices. Beyond Pesticides, a nonprofit organization founded in 1981 to advance land and building management strategies that eliminate use of toxic materials, focuses on land management practices that protect health, enhance biodiversity, and mitigate the climate emergency. The group brings to the project expertise in land management practices that focus on enhancing soil microbial life to cycle nutrients naturally. Beyond Pesticides contributed to the writing of the *Organic Foods Production Act* of 1990, which created the U.S. Department of Agriculture organic program and seal on food products, and served on the National Organic Standard Board.

"We are thrilled to be working with Grinnell College on organic land management practices that protect the health of students, faculty, staff, and the environment, while supporting efforts to avert climate disasters and biodiversity decline," said Jay Feldman, executive director of Beyond Pesticides and Grinnell alumnus.

The push for organic management began in 2019 with a student-led campaign in collaboration with Re:wild Your Campus, a student-founded organization that works with students and staff at schools across the country to help eliminate pesticide use on campus grounds. Student

advocates Tommy Hexter '21, Jacy Highbarger '22, and Grace Duffy '22, joined forces with peers to create "Too Much Grass," a group focused on rewilding underutilized turf areas on Grinnell's campus. The group's first project, a 5,000-square-foot native prairie restoration project, leveraged an alternative plan of action that did not require the use of highly toxic pesticides such as glyphosate, using a sod cutter to remove the grass and enlisting volunteers to cart it away in wheelbarrows to be composted or donated to the community. The project, created and managed without herbicides, caught the attention of the school's president.

Now, five years later, Grinnell College has begun implementing organic land management practices on Mac Field's 3.5 acre lawn, which is a central gathering spot and hosts weekly intramural practices and competitions. Supporters of the project see the demonstration site as a model for broader adoption of organic land management on campus, with all its safety and environmental benefits.

"This is a huge step towards prioritizing human and environmental health," says Mackenzie Feldman, project director of Re:wild Your Campus. "We are so proud of the student advocates who began pushing for this four years ago and whose tireless efforts have been integral to achieving this victory."

"It has been incredibly rewarding to see this work come full circle," says Tommy Hexter, Grinnell alum '21, director of Grinnell Farm To Table and rural organizer with Iowa Farmers Union. "I started campaigning for organic land care at Grinnell when I was a junior in 2019. It seemed impossible to achieve, so we pivoted to converting underutilized lawn areas on campus to native prairie. The prairie projects soon garnered attention from campus admin and staff, allowing us to build bridges and eventually getting an agreement from the grounds department to also transition one of the largest campus lawns, Mac Field, to organic this year. While this will hopefully be the first of many areas on campus to journey away from toxic pesticides, I could not be more thrilled to know that our hard work as students paid off, and we will be leaving a lasting legacy of sustainability on our campus grounds."

Beyond Pesticides' Parks for a Sustainable Future program is supported by Natural Grocers, which underwrites the horticultural consultation services, including the analysis of soil biology, development of a plan with recommended practices and materials, as well as ongoing collaboration with staff.

Alan Lewis, Vice President of Advocacy and Governmental Affairs at Natural Grocers, stated, "We are thrilled see Grinnell College launch the organic management project, which we feel is important to a healthy campus and study body. We know from long experience the land managers are happily surprised by the naturally weed-free landscapes and the cost savings due to lower water use. The biggest benefit, of course, will be for students, faculty, and staff who will have safer green spaces for hanging out and playing sports." Natural Grocers operates stores throughout Iowa, the Midwest, and West.

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Beyond Pesticides

Beyond Pesticides is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., which works with allies in protecting health and the environment with science, policy, and action to lead the transition to a world free of toxic pesticides. Learn more at <https://www.beyondpesticides.org/>.

Re:wild Your Campus

Founded by a group of passionate students, Re:wild Your Campus is transforming the land care paradigm and is on a mission to eliminate synthetic pesticides from all college campuses in the U.S. by 2030. Through working closely with campus administrators, groundskeepers, students, faculty, and local organizations, Re:wild Your Campus eliminates synthetic pesticides, implements organic land care, and increases biodiversity and native plants through education and projects tailored to each campus's unique needs and goals. Re:wild Your Campus is a fiscally sponsored project of Re:wild. Learn more at: rewildyourcampus.org/

Natural Grocers

Founded in 1955, Natural Grocers by Vitamin Cottage, Inc. (NYSE: [NGVC](#)) is an expanding specialty retailer of natural and organic groceries, body care products, and dietary supplements. The products sold by Natural Grocers must meet strict quality guidelines and may not contain artificial colors, flavors, preservatives or sweeteners, or partially hydrogenated or hydrogenated oils. The Company sells only USDA-certified organic produce and exclusively pasture-raised, non-confinement dairy products, and free-range eggs. Natural Grocers' flexible smaller-store format allows it to offer affordable prices in a shopper-friendly, clean, and convenient retail environment. The Company also provides extensive free science-based Nutrition Education programs to help customers make informed health and nutrition choices. Headquartered in the Union Square neighborhood of Lakewood, CO, Natural Grocers has 168 stores in 21 states. Visit www.naturalgrocers.com for more information and store locations.

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