



Healthy Campus Case Study



HEA

An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas
The Higher Education Authority

TUS Food Forest & Kitchen Garden: A Bio Terra Cycle System in Action

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| Institution/ Organisation |
| Technological University of the Shannon |
| Who leads/ led the project? |
| Department of Hospitality, Tourism & Leisure Studies, TUS Athlone Campus |
| Date and timeframe |
| Academic years 2023/24, 2024/25 and ongoing |
| Project Rationale |
| The project addressed the interconnected challenges of food waste, environmental degradation, and disconnection from food sources. It identified a need to move beyond theoretical sustainability education to provide hands-on, experiential learning. By creating a tangible system where students grow, forage, cook, preserve, and regenerate waste, the initiative promotes physical health through nutritious food, mental well-being through connection to nature, and planetary health through sustainable practice. |

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| Project Overview/ Summary |
| This case study details the development of an integrated sustainable food system at TUS on the Athlone Campus. Driven by the HTL department, the project transformed a campus space into a productive garden and established the "Bio Terra Cycle System" as a unique composting system that processes kitchen food waste into nutrient-rich compost to feed the garden. This system forms the practical underpinning of a pedagogical model structured around five pillars: Cook, Forage, Preserve, Regenerate, and Grow. |
| Students engage directly with every stage: they grow seasonal produce (squash, parsnips, leeks), forage for wild ingredients (nettles, wild garlic), cook using local and seasonal recipes in class, preserve surpluses (jams, pestos, cordials), and process waste via the Bio Terra Cycle. The initiative has reduced food waste disposal costs, created a vibrant outdoor learning space, and facilitated the development of a practical cookbook/guide as an open educational resource. It demonstrates how a healthy campus initiative can seamlessly blend education for sustainable development, hands-on skills training, and the promotion of environmental and personal well-being. |

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| Key Learning Points |
| 1. Start Small, Grow Organically: Significant change can be built from small, shared interests (e.g., Bokashi composting) that gain momentum through collaboration. |
| 2. Hands-On is Transformative: Connecting theoretical sustainability concepts to the tangible acts of growing, cooking, and recycling waste creates profound and lasting student learning. |
| 3. Systems Thinking is Key: Addressing food waste wasn't just about disposal; it became the catalyst for a holistic system encompassing education, sourcing, consumption, and regeneration. |
| 4. Cross-Campus Collaboration is Vital: Sharing expertise and enthusiasm across departments and campuses enriches the project and broadens its impact. |
| 5. A Living System is a Powerful Teacher: Our Food Forest and our Bio Terra Cycle System are not just projects but continuous, evolving tools for teaching about climate, seasonality, and resilience and enhancing their learning experience within the Department of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, TUS Athlone Campus. |

| Limerick Framework for Action | | | | Whole Campus Approach | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|----------|-----------|---|--|
| Culture | Partnership | Students | Celebrate | Campus Environment (Facilities & Services) (Pillar 2) | |
| | | | | Personal & Professional Development (Pillar 4) | |

