Cultivating Forest Stewardship

Integrating forest ecosystem management and student learning at the UBC South Campus Farm
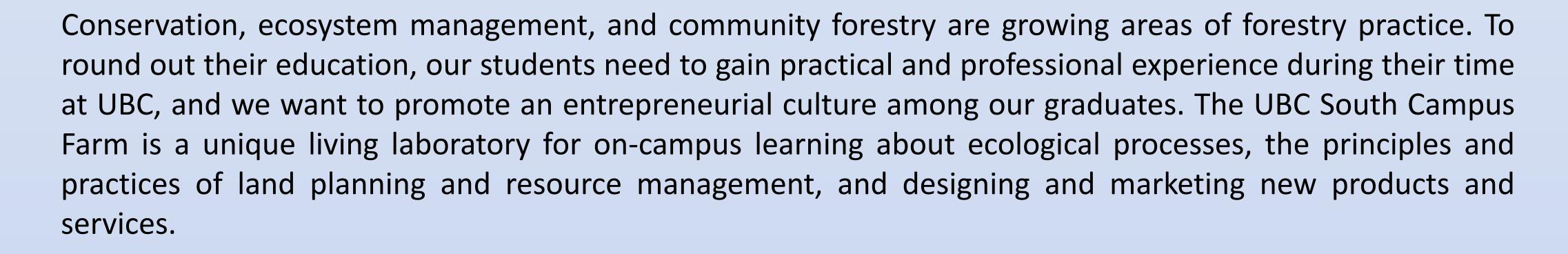

The Forestry Undergraduate Christmas Tree Farm.

Conservation, ecosystem management, and community forestry are growing areas of forestry practice. To round out their education, our students need to gain practical and professional experience during their time at UBC, and we want to promote an entrepreneurial culture among our graduates. The UBC South Campus Farm is a unique living laboratory for on-campus learning about ecological processes, the principles and practices of land planning and resource management, and designing and marketing new products and services.

In this project we are: 1) assembling a digital, spatial database of historic and current physical and ecological conditions that will be available to the campus community, 2) designing signage to identify forestry/agro-forestry installations and natural features, 3) developing new learning modules, such as the FRST 305 silviculture prescription exercise, and 4) creating a new course - Case Studies in Forest-Based Entrepreneurship.

Plots were established across the UBC Farm.

Kaylah and Abby, planting tree seedlings for future Christmas Trees.

Photographs were taken at each plot to show the land cover type.

Oyster mushrooms – a marketable crop?

Two undergraduates, Brent and Kaylah, were hired for the summer and established 328 plots on a 25 m by 25 m grid across the farm. Of these 96 were marked as permanent sample plots to be re-measured periodically. They measured tree, vegetation and soils attributes, and took photos in each plot. Kaylah collected plants for a herbarium. Brent assembled old project reports. Field data was analyzed and combined with aerial photographs by Felipe, to build geographic information system layers. All of this information will be posted and available to the campus community via the UBC Farm website.

In a pilot of the entrepreneurship course, Abby and Kaylah prepared management and business plans for the Forestry Undergraduate Society Christmas Tree Farm. They were mentored by Sean, a recent UBC graduate who markets live Christmas trees (http://evergrowchristmastrees.ca), and they visited local commercial nurseries to learn about production techniques.
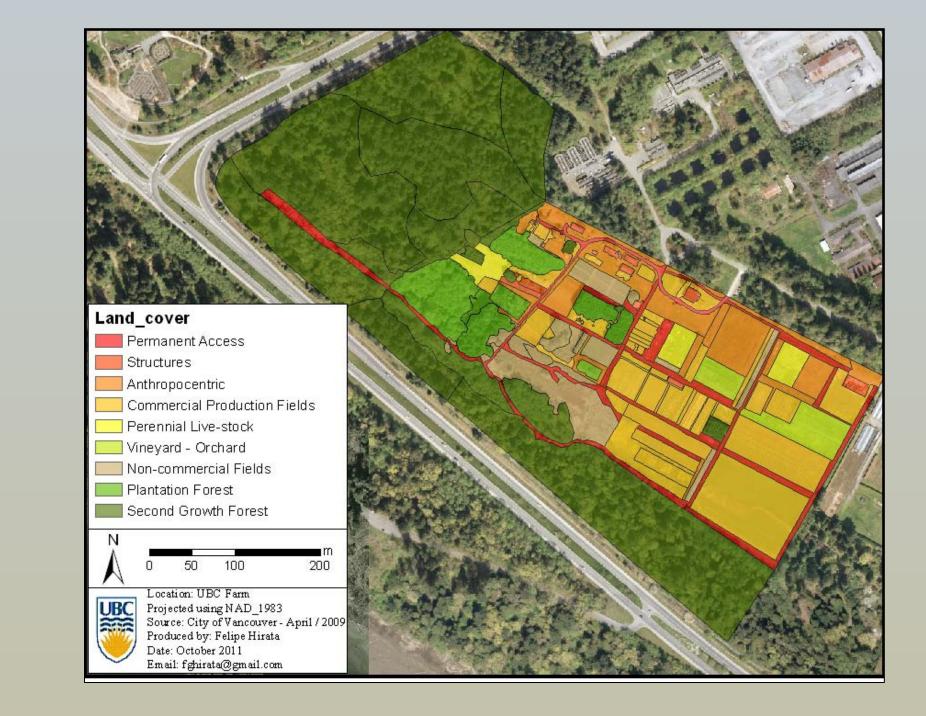

Aerial photographs and plot data were used to prepare land cover maps, available as GIS layers.

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