In coming months, Greenfield Community College students and faculty will create art using “locally grown” tools that they made themselves from plants grown in GCC’s greenhouse. The Pigment Garden Project is the brainchild of Art Instructor Kelly Popoff and Greenhouse Lab technician Tony Reiber and a collaboration between GCC’s Science and Art departments. The students harvested and identified plants, which they then grew in the greenhouse and gathered this summer and have begun processing the plants into ink.

They grew cosmos, coreopsis, tansy, and gardens this summer and have been experimenting with making pigments from flowers and plants, starting by experimenting with books about dyeing wool. His- torically, plant dyes were a primary source of pigments for artists. “There’s a lot of chemistry involved,” said Tony. “Copern (aluminum potassium sulfate), and iron from these metals will ac- cumulate on this dye so we won’t use- less or dye. Many factors determine what color will be present, including when the pigment was extracted from the plant, whether the plant parts were fresh or dry, and when during the growing season they had been harvested.”

Talking about her collaboration with Tony, Kelly said, “We’re experimen- ting using different mordants with the plants to see variations in color they produce. The same flowers might make different colors depending on which metal is added. I’ve always been fascinated with how disciplines overlap and what we can learn from where they meet in the middle. Students from both science and art backgrounds will learn about the common ground between the fields, where there is a similarity.”

Commenting on the project, GCC Dean of Humanities Leo Hwang says, “Kelly and Tony are teaching intentionality. How do you make something that has meaning? Just by looking at local and hyper-local resources, and turning it into action? By teaching students to make pig- ments out of local plants, Kelly and Tony are teaching about an ecology of where human activity and our impact on the environment are so closely intertwined. There’s a lot of chemistry involved, but we’re also looking at how we can use our choices to protect the environment that we live in.”

Students interested in the Pig- ment Garden Project are invited to an informational meeting on Mon- day, October 21 at Noon in Room 515. For information, contact Kelly Popoff at popoff@gcc.mass.edu, 775- 1360 or Tony Reiber at 775-1364, mrebey@gcc.mass.edu.

Join Us
Elms College Information Sessions @ GCC
Saturday, October 12 and October 19, 10 a.m. -12 Noon
Main Campus, East Building Room 109
Elms College offers a 20-hour credit/degree’s social work at GCC.Colonies are built in one or two steps, Elmo. Progress is accompanied by a beginning again for new students for fall 2014! It’s for a deep- information session in launch about this exciting new opportunity. Join us for a preview of the program, and meet potential new friends.

Save the Date
Elm College Information Sessions @ GCC
Thursday, October 24, 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.
Main Campus, Room C318

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