

C-MASC Program Coordinator Viewpoint



FROM THE DESK OF MAGGIE WILLIS

Each day seems to bring another wave of bad news about our climate crisis: the accelerating Arctic warming and disappearance of sea ice, sea levels rising faster than expected, record-breaking forest fires in Australia and heat domes in the Pacific Northwest. It often feels overwhelming. Despite the tireless work I witness at C-MASC and the School of Environmental and Natural Resources, I sometimes worry our efforts won't be enough to counteract this tide. When I feel discouraged in this way, I look for inspiration in my garden.

The first year we lived on our small plot of land, our backyard was little more than turf. I noticed, however, that soil under the western side of the lawn seemed richer, softer, and blacker. The previous owner must have tended a garden there some time ago, and so I dug it up and planted grapes, some yarrow, and blackberries.

As a novice gardener, I was disappointed when after the first year the grapes grew a grand total of 8 inches up their arbor. The following year, they were hit by the remarkably late freeze in May, and I was certain I'd lost at least one vine. But I persisted in my efforts to water, feed, and protect them from beetles as best I could.

I was just barely aware of the incredible work the grapes were performing beneath my feet, extending roots as far as 20 feet below into the clay and soil, made soft by the gardener before me. I am pleased to say that this year, I am looking forward to eating grapes for the first time, as both vines - even the one stunted by the early freeze - have exploded over the arbor and shown great resilience in the face of imperfect conditions and my clumsy care. I am certain that the good foundation laid by the healthy soil played an integral part in their survival.

And so, I have faith in the work we do every day, which sometimes may seem to be only "beneath the surface." We are gathering resources and laying the foundation for repair and fortify the resilience of our planetary systems. One day, all of us may enjoy the fruits of these efforts which have grown out of the healthy "soil" of climate action, good policy guidance, and a well-educated population, thanks to the hard work of all people the world over committed to the health of our planet in step with those at C-MASC, SENR, and The Ohio State University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maggie Willis".

Maggie Willis
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