



Orgun Orhan, a 2015 Cool Davis Eco-hero, cannot help but smile as he works in the garden and thinks of full stomachs his produce will provide to others.

Orhan Orgun: From Lecture Hall to Farming Call

By David Abramson

In 2012, Orhan Orgun decided he needed a change. He had been feeling the itch for some time to move away from theoretical studies towards what he called a “world of action” and that is exactly what he did when he decided to pack up his career as a linguistics professor at UC Davis and dedicate his life to growing food for underserved populations. Originally from a small village in Turkey, he immigrated to the U.S. as a young man, and now wanted to till the soil again.

At his retirement party, he had the good fortune of meeting a farmer connected with FARM Davis (<http://farmdavis.org/>), a group that grows food for houseless and food-insecure people in Davis. He soon began volunteering with them, and hasn't looked back since.

Orhan ended up removing his own front lawn and donating the area to start the third FARM Davis site, now full with an abundance of fruit trees, vegetable rows, and their signature “hugelkultur” mounds. The mounds, made by digging a deep holes and filling them with woody tree debris and soil, help to save water and replenish the soil with vital nutrients. Orhan's garden, even as the smallest of the three, produces over 600 pounds of produce per year.

There is certainly a social and political component that seems to motivate Orhan. He sees food as “not just a commodity but a basic human right” and noted that there are some serious issues with the food system in America, mostly regarding to how food is distributed amongst the people. Orhan explained that “we grow more food than we eat as a country” but most of that food ends up wasted and not getting to the people who need it.

Orhan volunteers 10-15 hours per week between the three FARM Davis properties and also help fund the projects by purchasing irrigation supplies and other needed gardening materials. Cool Davis celebrates Orhan's efforts with an Eco-hero award.

If you want to farm with Orhan and get involved with FARM Davis, email farmdavis@gmail.com.