

Students take eco cupcakes during UConn's Earth Day Spring Fling in 2024. 2026 Spring Fling was held on Monday April 27 after being postponed due to poor weather.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONN ON INSTAGRAM

Earth Day Spring Fling promotes sustainability and outdoor programs at UConn

by Elijah Polance
STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/THEY/THEM
elijah.polance@uconn.edu

The annual Earth Day Spring Fling, co-sponsored by the University of Connecticut's Office of Sustainability and Dining Services, took place on Monday, April 27.

At 11 a.m., Fairfield Way was packed with organizations tabling and promoting environmentalism, sustainability and other outdoor-related initiatives. The event was originally scheduled for Wednesday, April 22, but was postponed due to inclement weather.

Dining Services had a variety of treats near the plaza entrance to Homer Babbidge Library. A flex pass or payment granted access to their zero-waste barbecue, which featured vegan and vegetarian options with local ingredients. The barbeque meal came with free ice cream from the UConn Dairy Bar. A selection of cupcakes and a table with strawberry shortcake were also available at the event.

The stretch of Fairfield Way between the library and Gampel Pavillion housed the bulk of the tabling groups. Some were student organizations, like Summit Sisters, a new club for female students to take on hikes in New England. Around 20 feet away was the UConn Horticulture Club, which sold a variety of plants at the event.

The Spring Valley Student Farm was situated near Hillside Road and handed out free marigolds to students. Anusha Prabhakar, a sixth-semester student on the pre-med track who is majoring in structural biology and biophysics and computer science, is part of a program where she works on the farm in exchange for living there.

"It's just nice to be able to engage with the student campus and offer these plants to people, so that even if they keep it in their dorm, they're mindful about nature," Prabhakar said.

On Fridays, the farm hosts a weekly volunteering event, where students can visit the farm to complete farming activities during the fall and spring semesters.

Academic programs and organizations also came to the event to promote outdoor programs. The UConn Library had books about environmentalism on display, and the Student Recreation Center handed out flying discs, pens and sunglasses to promote its outdoor trips and equipment rentals.

The UConn Thrift Den, a free thrift store on campus and a part of the Office of Sustainability, was also present with a selection of clothes for students to take. Caroline Keary, the Office of Sustainability's zero waste coordinator and a master's student studying social responsibility and impact in business, helped table for the Thrift Den. She oversees a variety of sustainability initiatives on campus, including Give & Go, a program that allows students to donate unneeded items during the move out period of the spring semester.

"Circularity is something that I think is really, really important and something that's very much missing from current society, especially with social media and TikTok Shop and Instagram and how accessible it is to buy things all the time," Keary said. "It makes it really hard to be mindful when you're shopping."

Keary said clothing became her favorite avenue to creatively and frequently work sustainability into her life. During the Spring Fling, most of her work went into helping the Thrift Den and she said the rest of the event was helpful for the Office of Sustainability.

"Our biggest goal is just to let everyone know that the Office of Sustainability does exist on campus and there are a lot of sustainability initiatives going on," Keary said. "It allows us to get our name out there, but it also allows people to understand that they're part of an entire sustainability ecosystem on campus."

There were organizations tabling that weren't affiliated with UConn as well. Mansfield sustainability groups, renewable energy companies and even national environmental organizations, like the Sierra Club, had tables too.

The activities weren't limited to Fairfield Way. For those who signed up beforehand, there was goat yoga to be done on the Founders Green. There was also a party bike that went through a section of the campus.

Toward the end of the event, the Class of 2029 Tree Planting Ceremony occurred between Susan V. Herbst Hall and the William H. Hall Building. Aminieli Hopson, an eighth-semester real estate and urban economics major and an intern at the Office of Sustainability, said the ceremony was held in partnership with the UConn Arbotoreum and featured an explanation of the class tree's historical significance.

Keary said she was happy with the number of organizations visible at the Spring Fling.

"It always is very helpful as well when it's a beautiful spring day," Keary said. "It's really helping other organizations know that they're not the only one with this value and idea and trying to target that in some different way... that's really awesome, too."



The Party Bike at UConn's Earth Day Spring Fling in 2024. This year's Spring Fling was Monday, April 27.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONN ON INSTAGRAM