

Mennonites Own Modules in Solar Garden

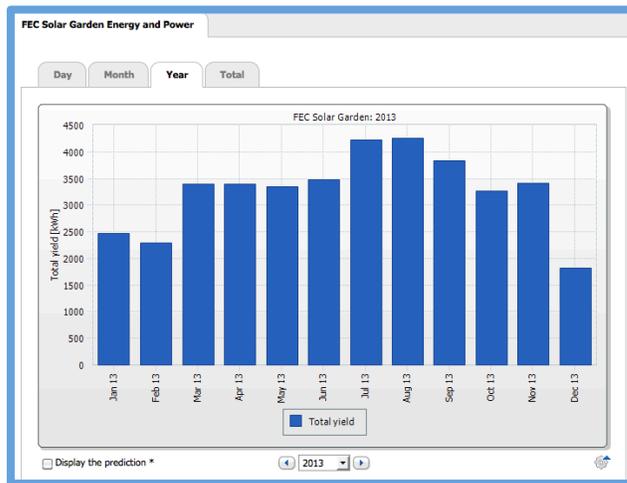


Lower Deer Creek Mennonite in Kalona has purchased modules in Iowa's first community-owned Solar Garden operated by the nation's oldest electric cooperative, Farmer's Electric Coop in Frytown, Iowa.

After the initial purchase of \$375 per module, the church receives a credit on their monthly bill for the retail value of the power, which is working out to be an average of about \$3 for each module every month. This rate will rise as retail rates rise. At this rate payback should be about 10 years, and the system will generate power for another 20-30 years after that. So over the life of the panels it will be a money-earning venture for the church.

Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church generates about 10% of their electricity from the 10 panels that they own.

Community-owned solar gardens allow individuals an affordable way to invest in solar. Many can't afford the upfront costs or don't have adequate site conditions. With this community project, individually owned modules are installed on common arrays, with FEC providing mounts, transformers, insurance and labor. Warren McKenna, Farmers Electric general manager, says, "To sign up, all they have to do is call us. We invoice them for the solar module, and it shows up on their bill. It's just very easy to do."



There are sixteen grid-tied solar arrays now producing power at the FEC Solar Garden. You can view the energy production in real time online at www.fecklona.com Click "View Production Data" in the left column.

Since it was put into place in December of 2011 annual production has been approximately 53,328 kWh, which translates to about 37 tons of carbon emissions avoided per year.

The Solar Garden helps keep summer peak demand down, keeps a portion of the energy dollar in the community and helps to keep electric rates steady.

Pastor Don Patterson at Lower Deer Creek says they were motivated by the desire to conserve in the Mennonite way of making more with less, using finite resources with restraint out of concern for future generations. As their Confession of Faith says, "Human beings have been made for relationship with God, to live in peace with each other, and to take care of the rest of creation."*

*Find the Mennonite Confession of Faith at
<http://www.mennolink.org/doc/cof/art.6.html>