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WWU to begin work on greenhouse next week

ANNA WALTERS / THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

Each week, The Bellingham Herald takes a look at an ongoing construction project in Whatcom County. This week: Western Washington University's new glass greenhouse.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Construction of a new greenhouse near Arntzen Hall is scheduled to break ground on Monday, Feb. 16. The greenhouse will be used by WWU's biology professors for plant research.

"The number of faculty that are doing research that involves plants has increased," said WWU biology chairwoman Joann Otto, after the university added two new biology professors to the department in 2008 and 2007. "The current greenhouse that we have is used only for teaching purposes, so it's used to maintain the plants that we use in our courses."

Five professors, along with students working on projects, will conduct research in the greenhouse.

Next week, crews will begin clearing a space for the new building and rerouting underground utilities. Faber Brothers Construction Inc., the general contractor on the project, will have to custom make "a fancy gutter" that connects the greenhouse to the laboratory portion of the building.

Although the lab area will share a wall with the greenhouse, the two buildings - which total about 1,300 square feet - will have separate entrances.

"The greenhouse has to be totally separate just because of all the humidity and moisture that goes on inside," said Jon Lindberg, project manager for Faber Brothers.

WHERE IS IT?

Near the university's current greenhouse behind Arntzen Hall.

WHO IS DOING THE WORK?

Lynden-based Faber Brothers Construction Inc. is the general contractor on the project and Seattle-based Rolluda Architects designed the plans.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

About \$564,800 for the building materials and labor.

SCHEDULED COMPLETION DATE?

The project is scheduled to be completed by June.

WHAT IS NOTEWORTHY ABOUT THE PROJECT?

The new greenhouse will have solar shades for climate control, an air circulation system, misting and irrigation systems and controls, grow lights and plant racks. All doors, windows and vents are screened to prevent the intrusion of pests and pollen - common problems with in WWU's current greenhouse.

The laboratory portion of the building will house four workstations, computers and a storage space for chemicals, scientific equipment and soils.

A 1,000 gallon rainwater collection tank - installed on the building's exterior - will be used to water plants and outside gardens.

SOURCE: Barbara Alten, WWU Architect; Joann Otto, WWU biology chair; Jon Lindberg, project manager for Faber Brothers; Taine Wilton of Rolluda Architects.