



WASHINGTON STATE  
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION  
**Kitsap County**



# Kitsap Farm Mentor Program

# 2024

## THE ISSUE

The number of small farms in Kitsap has continued to increase, as well as the interest in farming and sustainable farming practices across our region. Because of this, the need to train the next generation of farmers is ever pressing. Experienced farmers in Kitsap have been hosting their own interns for years, creating a siloed environment of learning for those interns. In 2015, Kitsap Extension helped support the development of a farm mentor program in the county providing educational resources and additional capacity to farmers with interns, focused on providing collaborative group class offerings.

## THE RESPONSE

Since 2015, WSU Kitsap Extension has supported farmers through the Kitsap Farm Mentor program. This initiative helps approved farm mentors educate and train the next generation of farmers. Farm interns receive comprehensive instruction in farm operations from their mentors, supplemented by monthly WSU workshops on relevant topics. The program also provides interns access to multiple farms and a social network, enhancing their learning and connections within Kitsap County. In 2024, WSU Kitsap Extension continued to support the Kitsap Farm Mentors through administrative and facilitation, resources, and development of the annual curriculum, while also offering individual assistance to farmers and guidance to intern class participants.

## THE IMPACTS

Due to the support provided by WSU and the dedication of the farm mentor group, eight (8) farm mentors were able to take part in the program with delivery of eight (8) group classes to twelve (12) interns during the 2024 farming season. Class topics included: body mechanics; farm efficiency; pasture & hay management, integrated pest management, growing flowers, business planning, composting models, and crop planning. From the 12 interns end of season discussion and surveying, two planned to continue farming in another county, two chose to continue to farm in some capacity in Kitsap County, and eight were undecided.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- 8 approved farm mentors from 7 farms across Kitsap
- 8 intensive group classes delivered to 12 interns.
- Interns provided opportunities to attend all additional Regional Small Farms classes throughout the season.

## QUOTES

“ I enjoyed it very much and learned a lot! Especially Lynn and the body mechanic’s portion. I have been very interested in optimal movement and this class aligned perfectly with those interests  
– 2024 Intern in response to *Body Mechanics & Farm Efficiency Class*

“ The speakers were incredibly knowledgeable, and I appreciated having them ask questions regarding what we see on our farms so we could directly see the importance of these tools”  
– 2024 Intern in response to *IPM Farmer Round Table Class*

