



Master Gardeners

2024

THE ISSUE

Puget Sound and Kitsap's rivers, lakes, and aquifers supply water for agricultural, residential, and recreational purposes. Stormwater runoff is the primary cause of pollution in the Puget Sound region. Scientists have detected 23 pesticides in Washington streams, many at levels that could harm salmon and other wildlife. Studies indicate increased health risks among families, particularly pets and children, using lawn and garden pesticides, which can easily be tracked indoors, bringing toxins with them. Sustainable gardening practices such as composting, mulching to prevent erosion, and reducing the use of garden chemicals help to prevent polluted stormwater runoff. Protecting existing trees and planting new trees and native plants in our gardens has been shown to reduce stormwater runoff and offer numerous other environmental benefits.

THE RESPONSE

The WSU Master Gardener Program was established in the Seattle area in 1973. The Kitsap Master Gardener Program followed in 1975 and will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2025. The Master Gardener name is highly regarded in our communities for providing friendly, unbiased, and research-based advice on gardening and environmental conservation.

A survey of Kitsap County Master Gardener clients revealed that over 50% of visitors to the Master Gardener Diagnostic clinics were referred by friends or family. Additionally, 100% of survey participants indicated they would recommend Master Gardeners to others. One respondent noted, "I appreciate having someone to talk to who doesn't have a vested interest in selling me something," while another shared, "Every time I've called, they've been very truthful with me." This high level of public trust enables Master Gardeners to serve as unique and impactful community educators.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 16,466 volunteer hours reported
- 28 new certified MGs, 42 Emeritus MGs, and 211 total certified MGs for 2024
- Over 3,500 citizens received individualized help from MG volunteers at 241 diagnostic clinics.
- MG volunteers answered 2,535 specific garden-related questions.
- MGs taught 92 workshops, demos, or field days for 1,551 adults on various gardening topics.
- MGs taught 23 workshops, demos & field days to 1,613 youth.
- 118 individuals participated in the 12-day Organic Vegetable Gardening Classes, taught by 7 Master Gardener volunteer educators.
- Over 1,500 community members attended the annual plant sale where MGs offered guidance
- 3,875 pounds of produce grown with organic methods from 4 designated learning gardens was donated to 4 local food banks.





THE IMPACTS

30 citizens attended Kitsap Master Gardener Training, a 13-week program with an online horticulture curriculum from WSU, as well as Zoom and in-class lectures on topics such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Gardening & Water Quality, and Plant Problem Diagnosis. Trainees are taught where to locate science-based resources with efficacious and safe pest control information to use at home and share with the public. 28 of those students went on to graduate as certified WSU Kitsap Master Gardeners. Certified Master Gardeners return to the training sessions annually to earn required continuing education hours.

Kitsap Master Gardeners provided advice for homeowners at 241 regularly scheduled plant diagnostic clinics at 3 farmers market locations (Port Orchard, Bremerton, Poulsbo), at the Bainbridge Island Public Library, the WSU business office, and other locations countywide. "Home Composting Made Easy", "Natural Yard Care", and "Kick the Weed and Feed Habit" booklets are popular publications Master Gardeners reference and distribute to the public. Over 5,000 people received individualized help from MG volunteers, and 2,535 specific garden-related questions were answered for citizens.

All the demonstration and community gardens MGs plan, manage, and lovingly tend are maintained with organic methods to protect our water resources. Sustainable methods are on display at these gardens for citizens to adopt at home, including composting demonstrations in partnership with Kitsap County Solid Waste. 83 individuals in total attended classes on the safe and proper use of pesticides from WSU and Master Gardeners. Kitsap Master Gardeners succeeded in coordinating 107 workshops, demonstrations, and field days for adults and children that focused on stewardship of natural resources and environmental protection.

QUOTES

Quotes from 2024 Trainees:

“ This program is very well organized and provides many diverse opportunities to participate in promoting gardening practices in the community.

“ I am understanding better how horticulture and mother nature work together.

“ I came to Washington a stranger, and through this program, I have made so many good friends and have learned so much about Kitsap that it might have taken me years to learn.

“ I look forward to serving the community in increasing people's knowledge of gardening and protecting the environment.

“ I had no idea how much it would change my life. I feel blessed to have become part of the community.

“ I will share what I learned - all of it - with neighbors, friends, etc. so that they can make use of it in decision-making.