



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
Kitsap County



Kitsap Farm Mentor Program 2025

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 2025, WSU Kitsap Extension continued to support the Kitsap Farm Mentors through administrative assistance, class facilitation, resources, and development of the annual curriculum, while also offering individual assistance to farmers and guidance to intern class participants.

Farm mentors provide their chosen interns with comprehensive instruction in the operations of their farm. Farm-based learning is supplemented by intensive group classes in topics designed to prepare them in becoming the next generation of farmers.



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THE IMPACTS

With support from WSU and the commitment of the farm mentor group, the program engaged seven farm mentors, three farm partners, and one Extension Specialist during the 2025 farming season. Together, they delivered nine group classes to ten interns, covering topics such as: Body mechanics, farm efficiency, cattle ranching, integrated pest management, growing flowers, business planning, composting models, aquaponics, and crop planning. Additionally, two online mini lessons (one hour each) introduced business planning and crop planning early in the season, providing a foundation before revisiting these topics in greater depth later.

Throughout the season, interns received regular evaluations to support their growth, culminating in a final survey and discussion to reflect on their experiences. At the end-of-season discussion and survey, four interns participated. Of these:

- Three plan to continue farming
- Two intend to farm in Kitsap County

QUOTES

“ This was an excellent intro to cut flowers for someone who had zero prior experience growing flowers. Rebecca is an excellent teacher and her passion and expertise shine through.
~ 2025 Intern in response to the Growing Flowers class

“ Each class featured a fascinating topic with direct application and practicality within farming. It was great to reinforce the actual farm work with useful knowledge and bigger-picture concepts.
~ 2025 Intern on end of season evaluation

“ I appreciated the holistic and well-rounded instruction I received in a variety of crops, farming methods, and overall agricultural philosophies.
~ 2025 Intern on end of season evaluation

BY THE NUMBERS

- **7** approved farm mentors from 5 farms across Kitsap
- **3** additional farm partners and **1** extension specialist delivered classes to broaden group educational offerings.
- **9** intensive group classes delivered to **10** interns.
- Interns were provided opportunities to attend all additional Regional Small Farms classes throughout the season.

