



WSU EXTENSION  
Thurston County

# The Extension Connection

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE. CHANGING LIVES.

October 2023

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

3rd Quarter 2023



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Attendees at a Soil Health workshop in learn how to evaluate compaction, soil texture, soil biological activity, and soil test reports. This workshop was a collaboration with the WSDA-WSU Soil Health Initiative ([washingtonsoilhealthinitiative.com/](http://washingtonsoilhealthinitiative.com/)), the Lewis County Farm Bureau, local Conservation Districts, and WSU Extension.

*What's COMING UP IN EXTENSION?*

[Hedgerows Webinar & Workshop](#)  
To learn more and register please visit:  
[www.extension.wsu.edu/thurston/hedgerows/](http://www.extension.wsu.edu/thurston/hedgerows/)

[Youth in Agriculture Series - Rabbit Basics](#)  
To register please contact [tc4h@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:tc4h@co.thurston.wa.us)

[WSU Master Gardener Training Recruitment](#)  
To learn more about the MG Program and to apply please visit:  
[www.extension.wsu.edu/thurston/gardening/](http://www.extension.wsu.edu/thurston/gardening/)

[Southwest Washington Food Hub Winter Multi-Farm Produce Box](#)  
To learn more and sign up please visit [swwafoodhub.com/](http://swwafoodhub.com/)

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Thurston County WSU Extension builds the capacity of individuals, organizations, businesses and communities, empowering them to find solutions for local issues and to improve their quality of life. Extension collaborates with communities to create a culture of life-long learning and is recognized for its accessible, learner-centered, relevant, high-quality, unbiased educational programs.



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(Left) 4-H Poultry Project members attending a pre-fair poultry clinic to prepare for the Thurston County Fair. (Center) Thurston County 4-H Plant Science members with the 4-H garden at the Thurston County Fair. 4-H members prepared, planted, and maintained 4-H gardens beds at the fairgrounds. (Right) 4-H youth participating in the Rabbit Judging Contest at the Thurston County Fair.

## 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Emily Killeen

The summer months are always busy for Thurston County 4-H youth and volunteers. Youth attend pre-fair activities, clinics, and workshops to prepare for the showcase event of the year – the Thurston County Fair! Part of preparing for the Thurston County Fair includes beautifying the barns, buildings, and other areas within the fairgrounds, including the five raised garden beds the 4-H program "adopted" through the Fair Board's Adopt a Garden program. We were fortunate this year to have new 4-H volunteer, Michele D., take the lead with the county garden project. Michele, along with several 4-H members, planned, planted, and cared for the raised beds located along the fairground's main walkway throughout the summer. Their hard work paid off, as the 4-H raised garden beds won the Fair Board's Special Award!

Why is the Thurston County Fair the showcase event of the year for local 4-H youth? The Thurston County Fair is more than an opportunity to eat fair food and go on the carnival rides, for 4-H youth members it is a lesson in life while having fun with friends. 4-H youth members work for several months leading up to the Thurston County Fair on their 4-H projects (hands-on interest areas). Youth exhibit baked goods, fine arts, home arts, science exhibits such as horticulture or robotics, and both household pets and farm animals. The 4-H motto to "Make the Best Better" is on full display at the Thurston County Fair as youth exhibit their best work and interact with the fair's visiting public. Youth learn to "Make the Best Better" from the fair judging process as experts evaluate fair exhibits, provide feedback, and recognition for a job well done.

4-H youth members learn valuable life skills from the fair experience such as public speaking, public relations, decision-making, problem solving, leadership, all while providing an educational experience for fair goers. There is something magical about the county fair as it brings people together who share a passion for the 4-H Youth Development Program, working with school-age youth, and the many 4-H project interest areas. For over 100 years, the Thurston County Fair and the 4-H Program have helped school-age youth discover their sparks! Sparks are interests or passions that light a fire in a person's life. For youth, having a spark or sparks gives a young person a sense of direction and encourages goal setting. Research shows that helping youth discover their sparks is important to helping young people become capable, contributing, and caring adults. We look forward to the 2024 Thurston County Fair (July 24-28) and hope you will visit the fair to see 4-H youth in action!



4-H Dog Show at the Thurston County Fair



Thurston County 4-H goat project exhibitors at the Washington State Fair in Puyallup.



WSU Water Resources/Native Plant Salvage Foundation volunteers Ralph Gross & Joe Bauman assist Helsing Junction farmers Jessica Armstrong & Angie Camp prepare their site for a hedgerow installation, which will be the focus of a field-day workshop on November 4th.

## WSU WATER RESOURCES & NATIVE PLANT SALVAGE PROGRAM

Erica Guttman

WSU Water Resources and its non-profit arm, Native Plant Salvage Foundation, will be partnering with Pierce and Thurston Conservation Districts, Xerces Society, and Helsing Junction Farms for a two-part webinar/workshop series.

On Wednesday, November 1st, from 6-7:30 p.m., WSU staff will present a Webinar covering hedgerow benefits, design, site prep, maintenance and more.

Then, on Saturday, November 4th, learners and volunteers will meet in person at Helsing Junction Farms in Rochester for hands-on learning while installing a 500-ft. long by 15-ft. wide hedgerow in a field where Helsing Junction Farms grows a bounty of organic produce for our region!

Featured topics for this field-based workshop include:

- laying out a hedgerow design and practicing use of a planting plan diagram;
- how budget and goals affect plant choices, including bare-root plants, livestakes, and containerized plants (and experience the specific techniques for planting each type); and
- how the hedgerow will support habitat for different types of pollinators and other beneficial insects that sustain healthy organic vegetable crops (presented by an expert from the Xerces Society).

The workshop topics will conclude by about 1:30 p.m., but participants will be encouraged to stay longer to see the hedgerow installation from start to finish — expected by about 3:30 p.m. Warm drinks, snacks, and warming tents will keep participants fueled for a day of learning and making positive on-the-ground change!

Details about the events and a link to registration can be found at <https://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/hedgerows/>

These events are funded by grants from Thurston County Community Planning, Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, and the Washington Conservation Commission.



WSU Water Resources/Native Plant Salvage Foundation volunteers Ralph Gross & Joe Bauman assist Helsing Junction farmers Jessica Armstrong (not pictured) & Angie Camp prepare their site for a hedgerow installation, which will be the focus of a field-day workshop on November 4th.





# SNAP-Ed

## Healthy Eating on a Budget

### SNAP-ED Amanda Leoni

This Summer was a busy one for SNAP-Ed. We offered cooking demonstrations at 6 different farmers markets and tabled at many of them bi-weekly.

In July, we partnered with WIC and the Washington State Farmers Market Association to promote new WIC benefits being accepted at farmers markets. We offered cooking demos, handed out free cookbooks and helped to inform shoppers of the new change.

In early Summer, SNAP-Ed started working with SKIPP, the free summer Meals program at Garfield Elementary. We offered nutrition education, cooking demos and garden tours with students. Each time we made a recipe together, we harvested as much as could from the school garden. This free summer meals program runs for most of the summer break.

In August, we did our annual South Sound School Garden Network Tour where SNAP-Ed presented on our school garden pocket lessons.

In September, we welcomed students back to school with a fun open house event at Garfield Elementary where we planted purple vegetables (cabbage, brussel sprouts, broccoli...) and said hi to all the students coming to meet their teachers for the first time.



SKIPP children watering the pumpkin patch at Garfield Elementary.



SNAP-Ed Program Assistant, Melissa, making zucchini pancakes at the Chehalis Farmers Market for WIC Week.



Kelly Battersholl and Laura Mosher of Piece by Piece Farm in Rochester, WA lead a group of attendees at an August SW WA Food Hub Farm Walk. They shared a lot of useful and innovative information about their farming system, including high tunnel design and management, bell pepper production system, mulch-layer and row cover system for a low-weeding approach to growing winter squash, and their new post-harvest Washington facility and equipment.

## AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

### Stephen Bramwell

The WSU Extension agriculture program powered through a jam-packed July-September, 2023. We hosted 28 Washington School Nutrition Association nutrition staff and coordinators for a “Field to Flavor Showcase”, focused on farm-to-school purchasing and Washington-grown grain products including flour, muffin mix, pancake mix, and breakfast bars.

Annie coordinated an ag labor recovery program, in which participating farms receive up to \$20,000 in labor cost offsets. The funding is ¾ used up, and hopefully more funding will become available.

Sierra worked on many workshops with Stephen, and helped launch the 2023 Whole Farm Planning course, which is a local and statewide program that teaches essential aspects of starting a new farm.

Efforts were underway in Q3 to connect local producers of organic buckwheat with Cascade Milling in Royal City, WA. Stephen and Annie are collaborating with Fagerness, Hedlin, Finnriver, Kirsop Farms, and The Evergreen State College on this project. Look for local pancakes at the 2024 Thurston County Fair!

On that note, the Thurston County Fair was great in 2023! We observed a noticeable uptick in energy around our educational displays, and the youth market animal sale.

Other recent events were a Soil Health workshop partnering with local Farm Bureau’s and local Conservation Districts, and the WSDA-WSU Soil Health Initiative; two farm walks with the Southwest Washington Growers Cooperative to Gordon Family Farm and Piece by Piece Farm in Rochester; and a weighty meeting about conservation easements for farmland protection.



The 2023 Buckwheat Festival in Chimacum, WA drew folks from around Washington and even British Columbia. This event was a collaboration with Organic Seed Alliance, Finnriver Farm, and the WSU New Grains Northwest Research team ([sustainableseedsystems.org/new-grains-nw.html](https://sustainableseedsystems.org/new-grains-nw.html)). Featured were field walks, tasting event with local chefs of traditional buckwheat dishes, and efforts to integrate buckwheat and millet as nutrient-dense food into school meal programs.

### UPCOMING EVENTS:

- November 16th: 2024 Farm Walk planning discussion, Thurston County Agriculture Committee
- November 30th: Launch of the winter Multi-Farm Produce Box, SW Washington Food Hub (contact: [sales@swwafoodhub.com](mailto:sales@swwafoodhub.com))
- December 12th: Annual Grazing Association membership meeting



Pacific Northwest Peony Society tours the peony garden at Closed Loop Park Demonstration Garden.

## WSU MASTER GARDENER & MASTER RECYCLER COMPOSTER PROGRAM

Cori Carlton

WSU Master Gardener Program 50th Anniversary Celebration activities continued through the summer months in celebration of the WSU Master Gardener program that started in King & Pierce counties 50 years ago and has since spread internationally. We hosted special guided walks of our demonstration gardens and presented the following themed workshops: Managing Pests and Disease in the Garden, Tool Care, Square Foot Gardening and Growing Dahlias. The volunteers at Closed Loop Park gave a special tour of our peony garden to the Pacific Northwest Peony Society.

Our Children's Garden program returned this summer after being on hiatus since the pandemic. Children transformed into garden superheroes as they harvested produce grown by the WSU Master Gardener volunteers. All food is donated to the Thurston County Food Bank. Master Recycler Composter volunteers led a wonderful lesson on worm composting. It was exciting to have children back in the garden again and we look forward to more Children's Garden activities in 2024.

WSU Master Gardener and Master Recycler Composter volunteers hosted informational and activity booths at numerous events over the summer. Visitors got their gardening, composting, recycling, and waste reduction questions answered. One of the highlights was at the Thurston County Fair where record attendance numbers kept our volunteers busy answering questions. We even won an award ribbon for Friendliest Booth at the fair.

Master Recycler Composter volunteers have been teaching monthly in-person composting workshops at our demonstration gardens. They also hosted a special composting presentation to the local Surfrider Foundation chapter.

Our 2023 Master Recycler Composter new volunteer training began on September 21 and runs through November 9.

Do you have a gardening, composting, or recycling question? Email our certified volunteers via our Question/Answer clinic at [master@co.thurston.wa.us](mailto:master@co.thurston.wa.us).

Check our website for further details on our outreach activities and demonstration gardens.



One of the "Garden Superheroes" who participated in the Children's Garden Program.



Master Recycler Composter volunteers processing compost at our Dirt Works Demonstration Garden.