



WSU EXTENSION  
Thurston County

# The Extension Connection

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE. CHANGING LIVES.

October- December 2024

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

3rd-4th Quarter 2024



A Garfield Elementary student carefully selecting produce at the youth farmers market event.

*inside this issue...*

**WSU WATER RESOURCES/  
NATIVE PLANT SALVAGE  
PROGRAM** page 1

**SNAP-Ed  
PROGRAM** page 2

**AGRICULTURE  
PROGRAM** page 3

**WSU MASTER GARDENER  
& MASTER RECYCLER  
COMPOSTER  
PROGRAM** page 4

**4-H YOUTH  
DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAM** page 5

*What's  
COMING UP IN  
EXTENSION?*

**Offal Composting Workshop - February 19**

Please register at: <https://forms.office.com/r/tkFN5KJ1hi>

**2025 Thurston County Fair Dates**

July 31-August 3

<https://www.thurstoncountywa.gov/2025-thurston-county-fair>

**Ranch/Livestock Photography Field Trips**

Are you interested in hosting a group of near-professional photographers (and some amateur) on your livestock farm for a tour, and then having access to all the files?

Contact [bramwell@wsu.edu](mailto:bramwell@wsu.edu) for more information

*Connect with us:*



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.



3054 Carpenter Road SE  
Olympia, Washington 98503  
Main Line: (360) 867-2189



Community members planted 1,000 specially-selected plants to create a new 10,000 sq. ft. hedgerow to support habitat for beneficial insects and pollinators, among other benefits.

## WSU WATER RESOURCES & NATIVE PLANT SALVAGE PROGRAM

Erica Guttman

Continuing its work to expand beneficial hedgerows in Thurston County, the WSU water resources program, and its non-profit arm, Native Plant Salvage Foundation, recently partnered with Thurston Conservation District and Piece by Piece Farm for another action-based learning event that resulted in establishing a new agricultural hedgerow that will support beneficial insects and pollinators, create a windbreak, and protect water quality.

With funding from Thurston County's storm and surface water program and Washington Conservation Commission, the WSU/TCD team presented a new online training in an ongoing series, with the focus on hedgerow planting structure design & options, including plant placement, plant characteristics & goals, key tips, planning for actual maintenance capacity, budgeting, and sourcing plants. All recorded webinars in the series are available as part of the WSU [Hedgerows Toolkit](#), under the [videos](#) section.

Following the webinar, participants and volunteers joined the WSU/TCD team and Piece by Piece Farmers to plant 1,000 trees and shrubs (funded by USDA NRCS) in a new hedgerow just under 10,000 square feet in size.

As detailed in the WSU [Hedgerows Toolkit](#), hedgerows can be sized to fit in almost any landscape—from urban to rural settings. They are a beautiful, low-cost, and valuable tool to achieve multiple benefits. With ongoing support from Thurston County, WSU will continue collaborating with local farmers to assist in establishing hedgerows, while using these new projects to provide hands-on education to Thurston County residents interested in learning more about how they can use the WSU Hedgerows Toolkit to create the perfect hedgerow for their own site. To learn more and participate in these future events, sign up [here](#).



Community members learned about hedgerow plants and tips for creating planting plans during a November 10th hands-on workshop at Piece by Piece Farm in Rochester.



After planting, the entire new hedgerow was mulched with a barrier of cardboard and arborists' wood chips to support healthy plant growth. WSU's partners for this project included Thurston Conservation District, Washington Conservation Commission, Thurston County, and USDA NRCS.



Cucumbers grown in the school garden being served in the cafeteria.



The Garfield Garden post wood chip garden party.



A Garfield student carefully selecting produce at the youth farmers market event.



Ingredients used in our July cooking demo at the Olympia Farmers Market. A summertime market salad.

## SNAP-ED

Amanda Leoni

Farmers markets, school gardens and community spaces were a big part of SNAP-Ed programming this quarter. Every Summer, SNAP-Ed partners with SKIPP (Summer Kids in the Park Program) at Garfield Elementary to focus on nutrition education. Throughout the Summer, we met students in the garden to harvest vegetables and then assisted students in making fun recipes in the cafeteria. SNAP-Ed hosted monthly cooking demos at the Olympia Farmers Market that focused on local in season produce. In collaboration with the Thurston County Food Bank, SNAP-Ed co-hosted a school garden network tour at Lincoln elementary. Teachers, students, and community members came together to learn about school gardens and how to get one started.

Once the school year started, SNAP-Ed hosted Garfield students in the school garden to harvest and plant vegetables. The preschoolers kicked off the Fall right with our first planting of garlic. The 3rd graders got the exciting task of digging up potatoes which we then turned into homemade mashed potatoes in the classroom. With the help of some committed volunteers, the Garfield Garden grew an abundance of cherry tomatoes and cucumbers which were served in the school cafeteria all throughout September. In collaboration with the WSU Extension Agriculture team, we hosted a Youth Farmers' Market at Garfield Elementary. We brought in a variety of local fruits and vegetables to set up a farmers' market in the school gym. All 3rd, 4th and 5th grade classrooms were able to shop at market with each student receiving \$14.00 in market tokens to spend. The Farmers Market event was a fantastic success, with over 150 enthusiastic students buzzing around the school gym. They eagerly moved from table to table, selecting fresh produce to bring home to their families. One excited 5th grader exclaimed, "My favorite part has been shopping all by myself. I have never done that before!" Another shared, "I can't wait to bring this home to my family. I'm going to cook something for them!"



Camas bulb planting for a new Camas Harvest Garden in north Thurston County.



Garfield Elementary students shopping at the 2024 Youth Farmers' Market



Produce display being set up at Garfield Elementary School. A full-van and truckload of produce (approximately \$5,000 worth) was purchased for the event with funding through the WSU BIOAg grant, through the Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources



Tierney Creech of Common Ground farm hosts visitors on the 2024 Thurston County Farm Tour. The group ate lunch at Common Ground Farm and learned about the history of the site.

## AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

Stephen Bramwell

### Highlights of agriculture Extension in Q4 2025:

**2024 Youth Farmers' Market:** 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students at Garfield Elementary received \$14 in tokens to “shop” from among \$5,000 in produce sourced from south Puget Sound Farmers through the SW Washington Food Hub. When asked between mouthfuls of carrot how they chose what to buy, students said “I’m buying this for my family,” and “we needed vegetables for my lunch.” Students were provided an incentive to visit the Olympia Market. Jim McGinn of Rising River Farm said he “really appreciated seeing kids buying veggies, and that they did a great job!”

In October WSU helped plan and coordinate a **farm tour through the Thurston County Agriculture Advisory Committee**. County Commissioners, Administrators, and others attended. Big thanks to Ken and Bonnie Miller, HJ Farm, MAK’s Garden, Wobbly Cart, Common Ground, James Rd Dairy, the Ag Park, and Riverbend Ranch for hosting!

During the fall, we helped establish a **Camas harvest garden**. The property is the traditional lands of multiple tribes, including the Squaxin and Nisqually. Nisqually Tribal members attended to help plant the Camas garden with bulbs.

Over the holidays WSU helped the Nisqually Tribe and the SW WA Food Hub launch a **local food procurement program**, delivering over 1,000 boxes of local food including from tribal-owned businesses, to tribal members.



Children's Garden volunteers after their class on sunflowers.



WSU Master Gardener and Master Recycler Composter volunteer Ralph Gross received the Presidential Service Award for giving over 600 hours of gardening service in 2024. In addition, he won Master Recycler Composter Volunteer of the Year and received his silver trowel award.

## WSU MASTER GARDENER & MASTER RECYCLER COMPOSTER PROGRAMS

Cori Carlton & Jenni Post

2024 was a busy one for the WSU Master Gardener and Master Recycler Composter Programs.

WSU Master Gardener and Master Recycler Composter volunteers hosted informational and activity booths at numerous events throughout the summer and fall. 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 also finished our Tumwater Library workshop series this fall. We are already planning our workshops for 2025.

Master Recycler Composter volunteers finished teaching their monthly in-person composting workshops at our demonstration gardens in November. We will resume teaching these workshops in March 2025.

Our Children's Garden program returned this summer. Children 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 2025.

Our 2024 Master Recycler Composter new volunteer training began on September 19. On November 14 they graduated from their classroom portion of their training. They will become certified volunteers after their 25 hours of community service is completed.

One of the biggest successes this year was completing phase one of a multi-year project to replace the irrigation systems in all three of our demonstration gardens. The Master Gardener Foundation of Thurston County fundraised over \$24,000 to replace the 35+ year old system at our Dirt Works Garden and Nursery in Yauger Park in West Olympia. The good news is that we are already seeing results and becoming better stewards of our natural resources. Our water bill for Dirt Works has already been lowered and the physical efforts of wrangling hoses is no longer necessary. In 2025 we will be upgrading the system at the Olympia Farmers Market Garden.

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.



Master Recycler Composter volunteers sharing waste reduction information at the Thurston County Fair.



Irrigation trenches were dug throughout the garden to lay the new water line.



(Left to right) Leah A., Maria K., and Charlotte P. on an equine tour in Kentucky. Joanne K. touring Churchill Downs racetrack and Kentucky Derby Museum. Leah A. on a behind the scenes racetrack tour. Joanne K. at ARBA Convention Awards Banquet

## 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

### Emily Killeen

#### Thurston County 4-H Youth Members Excel at National-Level Competitions

Thurston County high-school-age 4-H members recently traveled to Louisville, Kentucky to compete in National-Level competitions. These youth deserve a “Big Congratulations” as they brought home some top national honors. The Thurston County 4-H members first competed at the state-level to qualify to represent Washington State at Nationals.

Joanne K. attended the 101st American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA) National Convention and won First Place in the Individual Senior Judging Contest! Joanne writes “I was so surprised to learn I won first place because there were 174 Seniors from all over the United States in the Individual Judging Contest. I am thankful for all my years of 4-H participation in the rabbit and cavy projects as it helped me prepare for national-level competition. I learned a lot at the ARBA National Convention and had a chance to bond with my rabbit and cavy 4-H friends who live beyond Thurston County.”

Three Thurston County 4-H horse project members attended the Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup. The winners are: Charlotte P., 6th Place in Public Speaking; Leah A. and Maria K. with a Reserve Champion (2nd Place) in Team Presentation; and a Third Place Overall Presentations Team Award for Washington State 4-H! Leah A. writes about her experience: “I had the amazing opportunity to go to 4-H Nationals with one of my best friends, Maria, in our team presentation, “The Benefits of Dressage for Equines.” We started this presentation last December, and it grew so much over the past year. In Kentucky, we gave the best version of this presentation that we had ever done, and we became Reserve National Champions!!! This accomplishment is something I'm so grateful for and so proud of, and I am so thankful to Maria for being such a wonderful partner to have done it with.”

Competition in the 4-H Youth Development Program, such as at 4-H contests and county fairs, showcases 4-H youth project work to the public and supports life skill development among youth 4-H members. Through competition 4-H members put their communication, problem-solving, decision-making, and teamwork skills into action. Research tells us that youth who participate in 4-H contests and fair exhibition opportunities demonstrate a respect for fairness and inclusion, regardless of the competition outcomes. As youth gain 4-H project skill experience they can reflect on the outcomes of one’s choices, and for our teen members the 4-H motto of “Make the Best Better” becomes an act of self-determination.

Participation in the 4-H Youth Development Club Program provides local Thurston County youth (ages 8 to 18) opportunities to have their skills evaluated on a standard and receive recognition for their hard work. Youth 4-H members often share that the relationships they develop with their peers is a positive part of the competition experience. More information about 4-H competition is explained in A Developmental Framework of 4-H Competition for Volunteers by Michael Wallace, Extension Regional Specialist, Washington State University.



L to R: Maria K., Leah A., Charlotte P., and Coach Molly P. at Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup.



Joanne K. competing in the ARBA Senior Judging Contest. (front left)