



WSU EXTENSION
Thurston County

The Extension Connection

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE. CHANGING LIVES.

January - March 2025

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

1st Quarter 2025



Justin A. takes his goat through the 4-H Pack Goat Challenge course during a past Lacey Rotary Duck Dash.

What's
COMING UP IN
EXTENSION?

Lacey Rotary Duck Dash - June 7th
<https://laceyrotary.org/duck-dash/>

Southwest Washington Food Hub's Harvest Shares are available now! Sign up at <https://swwafoodhub.com/harvestbox/>

Upcoming Hedgerow workshops and events - May-June, 2025
<https://hedgerows.extension.wsu.edu/get-involved/>

2025 Plant Sales held between April 23-October 22 on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month from 10am to 1pm
At the Dirt Works Garden at Yaeger Park
Visit www.mgftc.org for more information

CAHNRS FOR



DIVERSITY | EQUITY | INCLUSION

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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WSU Ext./Native Plant Salvage volunteers save plants from forests on future construction sites prior to clearing & grading.

WSU WATER RESOURCES & NATIVE PLANT SALVAGE PROGRAM

Erica Guttman

The WSU Water Resources Program and its non-profit arm, Native Plant Salvage Foundation, received permission from three local land developers to recover plants from future construction sites prior to the forests being cleared. This “native plant salvage” effort has been a vital element of WSU’s Thurston County water resources and habitat programs since 1994, and occurs when plants are dormant, in the winter months, for best transplanting success.

Saving native plants is also a favorite activity for the program’s volunteers, who aren’t afraid of the cold weather and the rain (and sometimes snow!) that accompanies the work. For the 2025 season, 157 community members served 721 hours during six events, where they recovered thousands of native plants, including over 35 species of shrubs, trees, ferns, herbaceous perennials, and even mosses.

Volunteers are encouraged to dig plants for their own projects, and most of those volunteering take at least a few home to support landscaping projects that protect water and enhance habitat, including “naturescaping” and pollinator gardens, rain gardens, and hedgerows. Others are actively supporting community projects by transplanting the saved plants onto local park sites to fight invasive vegetation or to create learning landscapes at local schools, churches, and daycare centers. Additionally, a portion of the plants are placed into pots and cared for by the WSU/NPSF volunteers at a native plant nursery for future projects such as hedgerows, ecological restoration, naturescaping, or to financially support the entire WSU Water Resources/Habitat Program’s educational and operational expenses.

New volunteers are always welcome! Explore learning resources and sign up for classes or volunteer events [here](#).



Long-time volunteer and group leader Seth Orozco teaches successful plant salvage techniques to a group of new volunteers.



WSU Ext./Native Plant Salvage volunteers devote hours in the cold and rain to transplant newly dug native plants into pots to mature for use in future Thurston County projects, including agricultural hedgerows, naturescaping, rain gardens, and ecological restoration.



Students digging up potatoes at a garden work party in March

SNAP-ED

Amanda Leoni

SNAP-Ed has kicked off Springtime at Garfield Elementary in many exciting ways. We have brought our MyPlate Green Smoothie nutrition lesson to nearly every classroom in the school. We started with the third graders on St. Patrick's Day and it has become very popular across all grade levels.

We have hosted two garden work parties at Garfield and have many classrooms starting peas that we will be transplanting into the garden soon. We planted a new strawberry bed with students and are hopeful that we will get to eat some before school lets out for the Summer.

SNAP-Ed also presented at a lunch and learn nutrition class at the Salvation Army where participants learned creative ways to stretch their SNAP benefits.



Trays ready for students to make their own green smoothies



From left to right: Portuguese cattle; Themes for the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists; SWWA Food Hub Harvest Boxes on sale now!

AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

Annie Salafsky and Stephen Bramwell

WSU helped a large working group write and receive a **WSARE** public art grant called “Evaluating the Affective Power of Art to Increase Knowledge and Support for North American Rangelands and Pastoralists.”

Locally, WSU and The Olympia Camera Club will be traveling to four rangeland sites in our region for a series of photography field trips to working ranches, grass-fed livestock farms, and grassland reserves in Southwest Washington. Using the photographic medium, Camera Club participants will help tell the story of the grasslands and the stewards—ranchers, farmers, and indigenous communities—who work to conserve them.

Save the date! The first of these field trips is coming up on July 16th!

Stephen Bramwell, who is currently on sabbatical in Europe studying rangeland and pastoralists, helped form a coalition of many voices to tackle this ambitious goal. A network of colleagues in the U.S. Extension System, the Native American Rangelands Partnership, the Society for Range Management, international partners, and governmental and non-governmental partners was formed. Together, they will take part in celebrating the “2026 International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists” (IYRP) through various public art installations.

The goal of the **IYRP** is to increase public awareness of range/grasslands as highly threatened biomes and the role human communities play in stewarding these landscapes. Themes they will be exploring through multi-media will include:

- Grazing for biodiversity and ecosystem services
- Earning a livelihood on grasslands
- Traditional knowledge and culture
- Pastoralist women and youth
- Sustainable livestock products

WSU Extension, in partnership with Thurston County, is setting up a unique public-private partnership to utilize County land for both conservation and agriculture. The Early Blue conservation grazing site is being guided by grazing plans jointly developed and approved by a diverse steering committee of private ranchers, conservation groups, and public agencies. Grazing will be conducted by private operators and overseen by WSU agriculture faculty.

Goals for the site include diversifying habitat and increasing native prairie species while using livestock and other means available to private landowners. Early Blue has received internal cross fencing and expanded livestock watering infrastructure this spring in anticipation of privately owned animals grazing the site this spring and summer. Educational events and demonstrations will occur on-site and in partnership with the nearby agricultural park, Violet Prairie wildlife area, and neighboring private ranches. Goals for year one are to demonstrate non-chemical scotch broom management and establish working partnerships with neighboring livestock owners and voluntary steering committee members.



Happy WSU Master Gardener volunteers getting ready to plant at a community event.



Master Recycler Composter volunteers ready to answer clients questions on recycling, composting and waste reduction.

WSU MASTER GARDENER & MASTER RECYCLER COMPOSTER PROGRAMS

Cori Carlton & Jenni Post

We started 2025 with training a new group of WSU Master Gardener volunteers. Their training classes run through June 7. As part of their vegetable lesson the new trainees will be planting the raised beds at our Dirt Works Demonstration Garden. Food grown from these beds will be donated to the Thurston County Food Bank.

Our volunteers have been busy in the gardens with spring garden tasks. In March a new irrigation system was installed at the Olympia Farmers Market - Gallacci Garden. Volunteers worked hard ripping out the old irrigation system before the new one could be installed.

Volunteers have been serving a community events sharing gardening and waste reduction information. Our events schedule for 2025 is posted on our website. Events will be added throughout the year so check often for further details.

The Master Gardener Foundation of Thurston County twice a month plant sales begin in April and run through October. Visit www.mgftc.org for more information.

Do you have a gardening, composting, or recycling question? Our WSU Master Gardener and Master Recycler Composter volunteers can help. Please email your question to: master@co.thurston.wa.us



Plant Sale Nursery at our Dirt Works Demonstration Garden. Volunteers have been busy getting ready for the first Master Gardener Foundation of Thurston County Plant Sale.



Demonstrating how to properly plant bare root trees and shrubs at a community outreach booth.



Thurston County 4-H Teen Leaders attend the County Living Expo hosted by WSU Extension Skagit County.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Emily Killeen

Thurston County 4-H youth stayed busy over the winter with project practice and contest opportunities. A group of Thurston County 4-H teen leaders attended the Country Living Expo hosted by WSU Extension Skagit County. The teens will be taking the skills they learned at the Expo and offering workshops to their peers this spring and summer on topics such as flower arranging, drop spindle, and baking!

Event reports from our 4-H teens:

From Grace S. "...my siblings and I went to the Country Living Expo in Stanwood, and I really enjoyed how much I learned. The majority of classes I took were fiber arts where I got to learn about the whole process of turning a raw fleece into yarn. Two of my classes were about learning the process of cleaning the wool and I got to watch the instructor wash, skirt, and card the fleece. I also took a class with her about the different spinning tools and how they are each different.

From Sasha S. "...There were so many different classes to sign up for it was hard to choose. I did essential oils, spinning your own yarn, welding, and rabbit showmanship. The teachers were amazing and so helpful, my teacher for rabbit showmanship helped me when I was confused about how to pick one up.

From Marshal S. "Recently I went to a County Living Expo in Stanwood, Washington, with my fellow 4-H Friends. I loved it because there were so many classes to choose from. I took beekeeping parts 1 and 2, lefes, and arc welding. My favorite was either welding or beekeeping. I learned in beekeeping a lot about bees, like how to feed them, mating, swarming, and so much more. In arc welding, we welded on a piece of metal, and I did well..."



Grace S. learning to drop spindle (spin wool).