



WSU EXTENSION
Thurston County

The Extension Connection

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE. CHANGING LIVES.

April-June 2025

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

2nd Quarter 2025



Buckwheat pancakes at the Thurston County Fair

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What's
COMING UP IN
EXTENSION?

Thurston County Fair - July 31st - August 3rd
Find the details [here!](#)

Southwest Washington Grasslands & Grazing Photography Contest
- Accepting Submissions now through Nov 15th! Learn more at: <https://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/swwa-grasslands-arts>

Free Composting Workshops! Aug 9th, Sept 6th, and Oct 1st.
<https://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/gardening/composting/>

2025 Plant Sales held through October 22 on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month from 10am to 1pm at the Dirt Works Garden at Yauger 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.

Connect with us:



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From Left to Right: Students harvest lettuce from the school garden to make a salad on field day; Students planting squash, tomato and onion starts that were generously donated from Rising River Farm; Vegetables arriving at the Lewis County Food Bank Coalition from local farms.

SNAP-ED

Amanda Leoni

Spring quarter was extra busy for SNAP-Ed this year. For the first time, we had help from the entire school at Garfield Elementary with planting out the school garden. Rising River Farm generously donated over 50 plant starts which the students happily planted. They learned how to properly transplant starts from container to soil. Students especially enjoyed learning how to make “messy hair” with the plant roots before they placed them into the ground.

SNAP-Ed hosted three Garfield Garden work parties this quarter. Volunteers helped us with weeding and preparing the beds for planting. The first graders finally got to dig up the pumpkins they buried in the garden last Fall. The pumpkins had been filled with various items from the school cafeteria from milk cartons to apple cores. They were amazed to see how many plastic items were still recognizable, while the apple core and pumpkin had completely decomposed. This is a great lesson on composting and a good reminder as to why plastic needs to be thrown away in trash cans.

Towards the end of the school year, we taught a five-week nutrition class for the 5th graders at Garfield Elementary. The students learned how to make simple recipes, read a nutrition label, and the importance of eating a varied diet. The 5th graders reported that their favorite part of each class was cooking together and trying out new recipes.

SNAP-Ed hosted the entire school in the school garden on field day. The children got to explore the garden and harvest peas, lettuce, radishes and other goodies to make a delicious salad with a homemade vinaigrette. Yum!

The Lewis County Food Bank Coalition has continued to support local farms through the Farm to Food Pantry Grant and by prioritizing local purchasing. Farmers have been supporting the coalition's effort to get more fresh food into the nine Lewis County food banks by providing beautiful and abundant Spring produce on a very consistent basis. We were excited to partner with BHR again this year and offered a nutrition class for their clients. We made fresh hummus and talked about how to make a meal plan and budget for it at home.



25 WSU Master Gardener trainees graduated from their six-month training course on June 6.



Planting the raised beds at Dirt Works garden from April to June. All food is donated to the Thurston County Food Bank.

WSU MASTER GARDENER & MASTER RECYCLER COMPOSTER PROGRAMS

Cori Carlton & Jenni Post

25 WSU Master Gardener trainees completed their 6-month classroom portion of their training to become certified WSU Master Gardener volunteers on June 6. They will become certified volunteers after their 60 hours of community service is completed. Food is being harvested and donated to the Thurston County Food Bank from the raised beds the trainees planted in April.

Volunteers continue to serve at community events sharing gardening and waste reduction information. In May Master Recycler Composter volunteers celebrated International Composting Awareness week by hosting public composting workshops. We will continue to host monthly composting workshops through October. Check our website for further details.

Passionate about waste reduction? 2025/2026 Master Recycler Composter new volunteer training information will be posted on our webpage after August 1. Training runs from October 17, 2025 through March 20, 2026.

The Master Gardener Foundation of Thurston County twice a month plant sales run through October. Visit www.mgftc.org for more information. Revenues from the sales help support projects like the new irrigation system that was installed at our Olympia Farmers Market – Gallacci Demonstration Garden earlier this year. The new irrigation system is a perfect way to celebrate the garden's 30th anniversary in 2025.

Do you have a gardening, composting, or recycling question? Email our certified volunteers via our Question/Answer clinic at master@co.thurston.wa.us. Check our website for further details on our outreach activities and demonstration gardens.

AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

Annie Salafsky and Stephen Bramwell

In collaboration with the Ecostudies Institute and the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs, WSU Extension has helped develop a unique internship program for veterans interested in exploring local agriculture and regional conservation grazing practices. This 8-month paid internship offers hands-on experience at two key locations:

- Southwest Washington Food Hub in Chehalis
- Early Blue, a conservation grazing site in Tenino

Interns will receive a monthly stipend of \$3,200, gaining valuable skills and insights in sustainable food systems and land stewardship, and will be supervised by WSU Extension.

For more information and to apply, please visit:

[Internships | WDVA](#)

WSU Extension facilitated a Camas harvest with Nisqually Community Garden members, at the WSU planted camas garden at Meyer's Point Environmental Field Station. Camas bulbs were successfully dug, distributed, and replanted from the experimental plot, with more plantings and harvest planned for the future.

WSU Extension has delivered 50 pounds of nutritious, kid-approved buckwheat pancake mix to the Thurston County Fair for its beloved annual pancake breakfast!

This special pancake mix is the result of a collaborative effort between WSU Extension, Cascade Milling, and numerous school partners. Developed using Washington-grown ingredients, the mix has been extensively field-tested—earning enthusiastic approval from over 80 elementary school students who participated in taste testing.

The project is part of WSU Extension's broader mission to support Washington farmers while increasing access to high-quality, whole grain foods for school-age children across the state. Bringing locally grown and processed products to the community table, WSU Extension continues to bridge the gap between agriculture and education—one delicious pancake at a time.



Camas bulb harvest with the Nisqually Tribe



Early Blue Conservation Grazing Site



Buckwheat Pancakes at the Thurston County Fair



Thurston County 4-H Livestock Judging Teams (Junior, Intermediate and Senior teams) in Moses Lake on June 28, for the Washington State 4-H Livestock Judging Contest (annual statewide contest).

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Emily Killeen

Thurston County 4-H partnered with Lacey Rotary for their annual Duck Dash event at the Thurston County Fairgrounds. At the Duck Dash, event goers had the opportunity to see 4-H youth in action with horses, market livestock, archery, pack goats, and dogs. The Duck Dash event provided the perfect venue to hold the first in the Nation (as far as we know) 4-H Trail Dog obstacle contest! A team of Thurston County 4-H volunteers and staff developed the new 4-H Trail Dog Project guidelines, and youth from Thurston, Pierce, and Lewis Counties participated in the first ever 4-H Trail Dog Contest. The new 4-H Trail Dog Project focuses on outdoor skills, environmental stewardship, dog training, and animal science. The new 4-H Trail Dog Project will be part of the 4-H Showcase at the State 4-H Fair (Washington State Fair in Puyallup) over Labor Day Weekend.

Also, over the spring months, the new Thurston County 4-H Beekeeping project set-up their hives at the Brighton Park Grange. The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) interviewed Thurston County 4-H youth and shared a story about local youth on their blog and in social media, including highlighting the new 4-H Beekeeping project <https://agr.wa.gov/about-wsda/blog-posts?article=43947>.

At the end of June, Thurston County 4-H members traveled to the Grant County Fairgrounds in Moses Lake for the Washington State 4-H Livestock Judging Contest. Thurston County sent three teams who earned individual and team awards, including Third Intermediate Team for Sheep, Third Junior Team for Goats, and Third Junior Team for reasons. Congratulations to our 4-H Livestock Judging teams!



4-H Beekeeping project – setting up the new hive at the Brighton Park Grange.



New 4-H Trail Dog Project – May practice meeting.



Thousands of native and water-wise plants are organized into individual customer orders in advance of the drive-through pickups.

WSU WATER RESOURCES & NATIVE PLANT SALVAGE PROGRAM

Erica Guttman

WSU Extension's water resources & habitat program is supported through the hard work of committed volunteers of the Native Plant Salvage Foundation (NPSF), the non-profit organization that provides funding for the program's operational expenses. Bi-annual plant sales provide the majority of that funding!

NPSF's plant sales not only raise funds, they also provide community members with hard-to-find and unusual native and "water-wise" plants (plants that aren't native, but which have similar benefits, such as drought tolerance, no need for fertilizers or pesticides that harm groundwater, and more). Another mission of the sales is getting more of these green-landscaping plants out into our community, whether for ecological restoration projects, "naturescaping" at home landscapes, rain gardens, or hedgerows.

The plant sales include a lot of education about each plant, including: aesthetics, ideal growing conditions, best locations for planting for mature size, pollinator and other wildlife benefits, and best companion plants. Community members return sale after sale to add on to their native and water-wise planting projects with new species.

NPSF's plant sales feature online purchasing with drive-through pickups during a set appointment time. The fall sales typically go online during the third weekend of September and close the following Sunday night; the spring sales typically launch the third weekend of April. Pickups are scheduled Friday through Sunday during the first weekend in October or May, respectively, or by special appointment.

If you're looking for more plants for a special ecological project or just to see more birds and butterflies in your yard, visit nativeplantsalvage.org to check out plant sale updates.



Volunteers load and re-check each plant order for the drive-through pickups.



Longtime volunteers Dorothy Taylor & Heidi Engle fulfill an online plant sale order in advance of the weekend's drive-through pickup.