



WSU EXTENSION
Thurston County

The Extension Connection

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE. CHANGING LIVES.

July - September 2025

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

3rd Quarter 2025



Celebrating National Take Your Houseplant for a Walk Day at the Olympia Farmers Market.

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*What's
COMING UP IN
EXTENSION?*

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

Community Ethnoecology Seminar: Connections between European and Western Washington Grasslands and Grassland Conservation. January, date to be announced. Kick-off for the 2026 United Nations designated International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists. Have a downtown Olympia venue to recommend for this? Send your idea! bramwell@wsu.edu

Southwest Washington Grazing Association 2026 webinars, farmwalks, and social events. Information coming soon, check for details: <https://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/grazing-association/>

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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SNAP-ED

Amanda Leoni

SNAP-Ed had a busy summer quarter. Between tabling at Farmers Markets and working with students in the Garfield Elementary school garden, there have been many opportunities for nutrition education in our community.

Throughout the Summer months we worked with students at the SKIPP program. We harvested vegetables from the garden and made unique snacks in the cafeteria. Once school started, SNAP-Ed welcomed the students back with fresh watermelon slices in the cafeteria. Kids loved getting this tasty end of the Summer treat with their lunch.

Outside in the garden, students got to harvest cucumbers, bell peppers, and other veggies. We then made a fresh hummus dip to go with them. The third graders helped harvest all of the potatoes and then made home fries with bell peppers that were grown in the garden, too.

SNAP-Ed's funding is coming to an end next quarter, so we have also focused on responsibly transitioning our programming to community partners who might continue this work for us.



Students at Garfield harvesting sunflower seeds from a sunflower.



Students at Garfield harvesting potatoes



Youth Farmers Market Logo



Southwest Washington Food Hub
 by Nikki McClure



Like Halloween but with Vegetables!

AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

Annie Salafsky and Stephen Bramwell

Thurston County Agriculture Extension and SNAP Ed will be holding the second annual Youth Farmers Market (YFM) at Garfield Elementary school; third, fourth, and fifth graders will be able to “shop” for locally grown produce, observe cooking demonstrations, sample prepared foods, and take home recipes along with fresh fruits and vegetables. The Youth Farmers Market was the “best part of last year,” according to one Garfield teacher, the students really enjoyed choosing what to buy, and survey work showed that it influenced their eating habits. This year’s YFM features buckwheat pancake mix, which was developed through grant funded research by WSU Thurston County Extension and the WSU Breadlab, in order harness the potential of buckwheat to diversify our local diet and enhance our farming ecosystems. WSU Extension Thurston County continues to bridge the gap between agricultural research and industry and has helped Cascade Milling create a market for the buckwheat pancake mix, which will be sold to WA State schools and eventually at retail outlets such as PCC Markets.

Ag Extension continues to work closely with the Southwest Washington Food Hub, which they helped found in 2020. They helped the Hub, which is owned by 35+ local farms and value-added businesses, set up a box delivery program and create a local food program for the Nisqually Tribe. In the last year alone, the Hub’s revenue has grown by almost two million dollars, and the Hub has been able to hire 3 full time staff members. The Hub’s Fall Harvest Shares are currently available! Their Harvest Shares contain the best autumnal produce our region has to offer, with a wide variety of items to choose from each week! To find out more visit <https://swwafoodhub.com/harvestbox/>

Part-time Internship for Veterans at the Southwest Washington Food Hub and Early Blue Conservation Site:

The 20-hour a week internship offers hands-on experience for veterans interested in exploring local agriculture and regional conservation grazing practices. Interns will receive a monthly stipend of \$1,600, gaining valuable skills and insights in sustainable food systems and land stewardship, and will work in tandem with the current veteran intern.

For more information and to apply, please visit: [Internships | WDVA](#)



4-H archery project participants and 4-H club leaders at the Thurston County Fair.



Everett S. learning to make a traditional bow for his 4-H archery project. Everett's bow was exhibited at the Thurston County Fair and qualified for exhibit at the Washington State 4-H Fair (Puyallup).

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Emily Killeen

The summer months are a busy time for Thurston County 4-H clubs as it is fair season! Youth 4-H exhibits on display at fairs are the most recognizable elements of the 4-H Youth Development Program. Fair is a culmination of weeks, months, or even years' worth of learning, creating, and discovering through 4-H club participation. Fair is the public event, while the 4-H club is the complete package that supports 4-H member life skill development.

The days leading up to fair are filled with making, caring, and practicing. Many hours are spent preparing and beautifying the fairgrounds for fair goers. The opportunity to show and exhibit at the fair is a driving force that motivates youth to get up early, go out and work with their project animals, and improve their skills. It is the 4-H club, with caring adults serving as 4-H club leaders, that make the fair experience possible for 4-H members. Thank you to the many volunteers who help make the 4-H club program and the fair experience a success!

To illustrate the impact of the 4-H club and fair experience, the Thurston County 4-H Shootings Sports club (established in 2022), is captured in the photographs that accompany this article. To learn more about joining a Thurston County 4-H club, please email tc4h@co.thurston.wa.us



4-H archery project members preparing for the Washington State 4-H Fair.



Hunter Education course



Volunteers and workshop participants install the Broadfields Farm hedgerow as a learning and demonstration site.

WSU WATER RESOURCES & NATIVE PLANT SALVAGE PROGRAM

Erica Guttman

WSU's Water Resources and Habitat program, and its non-profit arm, Native Plant Salvage Foundation, are continuing a fruitful partnership with Thurston Conservation to provide direct technical assistance and resources to Thurston County agricultural producers to implement hedgerows. The backbone of this effort is the WSU-Thurston County [Hedgerows Toolkit](#), which provides a plethora of resources to successfully implement a hedgerow of any size for multiple benefits.

In October, the partnership collaborated with Broadfields Farm in south Thurston County for the fifth action-based learning event in this series to result in establishing a new demonstration hedgerow. This new hedgerow's primary purpose will be to support the health and improved production of beef cattle, as well as ultimately creating a "living fence" that will save the farmers time and expense in fence maintenance. The hedgerow will create shade for the cows, which studies have shown strongly correlates to healthier livestock, more successful live births, and reduced susceptibility to illnesses. The hedgerow will also support a more varied diet with the addition of pasture grasses that thrive in the shade of the hedgerow, and the hedgerow's woody plants reaching across the fenceline for cattle to eat; these new food sources will provide additional nutrients, enhancing livestock health. Secondary benefits of this hedgerow are creating a windbreak; reducing irrigation needs for both the pasture and the hay grown on the other side; providing habitat for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife; and protecting nearby waterways.

This newest addition to the demonstration sites will offer new opportunities for the partnership to learn more about best practices to inform future projects and continue to create ever-better hedgerow designs and implementation practices. The Broadfields hedgerow is the largest demo project since the program started in 2023. It is 1,500 feet long and will ultimately include at least 24,000 square feet of dense plantings — packing a lot of benefit into just a very narrow strip of land removed from agricultural production.

With funding from Thurston County's storm and surface water program and Washington Conservation Commission, the WSU/TCD team are also developing user-friendly tools where other farmers can learn from these ongoing demonstration projects, including costs, funding resources, hedgerow plants and overall design, maintenance requirements, lessons learned, and more. The first set of these will be available on the WSU-Thurston County [Hedgerows Toolkit](#) by summer 2026 to replace the existing mini case-studies.



Children's Garden volunteers after our buzz-tastic pollinator class.



MRC Joe is teaching a worm class at Dirt Works Demonstration Garden.

WSU MASTER GARDENER & MASTER RECYCLER COMPOSTER PROGRAMS

Cori Carlton & Jenni Post

This Summer the WSU Master Gardener and Master Recycler Composter volunteers have been busy managing our three public demonstration gardens and composting areas. A dedicated group of volunteers have been working on a multi-year project of labeling all the plants in our gardens. This project is helping our visitors and volunteers learn about plants they may not know.

At our Children's Garden program participants 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 recycling in the garden. It's been a stellar year for our food bank gardens. We are excited to see what the produce weights will be from our last harvests.

Volunteers also have been serving via our outreach booths and hosting composting and gardening workshops. One of the highlights was at the Thurston County Fair where record attendance kept our volunteers busy answering questions. We also celebrated "National Take Your Houseplant for a Walk Day" at the Olympia Farmers Market. A fun way to celebrate our indoor plants that don't get to spend too much time outside in the sunlight.



Master Recycler Composter volunteer Paul answering waste reduction questions at the Thurston County Fair.



WSU Master Gardener volunteers Nina and Ashtyn sharing gardening information at the Olympia Farmers Market.