



WSU EXTENSION  
**Thurston County**

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[extension.wsu.edu/thurston](http://extension.wsu.edu/thurston)

# WSU Thurston County Extension

## *Summary of Activities*



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
**EXTENSION**



# 2024



## WSU Thurston County Extension Leadership

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***Our efforts would not be possible without our program staff and numerous volunteers***



## Extension Programs: Organization Collaboration & Community Buy-In

11 Extension Educators positively impact Thurston County residents each year, providing research-based information and educational programs that give people the knowledge to improve health and livelihood. Leveraging County support, WSU Extension brings in resources from grants, contracts, fees, fundraising, and the University to develop and deliver locally-relevant programs.

In 2024, Thurston County provided **\$172,715** in support via the MOA and **\$447,054** from non-MOA sources (total **\$619,769**). WSU Thurston County Extension received **\$599,658** from WSU, raised an additional **\$349,257** in grants (total **\$948,915**), and facilitated **\$791,293** in volunteer service contributions. Combined County-WSU program value of **\$2,359,977!**

### Volunteer Support!

Trained, enthusiastic volunteers are an important part of WSU Extension programs. In 2024, WSU Thurston County Extension volunteers gave **approximately 22,745** hours of service\*, which is equivalent to **11** full-time employees. At an estimated volunteer value of **\$34.79** per hour\*\*, the service is worth **\$791,293**.

**\*Not all volunteer hours have been reported to the WSU Volunteer Database.**

**\*\*Source: Independent Sector, April 2025**



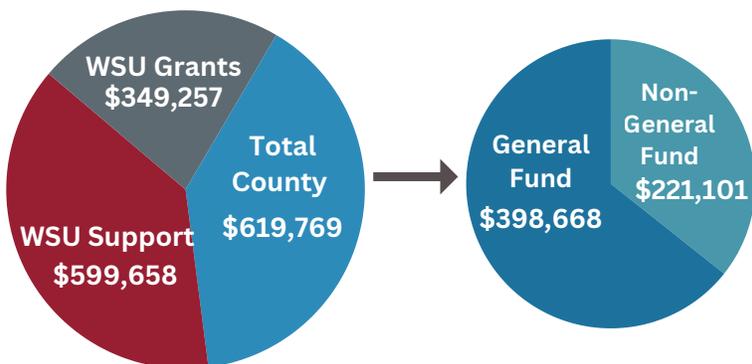
County Investment      Leveraged

\$791,293  
Volunteers

\$619,769  
Thurston  
County

\$948,915  
WSU

### Thurston County-WSU Funding Overview 2024



\*\*Budgeted County funds include space use, IT, phones, waste reduction program staff, front office staff, M&O, reserves, and other.

# Friends of Thurston County Extension

Three foundations support the WSU Extension programs in Thurston County: 4-H Youth Development Program, Master Gardener & Master Recycler Composter Program, and the Native Plant Salvage Project. Support is garnered through fundraising activities, accepting donations, membership fees, and other approaches.



**Thurston County 4-H Council** raises funds to enhance and expand 4-H Youth Development programs in Thurston County. The Council and Program Committees add value to the WSU Thurston County Extension program by providing grants for innovative programs, and subsidizing registration fees for camps, leadership conferences, volunteer leader training programs, and exchanges.

[extension.wsu.edu/4h/give-to-4-h](https://extension.wsu.edu/4h/give-to-4-h)



**The Master Gardener Foundation** of Thurston County, founded in 2005, encourages sustainable gardening and environmental stewardship practices through financial support for the WSU Thurston County Extension Master Gardener & Master Recycler Composter Programs. Major events sponsored by the Foundation include an annual Plant Sale on the third Saturday in May, a Bingo Night hosted by local gardening personality (prices are garden themed), and bimonthly meetings with educational lectures that are open to the public.

[mgftc.org](https://mgftc.org)



**The Native Plant Salvage Foundation**, founded in 2000, promotes the use, preservation, knowledge, and appreciation of native plants in the landscape through financial support for the WSU Thurston County Native Plant Salvage Project. The primary program areas of the project include: Green Stormwater Infrastructures (GSI)/Low-Impact Development (LID), Shoreline Stewardship Education, Schools Programs, Sustainable Landscaping/Naturescaping, Plant Salvages, and Plant Identification.

[nativeplantsalvage.org](https://nativeplantsalvage.org)

# Master Gardener & Master Recycler Composter

Program Coordinator: Cori Carlton, Program Assistant: Jenni Post



Volunteers are trained and certified as community educators to provide, professional, unbiased, research-based home gardening, composting, recycling and waste reduction information to the residents of Thurston County.

## 2024 in Numbers:

- **22** WSU Master Gardener trainees completed new volunteer training. Trainees participated in weekly classes and completed homework from January – June.
- **8** Master Recycler Composter trainees completed new volunteer training. Trainees participated in weekly classes and completed homework from September – November.
- **224** WSU Master Gardener and Thurston County Master Recycler Composter volunteers gave over **15,936** hours of service in 2024.
- **322** in-person and online question/answer clinics were held. From these clinics over **21,718** public inquiries for gardening, recycling, composting, and waste reduction information was recorded.
- **339** service parties were held to maintain demo garden, plant nursery and food bank garden operations.
- **42** virtual and in-person workshops were held. **1,453** people attended these trainings.
- A very dedicated group of volunteers grew over **2,000** pounds of food at our Dirt Works Demonstration Garden. All food was donated to the Thurston Co. Food Bank. Six new raised beds were also built this year.
- In addition to providing funding for two staff positions (1 FTE Program Manager, .5 FTE Program Assistant) Thurston County Solid Waste Department provided **\$7,152.53** worth of Master Recycler Composter program operating expenses.
- The Master Gardener Foundation of Thurston County (MGFTC) raised **\$77,042** through multiple fundraisers to help cover program outreach, operational and garden expenses. In addition, the Foundation received **\$3,500** in new grants,
- **\$4,840** in sponsorships, and **\$9,265** donations in 2024. They also funded a **\$24,255** irrigation system upgrade at our Dirt Works Demonstration Garden and Plant Sale Nursery.



# SNAP-Ed

Program Coordinator: Amanda Leoni



The SNAP-Ed program helps youth and families make healthy choices within a limited budget and lead active lifestyles through improved nutrition, food preparation skills, gardening, and physical activity.

## 2024 in Success Highlights:

- The Garfield School Garden engagement was the highest it's been in over 5 years
- The Youth Farmers Market Experience at Garfield was a huge success with 47% of students reporting that they tried a new food at the event.
- The Farm to Food Pantry Grant continues to strengthen local farms and provide food banks with fresh local produce throughout the growing season. As time goes on and farmers have more trust in the program, they have ramped up their efforts and have been donating about as much produce as they sell to the food banks.
- This year was the first time that SNAP-Ed hosted monthly cooking demos throughout the Summer at the Olympia Farmers Market
- Garfield Elementary 5<sup>th</sup> graders enjoyed being very important Buckwheat pancake taste testers which helped us narrow down which pancake mix to pursue and helped provide feedback which resulted in an overall tastier recipe.
- In the Fall, we served cherry tomatoes and cucumbers from the school garden on the salad bar in the school cafeteria for the first time.

## 2024 in Numbers:

- SNAP-Ed Hosted **61 different workshops** and cooking demos in the community reaching over **4,200** community members.
- **154 students** participated in the youth farmer's market with **42%** of students saying they have tried to eat more fruits and vegetables since the event
- Over **4,300** pounds of local produce was distributed to nine Lewis County food banks from seven different local farms

For SNAP-Ed, 2024 was a year filled with offering cooking demos at farmers markets, providing nutrition education to the community and helping to strengthen local food systems. SNAP-Ed continues to spend a lot of our time at Garfield Elementary. Each Spring SNAP-Ed teaches the Food Smarts curriculum to the 5<sup>th</sup> graders and hosts a variety of outdoor gardening opportunities in the school garden. Before Summer break, we partnered with the WSU Extension agriculture team to do a buckwheat pancake taste test in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. WSU Food scientists have been working with farmers and the Thurston County WSU Agriculture team to develop a local, organic pancake mix that is specifically designed to be served in school cafeterias. With the help of our Garfield 5<sup>th</sup> grade taste testers, we got incredible feedback on which mix was the best and we were able to improve the final recipe. SNAP-Ed also assisted in making a "how-to" video for food service workers who will be using the buckwheat pancake mix in their school kitchens. In the Fall, we collaborated with the WSU Extension Agriculture team and The Evergreen State College to host a Youth Farmers Market for 155 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Garfield Elementary. Many of the students chose to bring home Kale from the Youth Farmer's Market. Several of the students that purchased the kale said they learned that they liked kale after tasting it in the school garden. Over the Summer we hosted several students in the Garfield school garden from the SKIPP program. Each week students got to help harvest something from the school garden and then make a fun recipe in the cafeteria for a snack. Through the Farm to Food Pantry Grant, we strengthened relationships with existing farmers and food banks. Two new farmers joined our efforts and in 2024 over 3,100 pounds of local produce was delivered to the participating 9-food bank locations. This year we were allocated \$11,498.70 from the grant and secured an additional \$1,000.00 from private donors to increase our purchasing power.

# Commercial Agriculture

Program Coordinators: Stephen Bramwell, Annie Salafsky, Sierra Smith, Taylore Straight



The WSU Extension Ag program helps support **profitability and sustainability** of agriculture in Thurston County through:

1. Value-added production & marketing
2. Pasture, livestock, and habitat research and education
3. Agriculture workforce development

## In 2024 we:

- Taught several new local farmers with 85-student state cohort for Cultivating Success; half dozen with 92-cohort Ag Entrepreneurship course
- Provided program development, training, grant-writing for year-4 of the SWWA Food Hub that WSU co-established: \$277,792 in sales, 44% increase; 415 customers (317% increase)
- Collaborated with Cascade Milling (Royal City) to manufacture 1,700 lbs of WA-grown buckwheat pancake mix to 15+ school districts, 5 in TC (45% like, 20% neutral)
- Held Youth Farmers Market for 5th-graders at Garfield Elementary
- Facilitated creation of Conservation Easement factsheet
- Helped launch Hub food box with the Nisqually Tribe (clearing \$266,000 over the holidays)
- Helped hub make \$38,000 in prairie-raised beef sales

## 2024 in Numbers:

### Funding

We raise funds on top of those from WSU and Thurston County: **\$154,451** in 2024 from Dept of Defense Conservation Grazing, Western Coastal Restoration for SW WA Grazing School, Youth Farmers' Market WSU BIOAg program funding, and Pac Mtn Ag Labor Recovery

### Training and Projects

- **29** workshops including pasture walks, invited talks, soil health training, and new farmer training, including New Farmer Training and SW WA Grazing School
- **1,052** participants attended educational events

### Impact Highlights

- Planted **5,000 camas bulbs** with the Nisqually Tribe at Meyers Point to support cultural food harvests
- Secured funding through WSDA grants to **purchase reefer delivery** truck for SW WA Food Hub
- Held **2<sup>nd</sup> annual SW WA Grazing School** with 30-person course
- Purchased a new tractor and equipment to **establish conservation grazing at Early Blue** demonstration site
- Helped serve local **buckwheat pancakes at the Thurston County Fair!** "Directly puts money back into the County, and bee friendly"

# Water Resources & Native Plant Salvage Project

Program Coordinator: Erica Guttman, Program Assistant: Maggy Pollicino

## 2024 in Numbers:

### Funding

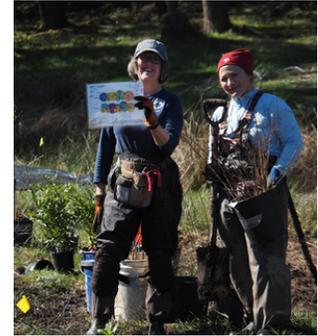
- Volunteer-based non-profit arm, Native Plant Salvage Foundation, raised over **\$140,000** in grants, contracts, and fundraising efforts to support program staff, AmeriCorps placement, and all program costs—including tools, equipment and trucks, supplies, plants, online education & communication tools, and nursery expenses.
- Impact of volunteer hours donated is over **\$152,500**—a significant community benefit for minor financial input.

### Training and Projects

- Through **127 separate field-based & classroom events** throughout the year, **501 volunteers** served **4,554 hours** in activities including plant salvage, plant propagation & plant care; ongoing maintenance of a nature trail used for education; hedgerow education & installation; training citizens in plant identification techniques; rain gardens; and maintenance of stormwater infrastructure.
- **1,187 learners** participated in field-based and online courses on topics including hedgerows, naturescaping techniques, rain gardens, and plant identification & ecology for multiple Western Washington ecosystems.

### Impact Highlights

- Over **13,000 native and water-wise plants** were provided to residents and used in demonstration hedgerows, water-wise landscapes, and rain gardens.
- Direct technical assistance resulted in the establishment of two new agricultural hedgerows, ultimately establishing **30,000 sq. ft.** of narrow buffer to protect water resources and create critical pollinator and other wildlife habitat, as well as multiple on-farm benefits.
- A partnership with **Thurston Conservation District** enabled expanded opportunities for external funding & broader outreach to bring hedgerows to the agricultural community.
- Over **36,500** visitors accessed online resources regarding hedgerows, naturescaping, rain gardens, native plants, & ecological restoration.



The main aims of the Water Resources/Habitat Program and Native Plant Salvage Project are to provide hands-on education to bring about on-the-ground changes that protect and conserve water resources and habitat, from the South Sound prairies to the shores of the Salish Sea. The program depends on external funding raised through contracts, grants, and fundraising by community volunteers.

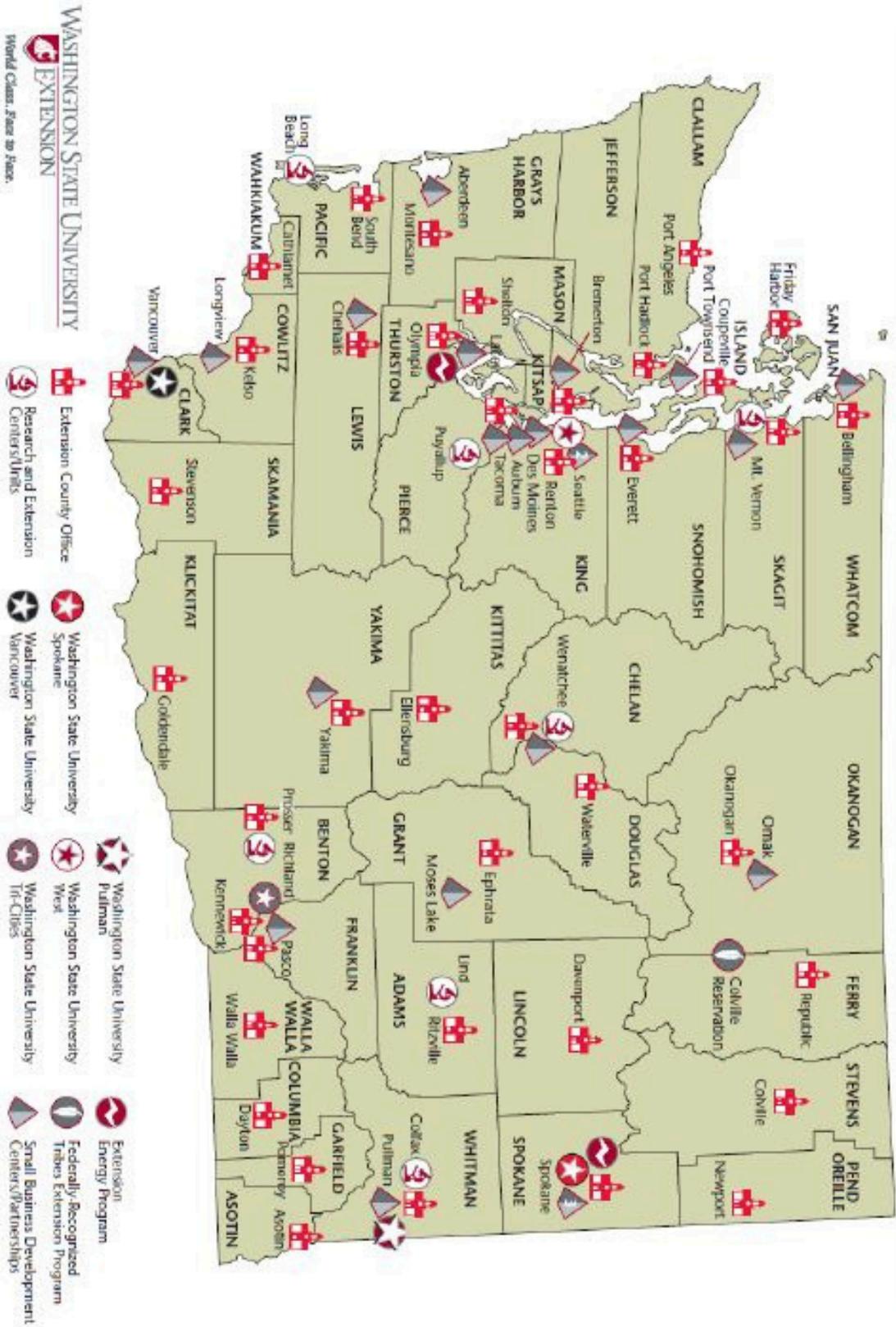
### Stormwater abatement and groundwater recharge:

By law, jurisdictions are required to educate their citizenry about stormwater pollution. Through workshops, volunteer trainings, demonstration projects, applied research, and technical assistance for onsite stormwater management techniques, our program supports local jurisdictions' efforts to realize on-the-ground changes that protect water resources and recharge aquifers.

**Habitat restoration:** Through revegetation projects and water-wise landscaping with native and drought-tolerant plants, we show citizens how to make changes to their landscapes that add value and protect water. To support the supply of affordable plants for these projects, we operate a volunteer-based native and water-wise plant nursery where residents receive training in propagation, salvage, and plant-care methods to support hundreds of local small-scale projects each year.

**Hedgerows for Rural & Working Lands Toolkit:** In partnership with Thurston County, this effort provides tools, hands-on education, and direct technical assistance to agricultural producers and others who need support for establishing narrow buffers through hedgerow techniques. These unique narrow plantings provide numerous benefits to farmers & ranchers, while protecting local waterways and supporting habitat, including beneficial insects and pollinators.

# Map of WSU Extension Locations



# The Smith-Lever Act of 1914

The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 codified into federal law and provided funding for outreach endeavors at the Land-Grant Universities founded by the Morrill Act of 1862. The act was introduced by Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia and Representative A. F. Lever of South Carolina to expand the vocational, agricultural, and home demonstration programs in rural America. Specifically, the Act stated as its purpose, “In order to aid in diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture, uses of solar energy with respect to agriculture, home economics, and rural energy, and to encourage the application of the same, there may be continued or inaugurated in connection with the college or colleges in each State, Territory, or possession . . .”

The appropriation for Cooperative Extension as established by Smith-Lever was unique in that it set up a shared partnership among the Federal, State, and County levels of government. A formula funding mechanism was designed to ensure that there was support from each of the levels to help the fledgling system achieve stability and leverage resources. The funding would flow from Congress to the **United States Department of Agriculture** and then out to the Land-Grant Universities to be matched with monies from the states and counties receiving programs.

The original formula called federal funding to be divided in the following manner:

- 20% shared by all States in equal proportions;
- 40% shared in the proportion that the rural population of each bears to the total rural population of the several States as determined by the census;
- 40% shared in the proportion that the farm population of each bears to the total farm population of the several States as determined by the census.

The unique nature of the Smith-Lever Act brought a systemic process for funding the on-going Extension education work that had been started in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by educators such as **Seaman A. Knapp, A. B. Graham, Jane McKimmon, and Booker T. Washington.**

The ideals espoused by these educators were transformative in the manner in which the Land Grant Universities saw their role in their state. The move toward a model of cooperative extension education allowed for professional educators to be placed in local communities in order to improve lives.

Although the original Smith-Lever Act was far reaching, it was later amended to be more inclusive of schools beyond the original funding for 1862 Land Grant Institutions. In 1971, Rep. Frank E. Evans from Colorado presented a proposal to USDA that amended the funding formula and gave an appropriation in the amount of \$12.6 million directly to the **1890 Land-Grant Universities** for research and Extension. Additionally, in 1994, there was a second revision to the language which added the **Tribal Colleges** in order to increase the system’s ability to serve Native American communities.

Current information regarding the Act and its applications in contemporary society can be found on **USDA’s website.**