



WASHINGTON STATE  
UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION



## KITSAP MASTER GARDENER

2014

### BY THE NUMBERS

- 273 certified WSU Kitsap Master Gardener volunteers
- 21 new Master Gardener volunteers trained
- 15,644 volunteer hours reported
- National volunteer hourly rate used to calculate \$418,007 labor savings for Kitsap County
- 5566 people received individualized help from MGs with 2980 specific questions answered.
- MG volunteer educators lead & coordinate 2 community gardens, one foodbank garden and 4 demonstration gardens
- 52 people take series of 5 Organic Vegetable Gardening Classes taught by 4 MG volunteer educators
- 6974.15 pounds of produce donated to foodbanks.
- 50 workshops for the public on stewardship of natural resources and environmental protection
- 100 percent of the 33 Kitsap MGs employed in the landscape/nursery/small farms industry are applying skills they learned with MGs to their livelihoods

## *Vegetable Gardening: food security, healthy choices, and community well being*

### ISSUE

According to USDA statistics, 49.1 million people lived in food-insecure households in the United States in 2013. This means the quality, variety or the desirability of the foods eaten were less than typical. (USDA Economic Research Service). From 2010 to 2014 the USDA Economic Research Service reported an increase of 46,453 households in Washington State who participated on a monthly basis in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp Program. This program is the nation's largest domestic food and nutrition assistance program for low-income Americans. In Kitsap, approximately 15,400 households participate in SNAP each month.

Statistics continue to show a need to supplement food banks with fresh and healthful produce, and many people are venturing into vegetable gardening for the first time to save money on groceries and increase the amount of fresh produce their families eat. This is evident through the increased demand for plots at the community gardens that WSU Kitsap Master Gardeners (MG) oversee and in the gardening questions Master Gardener volunteers receive from the local public.

### RESPONSE

Public education for *Organic Vegetable Gardening* for the beginning food gardener was developed by WSU Kitsap MGs in 2007 with scholarships offered to community members in need. In addition, MGs receive specialized training (known as continuing education) on the topic to educate the general public and community gardeners on current research based gardening practices to increase the gardeners' chances of successful harvests. The Organic Gardening Class is a 4 day series held each winter with an additional summer class on year-round gardening. From 2008 to 2014, 332 people have enrolled in the class.

Master Gardener volunteers taught edible gardening in 3 community gardens, 2 foodbank gardens and 4 schools. At our demonstration gardens and community gardens, 12 workshops were offered for adults and 25 were taught to youth. In total, 1313 youth participated in 34 hands-on classes taught by Master Gardeners, 369 of those in the City of Bremerton as part of the free summer lunch program. Master Gardeners hosted 242 plant diagnostic clinics where they answered the public's gardening questions using research-based information at 6 regular locations. 921 of the questions they were asked pertained specifically to edible gardening practices.



## QUOTES

**Master Gardeners share what they enjoy about participating at demonstration and community gardens:**

*"I like working with and sharing the potential of the gardens with local families. I like imparting information/educating others in practical life skills so others become self-reliant."*

*"Growing food for the food bank is a very important aspect for me. Also, I am at the p-patch (my own) many times during the week and I see people walk through our garden enjoying all of it."*

*"Maintaining a beautiful space that the community can enjoy, learn from and take with them to improve the quality of their own lives through gardening. To instill a love of the beauty of the environment that surrounds us by caring for, and adopting methods and practices that will help sustain our lands and waters for future generations."*

*"By volunteering at Raab Park Youth Garden, I get to see children learn & develop a passion for gardening early on, which I enjoy a lot! Their excitement is infectious! I also love being a part of something that is enjoyed by the entire Poulsbo community. Finally, the garden is a living, changing classroom where I continue to learn."*

## IMPACTS

Research shows that the more involved people are with growing their own food, the more likely they are to eat it. This correlates to a diet consisting of more fruits and vegetables, and evidence shows that gardeners eat more fresh produce than non-gardeners.

Studies of community gardens (also called p-patches) and their participants show more benefits to neighborhoods than just better access to fresh food and nutrition. Community gardens foster increased community involvement and pride among residents, increased neighborhood safety, increased activity and sense of well-being, and less isolation among residents. Community gardens also help people save money, preserve green space, and contribute to the urban food system. Additionally, community gardens bridge ethnic, economic, and age differences.

It is known that youth who participate in vegetable gardening are more likely to increase their intake of fresh produce and possibly reduce their risk of developing chronic diseases later in life. Youth also are inclined to share their newfound knowledge with their parents, possibly having a positive influence on the family's food choices. At our Raab Park Youth Garden in Poulsbo, parents who once attended as children or parents themselves are now bringing their own kids and grandkids to enjoy healthy outdoor learning, free of charge.

At 4 demonstration gardens and 1 foodbank garden, Master Gardeners planted and tended vegetables and herbs using organic methods, and as a result, were able to donate 6974.15 pounds of fresh and nutritious produce to 4 local foodbanks. MGs select the food crops they plant at the gardens based on feedback from foodbank staff regarding need and demand of foodbank customers.

In addition, recent research shows that on average community gardeners save \$435 on groceries per garden plot over the course of a growing season. Therefore, it can be estimated that the guidance provided by Master Gardeners in Raab Park P-Patch and Blueberry Park P-Patch has helped those community gardeners save a total of \$5,200 on groceries in 2014.