



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
Kitsap County



KITSAP FARM MENTOR PROGRAM

2021

BY THE NUMBERS

- 7 approved Farm Mentors from 5 farms across Kitsap County
- 8 intensive group classes delivered to approximately 24 interns in Kitsap
- 3 experiential farm walks offered in partnership with other farms across Kitsap in 2021



ISSUE

The number of small farms in Kitsap have been increasing, as well as the interest in sustainable farming across the region. Because of this, the need to train the next generation of farmers is ever pressing. Also, experienced farmers in Kitsap had for years been hosting interns separately, creating a siloed environment of learning for interns. WSU Kitsap Extension has helped support the development of a farm mentor program and has coordinated it since 2015, based off a model started in Jefferson County. The original program in Kitsap had limited capacity, providing limited resources to assist farm mentors in the education of their interns.

The Kitsap Farm Mentor Program now provides a multidisciplinary study into sustainable agriculture, providing curriculum support for approved farmer mentors.

RESPONSE

In 2021, WSU Kitsap was able to dedicate staff hours via the Food Systems Program Coordinator position in our Regional Small Farms program to support the Kitsap Farm Mentors. With this added capacity we were able to implement the newly redesigned programming, specifically focusing on supporting the Farm Mentors as educators. The program provides a multidisciplinary study into sustainable agriculture, providing curriculum support for approved farmer mentors across Kitsap County. Formal instruction is provided by each farmer mentor and WSU specialists. Individual farm mentors provide their chosen interns with comprehensive instruction in the operations of their own farm. Farm-based learning is then supplemented by monthly collective workshops in topics such as livestock systems, soil management, season extension, crop planning and integrated pest management.



IMPACTS

The focus on supporting the farm mentors in the program has enabled us to continue to grow their ability as teachers, and have an impact on the organizational and professionalism of the group. In this way, WSU Kitsap was able to provide administrative support, curriculum support and in person and online class facilitation for education topics in 2021. Seven approved Farm Mentors took part, with eight group classes and three experiential farm walks delivered to

interns from April to October of 2021. Classes included Season Extension, Beekeeping, Body Mechanics & Farm Efficiency, Soil Testing, Growing Flowers, Integrated Pest Management, Winter Crops, Racial Justice in Farming, and Crop Planning. In addition to group classes, Kitsap Farm Mentor interns are provided the opportunity to take part in all Regional Small Farms classes and programming free of cost.

Lastly, the farm mentor group approved one new farm mentor at the end of the year, and will work with them moving into 2022.

QUOTES



Lynn was amazing and I learned so much about body positioning and farm mechanics! Definitely an amazing class to have early in the season so that we can begin with good practices for the rest of our careers"

- 2021 Farm Intern thoughts on Body Mechanics & Farm Efficiencies Class

