



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
Kitsap County



KITSAP FARM MENTOR PROGRAM 2022

BY THE NUMBERS

- 8 approved farm mentors from 7 farms across Kitsap
- 9 intensive group classes delivered to approximately 16 interns
- 2 group farm walks offered in partnership with other farms across Kitsap in 2022

QUOTES

“ I appreciated that Renee and Betsy both gave an overview and then walked us around the farm to see the fruit beds. It made it easier to conceptualize how to actually grow and tend to the fruits. They also offered lots of helpful insights from personal experience growing them locally”

– 2022 farm intern thoughts on Growing Small Fruit group class and farm walk

“ Charles is awesome! I liked how he explained everything with lots of information/science but in ways I could understand, as someone with no bee experience. Definitely interested in learning more about bee keeping now. Thank you!”

– 2022 farm intern on Beekeeping group class

ISSUE

The number of small farms in Kitsap has continued to increase, as well as the interest in sustainable farming practices across our region. Because of this, the need to train the next generation of farmers is ever pressing. Experienced farmers in Kitsap have been hosting their own interns for years, creating a siloed environment of learning for those interns. In 2015 Kitsap Extension helped support the development of a farm mentor program providing resources and additional capacity to farmers with interns, focused on providing collaborative group class offerings.

RESPONSE

Since 2015 WSU Kitsap Extension has helped support farmers as mentors through the Kitsap Farm Mentor program. This program focuses on supporting approved farm mentors as educators. Individual farm mentors provide their chosen interns with comprehensive instruction in the operations of their own farm businesses. Farm based learning is then supplemented by monthly collective workshops in topics such as livestock systems, soil management, season extension, crop planning, integrated pest management and more.

In 2022, WSU Kitsap Extension was able to continue to dedicate staff hours via the Food Systems Program Coordinator position under the Regional Small Farms program to support the Kitsap farm mentors. The coordinator was able to provide administrative and facilitation support to the group as well as resources and build out of their curriculum for group classes.

IMPACTS

Due to the support provided by WSU, eight farm mentors were able to take part in the program with delivery of nine group classes during the 2022 farming season. Class topics included: season extension, body mechanics & farm efficiency, apiculture, small fruit production, growing flowers, winter crops, racial justice in farming, crop planning and soil fertility. Additionally, two intern group farm walks were conducted on partner farms to showcase other operations and business models.