



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
Kitsap County



KITSAP FARM MENTOR PROGRAM 2023

BY THE NUMBERS

- 7 approved farm mentors from 6 farms across Kitsap
- 10 intensive group classes delivered to 8 interns.
- Interns provided opportunities to attend all additional Regional Small Farms classes throughout the season.

QUOTES

“ The farm mentor teaching the class was awesome and thorough! Very knowledgeable”
– 2023 Intern in response to Farm Planning Business Class

“ Learning more about the composition of the spine, what a bulged/herniated disc is and talking about 'what's normal vs pushing too far', really helped me visualize and get on board with treating my back properly.”
– 2023 Intern in response to Body Mechanics Class

ISSUE

The number of small farms in Kitsap has continued to increase, as well as the interest in farming and 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 in the county providing educational 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 while training the next generation of farmers. 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, delivered by the farm mentor group, in topics such as livestock systems, soil management, season extension, crop planning, integrated pest management and more. Through this program farm mentors provide their interns access to multiple farms with differing business models and farm practices, allowing them to not only glean information from their host farmer but from other farm mentors in the group. Additionally, the intern group functions as a social network providing a more well-rounded experience and connection to other new and beginning farmers in Kitsap County.

IMPACTS

Due to the support provided by WSU and the dedication of the farm mentor group, eight (8) farm mentors were able to take part in the program with delivery of ten (10) group classes to 8 interns during the 2023 farming season. Class topics included: season extension, body mechanics, farm efficiency, farmer suicide prevention and mental health, small fruit production, crop planning, integrated pest management, no-till farming, business planning, and soil fertility.