

4-H youth gardening

Giving Youth the Tools to Grow



4-Hers exploring the potatoes growing in the garden at the Enumclaw Expo Center.

Photo: C. White

Program Goals

-Develop a strong network of individuals and community organizations to support 4-H Youth Gardening

-Create opportunities for youth to build life skills through gardening

Overview

The 100+ year history of 4-H began with a group of youth learning research-based corn farming methods, applying them within their own private farms and spreading that knowledge to their families and neighbors by providing successful examples. Fast forward to present day, much of the population is located in urban centers and many view growing things as a hobby for gardeners. Now, following some of the toughest economic times in recent history, gardening has become increasingly popular amongst the residents of King County, not just as a hobby but as a tool for more of an affordable and sustainable lifestyle. And true to our roots, 4-H is there to meet the needs of the community by giving youth the tools to benefit their families and communities.

The 4-H philosophy of learning by doing translates well in the garden setting, especially in the urban environment. 4-H youth get the opportunity to get their hands dirty by planning, planting, and maintaining a garden themselves; learning how to grow their own food based on the most current research done at the University and, in the process, developing a greater sense of the world around them. By using the garden as a hands-on learning tool, youth apply the subjects learned in school and get the chance to watch their time and efforts pay off.

Positive youth development in 4-H is about using project content to build life skills. The 4-H Gardening Project not only teaches gardening techniques but leadership, critical thinking, problem solving, organizing, team work, service learning, and healthy lifestyle choices as well. The youth are responsible for the success of their garden, with the results of neglect or prosperity visible almost immediately, making gardening one of the most rewarding teaching tools for any community member.

Highlights

In the healthy community-building spirit of 4-H positive youth development, 4-H has partnered with many local organizations motivated to serve youth with a garden project. Through these partnerships, 4-H has been able to reach many new audiences. 4-H has lead the way by connecting the dots and always striving to reach the goals of simplicity, sustainability, and success within each partnership and project. The following strategies were used to promote this project:

- Supervising two AmeriCorps members that volunteered over 2,000 hours to supporting the 4-H Gardening Project



4-H members building and planting a garden at the Enumclaw Expo Center. (Photo by: F. Ziegler)

Highlights Continued...



A glimpse of the seasons first tomato from the Enumclaw Expo Center 4-H Garden. Photo: C. White

4-H is a **community** of **young people** across **America** who are learning **leadership, citizenship and life skills.**



Cedar Grove Compost donated over 200 square feet of compost to the Enumclaw Expo Center 4-H Garden.

Photo: C. White

- Sending two 4-H representatives to the WSU KC Extension Master Gardener Training Series and committing to an additional 90 volunteer hours in support of this program
- Facilitating a “4-H Gardening with Youth” experiential workshop attended by over 45 people from various organizations in the community such as Seattle Parks and Recreation, Nature Consortium, and Master Gardeners
- Assisting in the development of a 4-H web presence including a Google map of all 4-H Clubs and King County Extension supported community gardens, as well as content for the new web site
- Providing direct service to 4-H Garden Project sites, including the building of a new 4-H demonstration garden at the Enumclaw Expo Center for the King County Fair and youth programming at approximately eight Seattle Parks and Recreation Community Centers
- Building sustainable and lasting projects and connections within the diverse programs offered by WSU King County Extension, such as providing Master Gardener Teaching Kit trainings to 4-H Garden Project leaders

Stay Tuned!

4-H is committed to the growth and success of the 4-H Gardening Program. Through the development of even more partnerships with organizations in the King County community such as Seattle Tilth and the King County Housing Authority, we hope to reach an even larger and more diverse audience with positive, experiential learning opportunities.

“Thank you! This and the workshop were very helpful!”

–Amy Pille, The Nature Consortium, about the 4-H Youth Gardening Workshop and 4-H Curriculum.

“I learned about how to ask follow up questions after an activity by watching how Caitlin did it with us. I did it with my youth and it worked really well to get them talking and thinking and applying what they learned. Thank you!”

- Jen Baron, AmeriCorps Member from King County Housing Authority

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