



# Thurston County

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES — MAY 2020

## 4-H PROGRAM

Thurston County 4-H held a Virtual Photo Contest and a Virtual Animal Costume Contest. We received 21 entries, and the top winners were awarded \$15.00 gift cards to the 4-H Mall and 4-H clover keychains. Prizes were donated by a 4-H volunteer. We also implemented our first District

Level Public Presentation session. 4-H clubs are meeting virtually, even holding craft meetings and dog practices. Additionally, due to the cancellation of the 2020 Thurston County Fair, 4-H staff has been working with a statewide committee to create resources and guidelines for counties to hold a 4-H Virtual Fair Showcase. Such a showcase will give 4-H youth a means to share the message of what they have learned about their project and the industry represented.

On the administrative side, since the 4-H program will remain "Virtual" until Thurston County reaches Phase 4, we are continuing to work remotely. We are responding to voice mails and e-mails daily. Additionally, enrollments are still coming in. In May we accepted twelve new youth in 4-H, with six of them being first timers! We continue to communicate, through ZOOM, with other Washington State 4-H administrators and network with other counties, to make sure Thurston County's 4-H program is aligned with WSU's policies as well



## AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

Through April and May the WSU Thurston County Extension agriculture program has been ramping up the field research season. The team started planting potatoes for a wireworm pest management trial at Pigman's Organic Produce in the Nisqually Valley on May 13<sup>th</sup>. The work is part of a regional research trial in San Juan, Skagit and Thurston Counties evaluating biological controls for wireworms, which are pests of onions, potatoes, carrots, lettuce, wheat and other grains, and other crops. This is the third of a three-year trial funded by the USDA Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program.



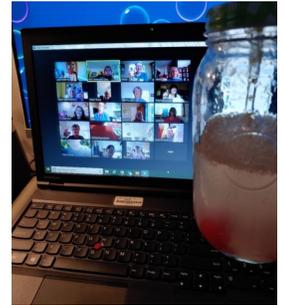
## MASTER GARDENER — MASTER RECYCLER/COMPOSTER

The Master Gardener program received "essential business" authorization to work in our demonstration gardens that provide food to the Thurston County Food Bank. Above are the Master Gardener volunteers showcasing their social distancing while sporting festive masks and gloves on our first planting day. To date over 25 raised beds have been planted. Being an essential business only allows food production work, so mowing the grass and other maintenance at the demonstration gardens is put on hold until we move into Phase 2 and 3.



Unlike everyone else, the last few months have been filled with Zoom meetings. I think it is great how our MG's and MRC's engage on Zoom. Before a recent MRC meeting, volunteers introduced their pets with each other. The MRC volunteers pictured here, in the top-right and top-middle, are fostering rats from Animal Services. The cat in the middle is not to sure about these rats joining the meeting."

Since our Annual Spring Plant Sale had to be cancelled, we recently held a virtual Plant Sale "Happy Hour" instead. Volunteers took a virtual trip through the Plant Sale, played trivia, and shared stories of past sales. We ended with a toast of cherry lemonade to what would have been another great Spring Plant Sale. The Master Gardener program hopes to have a smaller plant sale in the fall to make up for the anticipated loss of revenue of \$35,000. When you are handed lemons, make lemonade and add some cherries to make it festive. Cheers to next year!



## SNAP-ED

Just as we began to prepare our school gardens for planting, COVID happened and school closed. Everyone scrambled to adjust, and the gardens became inaccessible. Not wanting a season to go by without planting the garden, SNAP-Ed collaborated with Garfield Elementary teachers to build seed-starting kits for students to start plants at home. Once big enough, the children could bring their starts to the school garden to transplant.

To date, we have distributed over 120 seed-starting kits, including 1st grade bean kits, 2nd grade pumpkin kits, and 3rd grade cucumber kits. The 2nd grade pumpkin patch will tie into their fall science lesson on pumpkins.

These kits not only provide starts for our school garden, which increases fresh food access for our families, but also gives our students a break from online studies with a fun, hands-on, science-based activity. Many of our families are reporting this is the first year they have ever grown seeds, and they are excited with this new skill.