WELCOME TO THE NEW YEAR!

MEET OUR NEW DIRECTOR!

We are thrilled to have Amit Sharma as our new Director of Extension. Amit has a PhD in Education from Michigan State University and has worked with diverse partners all over the world. His research has focused on ways young people can be joyfully engaged with learning through play.

Amit sees the Extension mission as aligned with his own goals: to work in community with a solid grounding in research. Amit is excited about the strong sense of community here in Jefferson County, and is keen to build on these strengths. He is eager to help Extension partner with, improve and strengthen existing programs, while focusing on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Amit’s leadership style is to stay flexible, respond to situations as they arise, and step into different leadership roles as needed. He is inspired by Gandhi’s idea of service (seva), wherein we are trustees of the responsibilities we have been given. He sees our work as situated at the intersection of three areas: the research expertise that WSU Extension offers, the needs and opportunities at the county level, and the skills our own Extension team has to offer.

Not surprisingly, Amit is a creative person who loves to cook and bring people together around good food. He loves music, Urdu poetry, and has some experience in theatrical performances, including street performance as activism. The next time you see Amit, please extend your warm welcome. We are so grateful he is here!
2023 ROUND-UP

In the past year, our Extension programs engaged hundreds of people in Jefferson County communities. From 4-H to Farm Tours, shorelines to schools, and gardens to grocery stores, Extension helps empower our communities.

WATER AND NATURAL RESOURCES

WSU Jefferson County Extension provides outreach and educational resources for anyone interested in caring for our water and natural resources. Special training programs and research-based publications offer guidance for protecting natural resources associated with streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, estuaries and marine waters. These include the Beach Naturalists and Stream Stewards training programs, as well as the ongoing efforts of the Jefferson County Marine Resources Committee (MRC).

In 2023, Water and Natural Resources trained 96 community volunteers through the Beach Naturalists (77) and Stream Stewards (19) programs. The MRC onboarded five new members, supported four internships, engaged over 850 public members through education and outreach efforts, and forwarded local marine conservation efforts with over 1,900 volunteer hours contributed by MRC members and the broader community. With the help of many community partners and volunteers, the MRC installed a bioswale at the Old Alcohol Plant Inn in Port Hadlock and a rain garden at the Swan School in Port Townsend; oversaw the delivery of 1,200 bags (approximately 40 cubic yards) of clean shell that volunteers helped spread to function as substrate for native oyster larvae to settle on and grow; and revived pre-covid in-person, on-the-beach education events focused on sustainable and safe shellfish and seaweed harvesting.

In the Stream Stewards 5-week Program, participants learn about salmon life cycle and habitats, stream ecology and restoration, stormwater management and more. Learning is then applied through volunteer opportunities. Registration will be available soon, so keep your eyes on www.nosc.org or sign-up for their monthly newsletter.
4-H

Our 4-H year was full of growth with many new club leaders, volunteers and participants. Our fair season was super successful. We sent 6 4-H’ers to the State Fair, and had a blast sharing knowledge at the Jefferson County Fair. New clubs are currently forming, and opportunities for involvement abound! (contact Anji Scalf at anji.scalf.wsu.edu)

In 2023 Regional Small Farms offered 25 farm-related workshops and events and we are planning more for 2024. Topics will include farmer wellness, marketing, farm taxes and bookkeeping, and designing online courses.

In late October, we co-hosted the 2023 Tilth Alliance Conference, which took place at Fort Worden in Port Townsend. The theme of the conference and the associated science symposium was Integrated Pest Management. The 375 attendees had a chance to learn, build community, and celebrate accomplishments through their participation. For more coverage of this event, see the Clallam County story here. The Tilth Conference in 2024 will be held in Vancouver, WA, celebrating 50 years as an organization!

In December, we distributed Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as handwashing stations, respirators, N95 masks, surface sanitizer and more, to 25 Jefferson County farms. This was made possible by grant funding leftover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This equips farms with useful resources to promote worker and visitor health and hygiene for general food safety practices, as well as protection during smoky wildfire seasons, and for general preparedness.

Lex Helbling of Goosefoot Farm picks up a handwashing station and other PPE
In 2023, the Noxious Weed Control Board set out to control as many noxious weeds as possible. Through work from staff, and two AmeriCorps Crews, we controlled over 150-acres of noxious weeds in Jefferson County.

A highlight of weed control is always the outreach component that helps to advise landowners and managers in the ways they can prevent and control noxious weeds. One success story of the 2023 was a landowner who was able to do Early Detection and Rapid Response on an infestation of the Class A weed, milk thistle. While every part of this plant is medicinal, if left unchecked in your garden, it will create dense, spiny thickets and can create nitrate poisoning in livestock. Thanks to their ability to recognize the weed as a threat and their quick ask for help from the Weed Board, the infestation is under control and monitoring by both parties.

Noxious weed control takes a village! For large infestations, hand-pulling weeds takes an intense amount of labor. The Weed Board was grateful to volunteers who helped with a poison hemlock pull at Blue Heron Middle School. Together, we removed over 300 pounds of poison hemlock along public trails and school grounds.

Left: Flowering spurge laurel, a noxious weed that blooms in January and February.
Cultivating Plants, People and Communities since 1973

Last year the WSU Master Gardener volunteer program celebrated its golden anniversary, marking 50 years of dedicated service by volunteers in environmental stewardship. Over the past half-century, Master Gardeners have been at the forefront of sharing their expertise and passion for gardening with communities, making a lasting impact on the horticultural landscape.

Who We Are

Our 55 volunteers are engaged throughout Jefferson county: working in Food Bank and school gardens; maintaining city and county parks & rain gardens; writing news columns; presenting to organizations; and serving as advisory board members for a variety of environmental oriented organizations.

Connect with Us

As part of our ongoing mission to promote environmental stewardship and community engagement, we are excited to host "Ask a Master Gardener" clinics year round at the Port Townsend Library on the 1st Tuesday each month from 12 - 2pm; and at Port Hadlock Library on the 2nd Saturday from Mar - Oct. This provides an excellent opportunity for gardening enthusiasts and novices alike to seek advice, troubleshoot issues, and consult directly with seasoned Master Gardeners.

Classes and Workshop

Master Gardener program hosts horticulture classes and workshops throughout the year.

- “Growing Groceries” Classes and Workshops Spring and Fall
- Free Lectures: the 2nd Thursday of the month at 3:00 PM Jan-May, Sep-Nov at WSU Classroom, 97 Oak Bay Road
- Seed Library: Check out seed at Jefferson County Library (on-site and bookmobile) Mar—Aug
- Jefferson County Fair: 2nd Weekend in August in the Horticulture Bldg
- Presentations upon request
We’re looking forward to sharing events, workshops, trainings and tours in 2024! Please reach out to any one of us (contact info below) to get involved!

One of our goals in the coming year is to review and reassess our work. We want to make sure we understand the needs of the community so we can offer the most relevant support. We hope to engage with all of you as we reconsider who we are, what we offer, and what we all build together.

A huge thanks to all of the volunteers, participants and partners who helped make Extension work possible this past year! We could not do what we do without you! You are Extension.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Please consult our online calendar for more upcoming events.

1ST TUES EACH MONTH
“Ask a Master Gardener“ clinics at PT Library

JAN 22 Farmer Stress Assistance and Wellness Event

FEB 15 Youth Mental Health Resilience & Suicide Prevention

LOOKING AHEAD:
HOW CAN EXTENSION EVOLVE?

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OUR TEAM

Director
Jefferson County Director: Amit Sharma, amit.sharma1@wsu.edu

Program Coordinators
4-H & Youth Empowerment Coordinator: Anji Scalf, anji.scalf@wsu.edu
Master Gardener Coordinator: Bridget Gregg, bridget.gregg@wsu.edu
Regional Small Farms Coordinator: Kellie Henwood, kellie.henwood@wsu.edu
Water Quality and Natural Resources: Bob Simmons, simmons@wsu.edu
Water Programs Coordinator: Monica Montgomery, monica.montgomery1@wsu.edu
Noxious Weeds: Sophie DeGroot, sdegroot@co.jefferson.wa.us

Administrative Staff
Administrative Clerk: Kay Gaul, karen.gaul@wsu.edu

Goofing off on Halloween: we collectively dressed up as a farm!

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