

## **2023 year in review**

### **December 2023**

The WeGrow Garden is an urban garden in the heart of Bellingham comprised of 32 raised beds, fruit trees, composting systems, and native and perennial plantings that support pollinators and enhance green space in our urban core.

The garden is a successful collaboration between the WSU Whatcom County Extension, City of Bellingham Parks, and over a dozen schools, non-profits, and business partners. WSU WeGrow is dedicated to increasing food security, demonstrating sustainable practices, and providing space for community education, youth programs, vocational training, and public engagement. Whatcom County Agriculture is rich in tradition and production and the WeGrow garden creates connections with farmers large and small by training youth and residents to understand and value the crops that sustain them.

WSU WeGrow provides low-barrier vocational training and education by partnering with WSU Whatcom Master Gardeners. Together we plant, grow, harvest, and distribute produce to those in need. As a Bellingham Food Bank Victory Garden, we donate over 1000 pounds of produce each season. The garden also serves as an educational space for school groups, non-profit youth agencies, and the public. Showcasing how food is grown and managed is critical to a resilient community. As a vibrant living lab for horticultural learning, we seek to build on our successes each year and expand our partnerships, classes and public access.

### **COMMUNITY EDUCATION - PUBLIC EVENTS**

#### **Hosted 12 PUBLIC EVENTS**

**685 PUBLIC PARTICIPANTS**

**35 HOURS OF PUBLIC PROGRAMMING**

- Drip Irrigation installation and demonstration with Watertec, Inc.
- WSU Composting workshops and demonstration.
- Educational Demonstration Days
- AmeriCorps Common threads school garden plant Lab
- Rotary club presentations about WeGrow Garden
- Whatcom Farm tour with Sustainable Connections – Urban Farm stop
- Botanical Dye workshops with local artists.
- Weed ID Classes
- Cover Cropping and Harvest Days

### **YOUTH EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING – SCHOOLS public/ private & CAMPS – outdoor classroom**

School Programs participated during the growing season (March- October) on a weekly basis.

- 15 school visits
- 400 Participants, worked in the garden with teachers, staff, families.
- 885 Contact Hours with Whatcom County students

Assumption Catholic school—8<sup>th</sup> grade class

Options Highschool

Explorations Academy

Wild Whatcom

Bellingham HS Life Skills classes

Bellingham Parks Summer Teen Camps

WWU students

**VOLUNTEERISM** over 500 hours of volunteering in the garden. Twice a week work parties included teaching youth and adults.

- **Activities included:**

- Garden production: preparing planting beds, planting, harvesting.
- Garden maintenance: weeding, composting, bark mulching
- Public education
- Prepping and eating with freshly harvested produce.

**FOOD SECURITY - FOOD BANK CONTRIBUTIONS**

- 1200 pounds of fresh produce grow and donated to Bellingham Food Bank
- 34 Harvest dates from June – October
- Produce included: squash, potatoes, tomatoes, green beans, tomatillos, peppers, cabbage, cucumbers, onions, rhubarb, garlic, leeks, beets, kale, cauliflower, radishes, apples, berries, Flowers, lettuce, herbs.

**FUNDING, PARTNERS, DONATIONS, GIFTS, GRANTS in 2023**

- Whatcom Master Gardener Foundation \$1,000
- Bellingham Rotary Gift \$1,000
- Webb Foundation Grant \$1,000
- City of Bellingham Parks lease space, maintenance support
- In Kind Donation from multiple volunteers & businesses

**2024 Goals**

- Expansion of youth enrichment to include home school groups.
- ADA compliance making the garden more accessible to the elderly and those with disabilities.
- Maintenance and repairs to existing raised beds, installation of a few new metal raised beds each year, as funding allows, beginning in 2024.
- New demonstrations, classes (eg., container gardening for planting fruits and veggies in small spaces)

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

The garden is located on a high use public trail and adjacent to Whatcom Creek, the Bellingham Food bank, and local businesses. It is within walking distance of 4 schools and the bus line. The public benefits of this garden are direct and indirect. The value of a space for all to come and enjoy and learn is just as important as the beauty and stewardship that is offered. A sense of pride in the downtown corridor.

For more information and to get involved visit;

<https://extension.wsu.edu/whatcom/hg/we-grow/>



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*Special thanks to our Local Partners/ donors and many more...*

