

### Extending Knowledge. Changing Lives.

WSU Extension is a unique educational partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the nation's land-grant universities, and county governments. WSU Extension engages people, organizations and communities through programs that advance knowledge, economic well-being and quality of life. In Washington, the Smith-Lever Act has stimulated innovative research and vital

educational programs for youth and adults on a wide range of topics, including agriculture, gardening, economic development, parenting, nutrition, sustainable development, sustainable energy and more. WSU Extension focuses on applied research and outreach to solve high priority problems in the region. As the front door to the University, WSU Extension provides noncredit education and degree opportunities to individuals throughout the state, empowering residents to pursue their interests, develop their talents, support their families, and improve their communities.



### **Locations and People**

WSU Extension has 52 locations across the state, including every county and the Colville Reservation; Research and Extension Centers in Puyallup, Mount Vernon, Wenatchee and Prosser; Research and Extension Units in Lind and Long Beach; and campuses in Pullman, Spokane, Vancouver, Tri Cities and Everett. Extension faculty contribute outreach and content through the WSU Global Campus, including certification, continuing education, and training programs. Over 6,000 volunteers support the Master Gardener and 4-H Youth Development program. 4-H reaches youth and their families to build life skills through more than 100 different hands-on projects. The Master Gardeners help residents improve water quality and quantity, properly diagnose insects and diseases, reduce pesticide use, and plant adapted plants. Overall, WSU volunteers donated more than 500,000 hours to their communities.

#### College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Resource Sciences (CAHNRS)

Dean Wendy Powers joined WSU in August as the new College Dean. WSU and CAHNRS have been approved to hire essential faculty and staff to fill positions that have remained open over the past two years due to COVID restrictions and budget concerns. The second consecutive year of declining student enrollment has also resulted in budget concerns. Searches are currently underway for county faculty in Walla Walla (agronomy); Garfield-Columbia (agronomy); SW Washington IPM (cranberries and invasive species, including burrowing shrimp); Jefferson (food systems); Lewis (food systems), Clark (food systems), King (4-H youth development), and Whatcom (health promotions). Several of these positions have local administrative responsibilities.

#### **Soil Health Initiative**

Maintaining and improving soil health is key to preventing soil depletion, ensuring long-term agricultural productivity, and protecting the environment in our region, as well as the ongoing health of the rural economy and regional food security. A host of indicators are currently available to assess soil health;

however, our understanding of the relationship between these indicators and plant production and environmental outcomes is incomplete. To address these knowledge gaps, better understand linkages, and provide better guidance to stakeholders, the **Washington Soil Health Initiative (SHI)**. This initiative is an ambitious plan that funds research, extension, and demonstration of soil health best management practices through a network of long-term agro-ecological research and extension (LTARE) sites across Washington's diverse agricultural systems.

SHI is a partnership among WSU, the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and the Washington State Conservation Commission. The legislation included specific language requiring WSU to establish the proposed LTARE site at the WSU Mount Vernon Research & Extension Center.

A renewed focus on soil health creates a win-win-win opportunity for farmers, the environment and the general public, and puts the state of Washington in a leadership role nationally. An increased understanding of the linkages between soil health, production, and the environment achieved through the Washington SHI will contribute to several important outcomes:

- A baseline assessment of soil health and the tools to monitor and manage it across the diverse agricultural systems in Washington;
- Better understanding of the opportunities to improve soil health through changes in management practices; and
- Increased adoption of these practices to increase food production and farm profitability and providing important economic and environmental benefits to the state of Washington.

Key industries involved include growers of potatoes, wine and juice grapes, dryland agriculture and tree fruits, such as apples, pears, and cherries, among others. Visit <u>https://soilhealth.wsu.edu/</u> for frequent Soil Health Initiative updates.

# Stormwater Management and Green Infrastructure

The Washington Stormwater Center at WSU Puyallup continues to be one of the nation's largest research installations in the nation that focuses on green infrastructure and stormwater management. The program is conducted through a living laboratory with full-scale, replicated, Low Impact Development (LID) practices that serve as a center for research and outreach. The Center includes pervious concrete and asphalt surfaces, rain gardens, microcosms, pervious pavers, roofing, and fish tank studies. The center has an extensive outreach program that provides LID certification for engineers, planners and agency personnel. The Center also provides online modules for LID training. Many cities and urban counties have installed pervious concrete streets and sidewalks while local businesses have installed pervious pavement parking lots and rain gardens.

# **Forest Stewardship**

Washington has over 215,000 landowners that control nearly 5.8 million acres of forestland, making this the largest rural land use group in the state. Many landowners manage for multiple objectives, such as timber production, wildlife habitat improvement, and a variety of recreation opportunities. WSU led 58 events attended by 3,372 forest owners and managers, representing over 150,000 acres. Forest Stewardship Coached Planning is a comprehensive landowner education program that covers key aspects of caring for wooded property in a way that maximizes private landowner benefits while also protecting and enhancing public resources. The course is designed around the development of a personal Forest Stewardship Plan, which participants write with "coaching" from forestry professionals. Courses resulted in over 90% of participants implementing better management practices. In partnership with the WA State Department of Natural Resources, future staffing includes a new stewardship forester for Northeast Washington. A Northwest Washington Extension regional forestry health specialist started October 1.