

Kiwanis Food Bank Gardens

May Report to the Board

Usually a drier, warmer month, May is a prime time for planted vegetables to get a strong start for growth in June and July. Not so this year. May's cooler temperatures, averaging 3 degrees below normal, and wetter than normal conditions have slowed the garden's growth. But, there is an upside, with the help of many hands we have gotten more work done in a larger number of gardens and are far ahead of last year's pace for planting, weeding and preparing for our summer. Over 121 pounds of radishes, lettuce and herbs have been delivered to the Food Bank during May.

Department of Ecology Food Bank Garden: Over 5,000 square feet have been plowed and planted in potatoes. Another 5,000 square feet will be planted with a cover crop and squash. Fencing, built by the Washington Conservation Corp members is being installed this week. The DOE Sustainability Committee and staff member Johanna Ofner have been a good team to work with.

Capitol Campus Food Bank Garden: The entire 6 beds of the garden have been planted. Potatoes, onions, leeks, cabbage, pok choi, kohlrabi, radishes, cucumbers, brociflower, sugar snap peas, cucumbers, tomatoes and bush beans are the crops in the garden. Bird boxes are installed to attract swallows. Deer fencing is installed thanks to Steve Drew and irrigation system is in place and working thanks to Dave Kirk. Crews consisting of state employees, Key Club members, Food Bank Gleaners and students from the Children's Hands on Museum and Pioneer Elementary School have been helping with planting and working on the garden.

Vista Village Food Bank Garden: The partnership with Vista Village Community is strong. North Thurston Kiwanis and their Kiwanis family groups have planted cabbage and onions at the garden. Irrigation system will be installed soon. Harvest will happen in late June.

Westside Food Bank Garden: As mentioned earlier, harvest has started. The barn facility has been working well. Food Bank Gleaners and students from GRuB along with members have been invaluable in getting the garden planted and ready for the summer. Students from Westside Cooperative Preschool and NOVA school have participated in planting. Dahlia beds are planted, tomato plants are being transplanted and are ready for sale. Produce is being prepared for sale at Lacey Community Market in July, August and September. Thanks go to Peter Witt, Barry Diseth, Dave Carnahan and Ric Weatherman for their individual help during the month. Many of the swallow bird boxes at the garden are occupied.

Goche/Northwest Market Food Bank Garden: The high water table has slowed tilling and planting of the garden. About 1/3 of the garden has been planted. June will be an active time for planting what will be considered our late fall harvest crops including carrots, beets, squash and cucumbers. Bird boxes active.

St Mark's Lutheran Church Food Bank Garden: Assistance during May included some consultation on irrigation systems and weed control. The volunteers in the garden have been doing a great job. Harvest is on schedule for their potato crop.

Looking Ahead to June: With warmer weather both weeds and plants will grow. We have set up specific days for working the gardens. Capitol Campus Garden has work parties on Tuesday evening (5 to 6:30) and Wednesday noon to 1 pm. Westside garden on Thursday, morning and afternoon and Saturdays as we get closer to harvest. The Garden Committee is approaching volunteer organizations to schedule harvest with us. Groups include THEM and THOSE (a hiking group), Slow Food Olympia, Beth Hatfiloh Temple, Olympia and Capitol High School Key Clubs, Food Bank volunteers and the Department of Agriculture staff, among others. Club members are informed when work groups are formed and are encouraged to participate. We are discussing having a community open house at the capitol campus garden to explain our work and to raise awareness of the community need.

Derek Valley and Don Leaf, Co-chairs, Kiwanis Food Bank Gardens