

Growing tomatoes in the Seattle-area microclimate

By Anne Hoff, Hazel Heights P-Patch



The last jar of home-canned tomato soup bubbles on the kitchen stove. Seed packets are strewn across the dining room table. It may be wet and wild outside, but it's time to think about summer gardening!

Here in the Pacific Northwest, we face some unique challenges that our gardening counterparts in much of the rest of the country can't conceive of. Especially when it comes to heat-loving summer crops like tomatoes, we need to choose varieties suited to our weather, we need to get our timing right if our crop is to ripen, and we may need to cloche plants or use other tricks to create a warmer environment.

This article shares what I've learned over a number of years gardening in Seattle. I also have advice from Kate Folchert, a resourceful gardener at the Ballard P-Patch who grows and sells seedlings uniquely suited to our climate – including the “Uncle Wilfred” variety developed by her husband's uncle in wet and cold Northern England, an analog to our climate. (More on Kate's plant sale later.)

I've found Kate to be a wealth of information on all things tomato! Her first tip is to plant your tomatoes in the sunniest location you can find: the very best spot is in front of a south-facing brick or rock wall that gets full sun. Many P-Patch gardeners may not have a south-facing wall or even full sun, so the farther your situation is from this ideal, the more “tricks” you may need to employ to coddle your tomatoes.

Choosing varieties and purchasing seedlings

Tomato plants come from either starting your own seeds indoors or as seedlings you purchase to transplant outdoors at the appropriate time. If you live in a hot climate, you can grow big, fat beefsteak tomatoes; there is time and heat for them to ripen and produce well. Don't count on that here,

because our summers are not hot enough. It is so disappointing to have the summer end with your large, beautiful tomatoes still green on the vine. The larger varieties especially need additional protection and heat.

The easiest route, of course, is cherry or grape tomatoes and other varieties on the smaller size. I've always had some success with these, even in a particularly cool summer. Any variety of cherry or grape tomato should be fine; one classic is Sungold. Going larger than cherry/grape size puts you in the realm of “slicers.” Look for varieties with

faster maturities, which are particularly adapted to short-season northern climates. Some of the recommendations in the Seattle Tilth guide are Stupice, Siberian, Oregon Spring and Black Krim – and of course there's Kate's Uncle Wilfred variety.

It's now too late to start tomatoes from seed (that needs to happen by March 1 at the latest) so, if you haven't started seeds already, you will have to buy seedlings to transplant. Choosing organic starts is a must. Why? Because if you buy non-organic, you don't know what's in the soil or what the grower used for fertilizer. By the time you get your seedlings, one-third of their life has already happened, and you can't undo what's already been done to your tomato “babies.” So consider organic starts from a local plant sale.

Again, choose maturities and varieties suited to our region, such as you will find at a knowledgeable local nursery or at one of the local plant sales organized by gardeners or gardening organizations. Popular sales in Seattle include the ones organized by Seattle Tilth and King County Master Gardeners, and Kate Folchert's annual offerings. (Email c.folchert@gmail.com to get her announcements.)

When timing the purchase of your seedlings, consider when they will go in the ground. Many people in Seattle transplant tomato seedlings in May, but Kate says the trick to tomatoes in Seattle is not to plant them outdoors too early. Her personal rule of thumb is June 1.

Hardening off and transplanting

Whether you've started your own seedlings or purchased them, you will need to “harden them off” for a week or so before transplanting them into the garden so they acclimatize to the change of temperature and other conditions. (Some seedlings may already be hardened off when you purchase them; ask the seller.) Putting your plants in the ground without hardening off can shock them,

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With diligent care, young tomato seedlings can produce enough tomatoes for many meals in late summer and early fall, and also pots of sauce for delicious winter dinners.

News from the P-Patches...



Colman Park P-Patch gardeners held a work party last fall to replace deteriorated wood retaining walls before winter rains could cause more damage to the sloping garden.

Colman Park P-Patch work party

By Gloria Peterson, Colman Park P-Patch

Work parties can be fun and a great way to get to know other P-Patchers whom you may otherwise not meet. At Colman Park P-Patch, up the hill from Lake Washington and just south of the I-90 Bridge, we have a wonderful group of gardeners who tend about 50 plots on the old Seattle Parks Department Nursery site. Since our land slopes downhill, we often have to replace rotting terraces that hold back the uphill soil. The photo at left/right/below/above shows one such rebuilding project last October.

We have gardeners at Colman for whom 2015 was their very first year, and several who have been with us since the P-Patch first opened in 1974 -- four decades ago. Last year we started a mentoring program that has been as fun for the mentors as it is hopefully useful to the “mentees.” It is always nice to welcome new people to the garden, whether they have prior experience or not.

We feel very privileged to be gardening right in the middle of beautiful Colman Park, which is an Olmsted Brothers' design. Often folks who walk through the park on their way from the top of the hill at 31st Avenue past our gardens and down the winding trail to the lake will stop and chat, or just meander through the plots to admire our handiwork.

Please come and visit our garden, and walk your dog or take your children down to the lake where you will have a wonderful view of Mt. Rainier right at the water's edge. You will likely see people wading in the water or, on a warm day, having a swim. Hope to see you there!



By late winter, some gardeners at Thistle P-Patch were already tidying up their plots in preparation for a new growing season. The site is adjacent to the Link Light Rail line.

By Joyce Moty
Bradner Gardens P-Patch

Thistle P-Patch

If you take the Link Light Rail to the airport, you can see Thistle P-Patch between the Othello and Rainier Beach stations. Thistle and six other P-Patches were established in 1974, making them the second oldest in the program. Three acres in size, Thistle is one of the largest P-Patches with 77 plots. English, Mien, Lao, and Korean are often spoken in this diverse community garden where greens and other vegetables from all over the world are grown.

Thistle P-Patch is situated under Seattle City Light transmission lines in South Seattle and is a “bare bones” type of garden. Plots are delineated with tree limbs and sticks. Many of the gardeners use traditional tools imported from their home countries, such as grub hoes and the Asian hand hoe (pictured). The grub hoe is highly effective in breaking up the soil. Gardeners build their soil by chopping their garden waste and burying it in their plots.

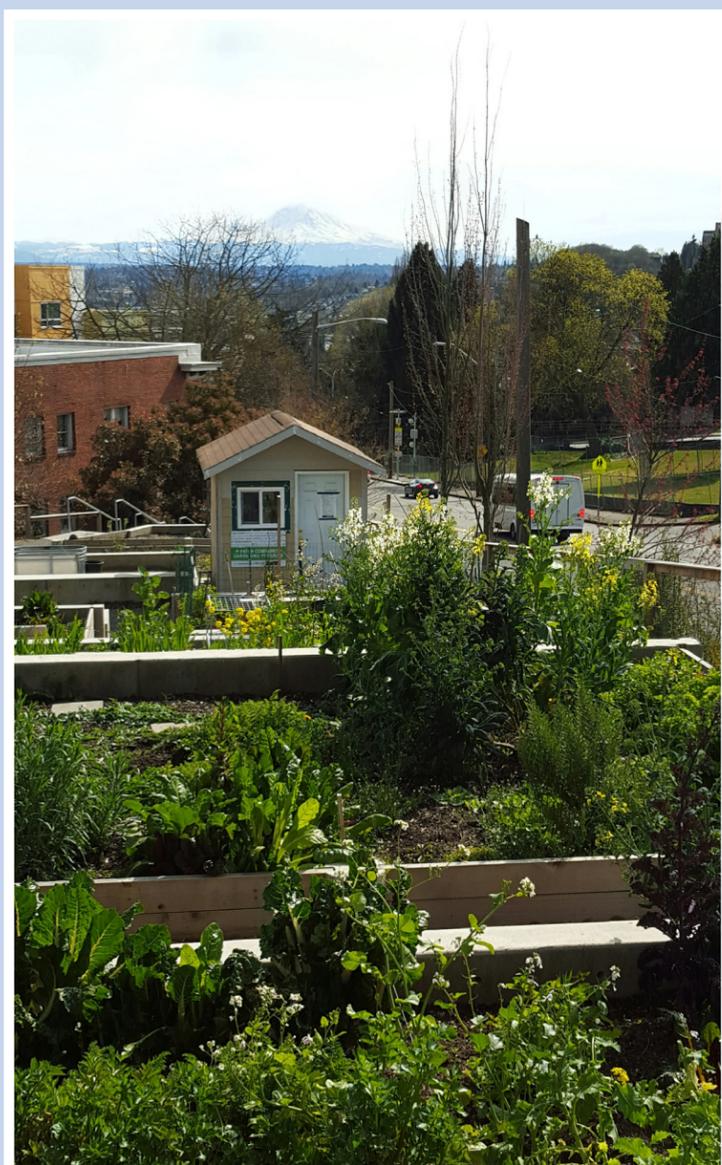
Thistle is especially worth a visit in the high growing season, when corn is eight feet tall and the gardens are bursting with beans, hot peppers, and a variety of squashes and greens. The P-Patch is on the northwest side of the intersection of Martin Luther King Way South and South Cloverdale Street.

Horiuchi Park P-Patch

Horiuchi Park P-Patch is named after the late Northwest artist C. Paul Horiuchi, who worked in an auto body shop at 12th Avenue South and South Fir before he gained fame as an artist. If you have ever enjoyed a Bumbershoot performance at the Horiuchi Mural Stage at Seattle Center, you have seen the work of Paul Horiuchi, whose art medium was collage and painting. His art is in the collections of the Seattle Art

Museum and the Wing Luke Asian Museum.

Horiuchi P-Patch now occupies what was originally designed as a small neighborhood park at Yesler Terrace, built with ProParks Levy funds in 2004. In 2015, the Seattle Housing Authority contributed funds to create a P-Patch there for Yesler Terrace residents and neighbors. Gardeners have great views of Mount Rainier, the Rainier Valley and Beacon Hill, because the site is high above Boren Avenue between East Fir and East Spruce. The garden has 28 plots in raised beds, a tool shed decorated with murals, some seating, and a small sandbox for kids to play in.



On clear days, Mt. Rainier can be seen from the Horiuchi Park P-Patch, which sits on a steep slope above Boren Avenue.

OH, Rats!

By Jason ‘JB’ Bennis,
Magnolia Manor P-Patch

“That’s it! Enough is enough!” thought Inger Beecher last summer as she was almost run off a path in Magnolia’s Manor Park P-Patch by two rats that were enjoying a game of tag in broad daylight.

Beecher, a local veterinarian, had previously encountered rats enjoying an early-morning breakfast of sunflower seed heads in a neighbor’s plot. And, much to her dismay, she also discovered rats nesting and tunneling in her own garden plot. Beecher had all the incentive she needed and formed the Magnolia Manor P-Patch Rat Patrol, AKA the “Dream Team.”

“We needed a container in which to safely set traps, but that would allow rats free access,” said Beecher. The answer was a large baited rat trap placed inside an upside-down plastic milk crate, partially covered by burlap and weighted down with a stone.

The concept is that the rats can freely enter the four small handle openings in the milk crate structure and meet a swift end in the rat trap. The milk crate’s exterior honeycomb structure acts as a deterrent for unintended by-catch like pets, birds, and curious children.

For other gardeners struggling with rodent issues, there are local resources. Ciscoe Morris’ *Seattle Times* column on August 20, 2015, focused on rat eradication in local vegetable gardens, and “Rodents in the Garden” is a thorough publication offered by the P-Patch Community Garden Program.

Beecher and her husband Mike, along with fellow P-Patcher Larry Bosi, got to work on a late-summer rat eradication plan. They identified rat burrows and tunnels and secured permission from a handful of P-Patch gardeners who had rodent-infested plots. Half a dozen traps were distributed among the individual plots and in common garden areas.

I wanted to see how sensitive the plastic rat trap was, so I asked rat patrol volunteer Larry Bosi to show me. With a deft flick of a wood stick, Bosi, a retired juvenile corrections counselor for the State of Washington, set off the Tom Cat Rat Snap Trap with a loud THWAP. “It doesn’t take much.”

Trying to think like a rat

I met Bosi at the Magnolia Manor P-Patch, where he showed me the rat patrol supplies in the community shed. “It became a little adventure: what do rats like, what attracts rats?” He pulled the lid off an old potato chip tin and rifled through various rat baits. “We tried all kinds of things: cat food, dog kibble, beef jerky, bacon-flavored jerky, peanut butter – anything aromatic that rats would sniff out.”

Bosi also showed me the detailed inner workings of the milk crate rat traps. The weathered burlap is wrapped around the milk crate to create an aesthetically pleasing earth-brown color that helps the milk crate trap disappear into the surrounding P-Patch. He said the Dream Team’s consensus is that the burlap darkens the trap so that rats will feel safe and secure. “We care about their emotional lives,” he said with a chuckle.

The burlap also helps keep rain out, thus extending the life of the dry rat baits. Lastly, he explained that the rock placed on top of the burlap and the milk crate “helps weight it down, because the wind blows all the time in the garden.”

Beecher’s and Bosi’s main rat patrol job was trap maintenance. Every day from late August to late October they baited the traps and checked them the next day. Most days they found nothing, because the smart rats learn to avoid the traps. Bosi recalls that, “Toward the end, the kill rate really



A weathered burlap bag helps hide an innovative rat trap in the Magnolia Manor P-Patch.

dropped off. We were most productive in our early trapping, and later the rats kind of got wise to it.”

As the saying goes, it’s a dirty job, but someone’s got to do it. The eradication of the garden’s rats doesn’t come easy for the Dream

Team. “I just hate that,” shuddered Bosi when recalling the 27 dead rats and a few that needed help with their final breaths, as well as the two dead sparrows that accidentally found their way into the traps.

Also tucked away in the rat supplies in the shed is a pair of gloves. “Sometimes rats bleed on the trap, and we use gloves to be as safe as possible in case there are any pathogens,” said Bosi.

At the Magnolia Manor P-Patch all-gardeners’ meeting on March 12, the future of the rat patrol was discussed. Concerns were raised about various crops like tall sunflowers attracting rats.

Block Leader Phil Best pointed out that a rat-friendly P-Patch must “look like a Whole Foods for rats.” He gently reminded the gardeners of the importance of donating excess produce to the Giving Garden Program so that overripe tomatoes and strawberries don’t create a “smorgasbord for the rats.” Inger Beecher confirmed that the Dream Team would be back in action in 2016 and said she was already looking into different types of snap rat traps that might offer better performance.



In 2015, P-Patch gardeners donated more than 40,000 pounds of produce to food banks and feeding programs, and they contributed more than 42,000 volunteer hours to steward their P-Patches and help their fellow gardeners.

Can we top those numbers this year??

Growing tomatoes in the Seattle area

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damaging the plant and/or delaying its growth. To harden off your seedlings, put them outdoors for a period of time each day. Start with a few hours of filtered sunlight, gradually increasing exposure to include full sun and, eventually, overnight temperatures.

There are a variety of methods for transplanting tomato seedlings into the ground. One gardener told me she plants her seedlings, especially leggy ones, horizontally in a shallow trench. (Strip all the lower leaves, lay the stem horizontally a couple inches deep, and cover all but the upper leaves. As the plant grows, it will turn vertically toward the sun.) This method is said to encourage root growth and a strong stem. Be sure to place your support poles or tomato cage right away, so you don’t accidentally damage the stem that’s no longer visible. I tried this method once, but it seemed a bit complicated and the results didn’t convince me it had to be done.

Kate’s method is to bury the seedling vertically so the stem is covered up to the first leaves. This is what I’ve been doing for a few years now, and I find it works very well. And I know exactly where the stem is when situating my support structures.

More “tricks,” and some words on watering

I’m lucky in my plot at Hazel Heights P-Patch. I have a southwest-facing wall and excellent sun, so I’ve grown cherry and medium-sized tomatoes without having to do much other than put the plants in the ground. Still, it’s always good to give tomatoes the benefit of extra heat. Kate has a few tricks she employs for the first few weeks, or even up to July 1 if the weather is cool.

The first is surrounding your tomatoes in plastic, mimicking a greenhouse. An easy way to do this is to install a tomato cage around the plant and wrap it in thick, clear painter’s tarp. Any time you are adding heat you need to monitor water needs more carefully and be sure your plants don’t burn on sunny days, so the lower edge of the plastic wrapping needs to be lifted a few inches on hot days. If you don’t live near your P-Patch, this method may be impractical.

Another variation that may be more forgiving is the commercial Wall-O-Water product, which is essentially a sleeve composed of tubes of water that surrounds the plant and forms an open teepee. The water serves as insulation, and the open top allows some air circulation. Kate has a great do-it-yourself version of this: If you are container gardening above ground, plant each tomato seedling in a large black

plastic pot; fill two-liter soda bottles with water, cap them, and bury them cap-side down around the seedling until the bottles are one-half to two-thirds covered in dirt. The water-filled bottles act as insulation to give the roots the heat they thrive on. An in-ground version of this can also be done.

An additional feature you can add to your soda bottles leads to our next topic: watering. To add a drip-watering feature to the insulating function of your partially buried soda bottles, you prep them before burying by 1) removing a quarter-sized piece of plastic from the center of the bottom, and 2) putting a pinprick hole in the cap. Then, when you partially bury the bottles cap-side down, angle them inward at the bottom so the water will be slowly dripped through the pinhole in the cap to the roots. Cover the quarter-sized hole that is facing up with a small piece of floating row cover to keep insects out, and use it to add water to keep the bottle full. It is the transfer of heat from the water-filled bottle to the soil that will help your tomato plant think it is living in Mexico or Southern Italy rather than Seattle.

Whether you use this bottle system or not, tomato plants should *always* be watered at the roots. If you get the leaves wet, it can foster disease or pests. It’s best to water well every few days in peak summer weather – but only if the plant needs it. To test, stick your finger about two knuckles (or 2 inches) into the ground near your tomato’s base; if that area is dry, you need to water.

Kate says that a failure in tomato gardening is usually because of insufficient water or insufficient weeding. At the Ballard P-Patch, a group of six gardeners banded together last year to rotate shared care. Whoever watered on a given day would email the others, and some contributed weeding instead of watering. In this way, each person was less challenged by the watering needs of his or her own plot while contributing to the “community” in community gardening.

Support and pruning

You will need to have support for your growing tomatoes because they are quite vigorous plants – particularly the indeterminate varieties. Support allows ventilation around the plants that helps keep them disease-free, and it also keeps your growing crop off the ground. Whatever support you use, install it when you plant your seedlings, so you don’t disturb future root growth. Tomatoes can grow quite tall, so if you use “cages,” purchase large ones. You can make your own cages from concrete-reinforcing wire mesh: five feet will make a cage 18 inches in diameter. It’s also possible to create trellising from a post with crossbars for each plant. You’ll find many creative options on the internet.

As your plants grow, you will need to prune regularly, which will encourage fruiting and earlier ripening by channeling the plants’ energy. It will also keep the plants from getting too dense, which can cause air-circulation problems and disease. You need to remove both side stems (which grow off the main stem) and suckers, which grow in the V or “crotch” between a leaf stem and the main stem. If you catch these early, you can simply pinch them off with your fingers. There are diagrams online for shaping tomato plants, as well as recommendations about fertilizing and other aspects of growing tomatoes.

The reward!

If the weather gods favor us, you will have cherry tomatoes as early as mid- to late July and slicers in August. Let them ripen on the vine for best flavor. If you have a bumper crop and can’t keep up with eating them, share them – or freeze or can them.

Canning is quite a process, but there are simple ways to freeze tomatoes. My father has been growing and preserving tomatoes for at least 50 years, and has switched from canning to a simple method of broiling-then-freezing: 1) slice the tomatoes in half and place them cut-side down on an oiled baking sheet; 2) brush them with olive oil; 3) place them under the broiler until the skins begin to blacken; 4) as they are cooling, use a fork to lift the skin off each tomato half – it should come off easily; 5) when cool, put the tomatoes in a zip-lock bag and place it on a flat surface in your freezer. Don’t put it directly on a rack, or it will freeze in between the rack’s wires, making it impossible to remove!

I’ve seen a variation on this method in which tomatoes are broiled cut-side up and dressed with herbs and olive oil without skinning them. This produces a wonderful sauce ready to use in cooking. Kate told me she tried something similar last year, without including the broiling step. She placed whole tomatoes and herbs directly in a bag and vacuum-sealed it before freezing, and found that this worked fine.

Inevitably, the season will end with some green tomatoes still on the vine. While some people advocate ripening these indoors (either by harvesting and spreading the tomatoes in a box so none are touching, or by hanging the whole plant upside down in your basement), I’ve never found the results to be satisfactory. I instead search online for green tomato recipes, which include chutneys and other preserves as well as fried green tomatoes.

Here’s to a wonderfully productive tomato-growing season!

Gardening Grandma connects with children

By Carolyn Kresser, UpGarden P-Patch

Her name is Bonnie Hedman, but she's better known as the "Gardening Grandma." If you've ever visited the UpGarden, the P-Patch that sits atop the Seattle Center's Mercer Street parking garage, you've probably seen her working in the common beds, or leading a children's group through the "touch and smell" garden, or helping a new gardener learn how things work.

She's the driving force behind the garden's partnership with the Center School, the alternative high school located at the Seattle Center, which has its own student plot in the garden. She also manages the garden's partnership with the nearby Brookdale Senior Living home, which grows the starts each year for the garden's Giving Garden and the Children's Garden. And she's responsible for creating the "touch and smell" garden, which allows visually challenged students to experience the garden in a way they otherwise could not.

Each year, P-Patch gardeners are required to put in eight community service hours as part of the agreement to keep their plot. Last year, Bonnie logged 370 volunteer hours.

She took over leadership of the garden about a year ago, but she's been involved in the garden since the planning stages. "I noticed a sign at QFC regarding the development of the garden, so I decided to go to a meeting. It was the group's third one, and I've been involved ever since."

Despite having a disability that prevented her from helping with labor, Bonnie took part in the construction of the garden in 2012. "I would fill my basket with screws, batteries, and water, and refill the crews' supplies and make sure everyone was hydrated," she said. "Once, I went home, made burritos and brought them back for lunch."

Involving a local preschool

The original plans for the garden included a Children's Garden, so Bonnie took it upon herself to reach out to schools, which led her to the Young Children Academy. "We started by growing seeds and starts at the school, and then I would take them up to the garden and plant them. Once they planted mini-pumpkins, and when we harvested them, they got to decorate them."

That connection led her to the Seattle School District, which was looking for a place to take visually impaired students. During a day camp, they developed the "touch and smell" garden, which includes plants such as pineapple sage, which smells like its namesake, and yarrow, which feels like a feather.

Looking for a way to get more people from the Seattle Center involved, Bonnie submitted a proposal to the Pacific Science Center to bring kids from the summer day camps up to the garden,



Bonnie Hedman shows young students a raised bed that enables people with disabilities to garden at the UpGarden P-Patch. She made the flower-filled planters hanging on the wooden wall from old soda bottles.

which they've now been doing for three years. The Children's Museum came on board last summer.

"I just try to keep my eyes open for opportunities to get different groups involved with the garden, especially when they're right in the neighborhood."

A place for science experiments

The Seattle Center partnership led to a relationship with the Center School, whose students from two science classes now come to tend their plot at the garden. "The AP class does experiments, like which fertilizer works best," said Bonnie. "It's fun because sometimes they bring their families up to show off what they've been working on."

In addition to educational outreach, Bonnie also manages the garden's partnership with the Brookdale Senior Living home, located a couple blocks from the garden. Originally, another UpGarden gardener approached the senior home as part of a class assignment on community involvement, and the residents got involved by growing plant starts. Two of them now grow all the seedlings for both the Giving Garden and the Children's Garden.

"I like to pick flowers from our common beds and make bouquets and take them over to the Brookdale residents," Bonnie said.

Bonnie grew up as an Army brat who moved around a lot – but she remembers her family always growing food, no matter where they lived. As an adult, she lived in Montana with her two children, and home-grown food was an important part of their diet.

She's been gardening ever since moving to Seattle with her kids in 1976, whether it was in a flower pot on an apartment patio or a shared garden at the Interbay P-Patch. She even managed to garden while living on a sailboat at Shilshole Bay Marina for seven years.

Why does she do it?

So why does someone volunteer hundreds of hours of their time to a community garden? One reason is that it can be tough to build a network of friends in a large city like Seattle. "I need people. And up there, we're all gardeners. My community is so enlarged by the UpGarden," Bonnie said.

She thinks it's also important to give back to the community. "I've always lived that way; it's just part of who I am."

One of the biggest benefits she gets from spending so much time at the garden is her physical well-being. "I've lost 40 pounds from walking back and forth from my apartment to the garden. And my bone density has gone up almost 9 percent," Bonnie said.

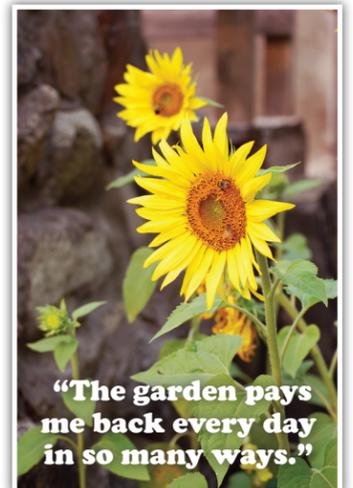
More importantly, her mental well-being is also vastly improved. "When I became disabled to the point I couldn't work, I felt like I'd lost all value. I went from being an executive to living below the poverty line. But at the UpGarden, I can use my organizational and computer skills from when I worked."

Despite all the benefits, Bonnie concedes she does have limits when it comes to how much she can do. "It keeps me healthy to be up there, but I've learned I can't overdo it. And there are certain tasks at the garden I'm not able to do."

But anyone who knows her knows that disability doesn't stop Bonnie from getting up to the garden nearly every day, rain or shine. She's also become involved in the UpTown Alliance, a community development organization that is supportive of keeping the garden in the neighborhood when the Seattle Center parking garage comes down. (Those plans were always in the works, even before the garden was built.)

"I'm learning about attending political meetings, and learning how to be an advocate for a cause - which is fun, because it's not something I've done before!"

Bonnie expects she'll log as many volunteer hours this year as the 370 she contributed in 2015 – if not more. And she wouldn't have it any other way. "The garden pays me back every day in so many ways."



"The garden pays me back every day in so many ways."

Seattle's P-Patch Community Garden Program thanks the following companies for their 2015 and 2016 contributions of organic seeds that enable the Program to better serve the community:

Peaceful Valley Farm Supply: <http://www.groworganic.com/seeds/organic-seeds.html>

Territorial Seed Company: <http://www.territorialseed.com>

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Supporters like these have enabled P-Patch gardeners, over the past 43 years, to:

- grow community • nurture civic engagement • practice organic gardening techniques • foster an environmental ethic and connect nature to people's lives • improve access to local, organic, and culturally appropriate food • transform the appearance and revitalize the spirit of their neighborhoods • develop self-reliance and improve nutrition through hands-on experience
- feed the hungry (in 2015, P-Patch gardeners donated 39,000 pounds of food) • preserve heirloom flowers, herbs, and vegetables • build understanding between generations and cultures through gardening & cooking



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Wise watering reduces time and increases plant health

You planted those seeds, added a little water, and observed the birth of new vegetables and flowers. How well they survive will be dependent on the weather, your soil and the care you provide.

Soil not only provides nutrition; it also has a direct impact on the amount of water your garden will require. The type of soil will, in part, determine how much water will be needed. Organic mulches reduce evaporation, keeping the soil moisture consistent while feeding your plants and giving you more time to enjoy your garden. If you're curious about your soil, the King Conservation District (www.kingcd.org/pro_far_soil.htm) provides King County residents up to five free soil tests per year.

Watering your garden efficiently and effectively will save you time and help your garden grow. Plants can be negatively impacted by both too little and too much water. A fully grown tomato plant loaded with fruit can use up to half an inch on a hot, windy summer day. The even watering of a 100-square-foot plot with half an inch of water requires 30 gallons of water.

The top 12 inches of soil contain 95 percent of the roots of your plants. Until they are established, transplants and seedlings need more water. Soil moisture can be best measured with a moisture meter (available for about \$12). The amount of water available can also be estimated by appearance and touch. Take a handful of soil and squeeze it in your hand. If water drips from it, there is too much water. The ideal amount of moisture will leave a wet outline of the ball on your hand. No outline means it's time to water. Although measuring soil water by appearance and feel is not precise, with experience and judgment you should be able to schedule irrigation with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

I explored several water delivery systems to determine the most effective and efficient one in order to maximize my time to enjoy my garden. Here they are:

- 1. Watering can:** A sturdy watering can costs \$15 on average and holds about 2 gallons of water. They are great in the early season when you are taking care of young transplants and rows of newly seeded crops. It would take nearly 15 refills of the watering can to water 100 square feet with a half-inch of water.
- 2. Soaker hose (\$35 to \$50):** A 100-foot half-inch soaker hose will deliver 54 gallons of water per hour. Soaker hoses require low water pressure. In my measurement, the soaker hose adequately watered 6 inches on either side of the hose over an hour. The biggest issue with soaker hoses is the time it ties up the hose in a community garden.

- 3. Fan-style watering nozzle (\$9 to \$15):** I am not sure why the fan style and other watering nozzles are so popular. They lose a lot of water to evaporation, and water the plants' foliage more effectively than the soil where the roots live. Water on leaves provides no moisture for the plant and can promote disease. In a 12-square-foot bed of beets, the fan delivered 1.5 inches of water to the soil in one minute.
- 4. Watering wand (\$18 to \$50):** Watering wands have the advantage of delivering water to the soil under the plant foliage. This cuts down the loss of water and keeps water off the leaves. Using the same water pressure as was used with the fan nozzle, the watering wand delivered 2 inches of water to the same bed of beets in one minute.
- 5. Hose (free at P-Patches and some other community gardens):** The hose can be fed along the ground between the rows, allowing very little water to hit the foliage and virtually no loss to evaporation. Holding your hand over the end of the hose will soften the flow for new seed beds and seedlings. Using the same water pressure and watering pattern as was used with the fan and the wand, the hose delivered 2.9 inches of water in one minute.



Irrigating a densely planted garden with a nozzle can waste a surprising amount of water, and may promote plant diseases.

Hoses are critical to every watering system. Take care of them by taking the time to turn the water off, relieve the water pressure, and carefully store them. Be considerate of your neighbors and make sure the stored hose does not create a tripping hazard.

Other tips:

- Water your garden in the early morning or evening.
- Mulch or water your garden gently so you don't compact the soil.

Based on my testing, I have chosen to use only the hose to water my garden. It is efficient and never compacts the soil – and I don't have to remember where I left it.

YES! I want to help GROW acquire and advocate for community gardens, and preserve and protect our existing community gardens.

Here is my contribution as a:

- FRIEND: \$25-\$34** (pays the fiscal agency fee for one garden for one month)
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The P-Patch Post is published three times per year by GROW, the nonprofit organization that advocates and provides services for organic community gardens. (GROW was formerly the P-Patch Trust.) The Post is produced by volunteers, and GROW welcomes articles, photos and story ideas for future issues. Please send them to p.patch.post@GROWnorthwest.org.

GROW's vision

We see inclusive, vibrant Northwest communities fed by organic gardeners and farmers, and a healthy food culture.

Our mission

We build healthy and diverse communities by:

- Advocating for, managing and funding organic community gardens, urban farms and green spaces
- Providing educational opportunities for growing, sharing and preparing food
- Acquiring and holding land for organic community gardens, urban farms and green spaces.



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P-Patch Program Staff Profiles:

An interview with Kenya Fredie, Community Garden Coordinator

By Ann Hoff, Hazel Heights P-Patch

How many years have you been involved with the P-Patch Program, and how has it changed over the years?

Kenya: I've been with the Program since 2007, and one change is scale. The P-Patch community has grown substantially. For example, in 1997 each Community Garden Coordinator had a portfolio of 13 sites at most, and by last year that had increased to 18. The funds from the ProParks Levy, from 2008-2014, increased our program by a third. We now have more gardens, and more families involved. There's a lot to creating new gardens, from funding to development to management.

There is now greater use of our program by other City departments for outreach to the larger community. We're increasingly developing our use of social media, whether through the website or the Listserv emails. And there have been new pilot projects created -- like large-tract urban agriculture, the Beacon Food Forest, and farm stands.

We've been working toward making the program more equitable, whether through ADA understanding and implementation, Language Line for communication for non-native English speakers, or shifting site leadership to team structures.

In terms of actual gardening, we encourage water conservation and restoration of bee habitats in light of climate change. We also now give gardens choices in fertilizer for optimal soil conditions.

What gardens are you responsible for, and how do they vary?

Kenya: In the Southeast, New Holly Youth & Family, which is characterized by multi-cultural awesomeness! In Central Seattle, Squire Park, Immaculate, Spring St., and Hawkins, which I can describe as a mixture of young and energetic citizens. In the North, Jackson Park, Pinehurst, Magnuson, Good Shepherd, Phinney Ridge, Hazel Heights, Fremont, Haller Lake, Roosevelt, Linden Orchard, Maple Leaf, Lake City, Licton Springs, and -- soon -- Troll's Knoll. All of these are solid examples of community engagement and innovation.

Just as organic gardens are stronger and healthier with a diversity of plants and organisms, a diversity of people enriches community. I encourage everyone to visit and discover the richness within the various P-Patch community gardens. When you're there, strike up a friendly conversation with fellow P-Patchers, and ask what makes their site truly unique!

What kinds of help do the differing gardens need?

Kenya: Oh, this is a loaded question! I would like to refer readers to our Baseline of Services document (see www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/PPatch/Baseline-of-Services.pdf) to see the



Kenya loved plants from the time she was a small child, as evidenced by this old photo from her family album.



The new Troll's Knoll P-Patch has been one of Kenya's Fredie's time-consuming projects. The sloping garden sits at the southwest end of the Aurora Bridge and is named for the famous troll that resides under it. The downtown skyline is visible from the site, which has 25 plots and containers for accessible gardening.

range of ways and degrees we may be involved. However, please keep in mind that this document is currently "under construction" to better reflect recent growth of the Program, and the needs of declining infrastructures at our older gardens.

Moving a garden around from one category of services to another isn't steered by us, but rather by what's going on in/around our P-Patches. Sites that fall under the various categories are never stagnant, nor locked into one position annually. Leadership development, building community capacity, and conflict resolution are ongoing processes that occur even for "minimally assisted" sites.

Why this job? What is your background and what led you to this position with the P-Patch Program?

Kenya: Deeply rooted in Boston, my family championed social and food justice movements. As a college student I majored in anthropology and art history, concentrated in photography, and received my B.A. from the University of Massachusetts. My archeological research was accomplished at Harvard University, and focused on the history of a famous utopian/transcendental community at Brook Farm (see).

Before joining the P-Patch Program, I was the Garden Manager for Orca Elementary School, where I instilled in my daughter and other children a passion for the environment. I developed both gardening and environmental science concepts into the garden curriculum, which followed the rhythms of the seasons as the classes helped prepare soil, plant, compost, and harvest. The children participated in the hands-on work of maintaining the garden, and at the same time were introduced to related scientific concepts from photosynthesis to botanical identification.

My curriculum moved outward from there to geography, math, writing, and art. Sometimes the garden was simply a place for kids to decompress and wander among the green. The program was a success. With PTA support I was able to obtain grants and other sources of funding, and the garden program under my direction was recognized by national gardening organizations as well as in the media, including articles in the *Seattle Times*. (http://old.seattletimes.com/html/education/2003049341_orcagarden10.html)

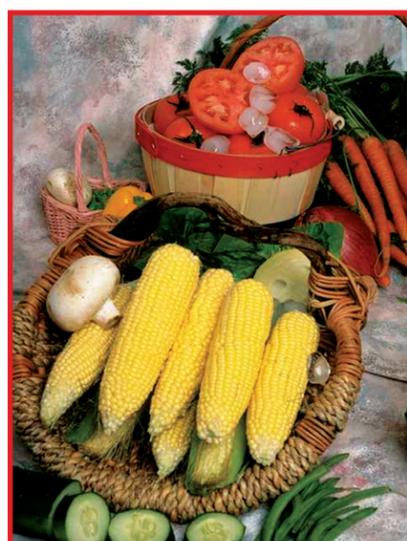
I was honored to be offered a P-Patch Community Garden coordinator position back in 2007, and I continue to take pride in working for a City program that makes a difference in people's lives. To quote Russell Simmons, "I'm not a politician. I only want to help relieve any suffering in communities, and I want to help people see their community in each other."

Do you garden yourself? If so, where?

Kenya: Gratefully, yes, at our safe green space within Judkins P-Patch!

What else would you like to say to the P-Patch community?

Kenya: "Turnip the beet!" Continue to shepherd sustainability, advocate for diversity, and elevate peace within our beautiful city!



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Mark your calendars!

The Chef in the Garden evening – GROW's annual fund-raising event – will be held on July 14 in Interbay P-Patch. Tom Douglas Catering will again provide a dinner of innovative and delicious courses

Tickets will be available soon via Brown Paper Tickets.



Good Shepherd P-Patch benefits from grant funds – and much volunteer labor

By Melanie Foster, Good Shepherd P-Patch, and Mark Huston

How do you move a thousand-pound tool shed out of the way? Lift it up and carry it!

Good Shepherd P-Patch is a very sweet little garden in Wallingford, but it had gone about 25 years with no infrastructure improvements. Among other problems, the shed roof had started to leak. Standing in the shed, you could see sunlight through the roof! The little building was otherwise dark – and cramped.

Also, over the years the slow migration of plot boundaries finally reached the point where we needed to measure and true up all the boundaries in the garden. At the same time, a lot of the boards being used for plot boundaries were deteriorating. So were the compost bins. A diseased plum tree needed to be removed. The enabled gardens needed to be expanded.

So the gardeners decided to redesign the area near the shed to incorporate all of the needed improvements.

We applied for a grant through the City of Seattle’s Neighborhood Matching Fund Program. A lot of people, both in the garden and in the surrounding community, pledged hours and donations. We devised a survey that was filled out by each participant after each work party. These were useful for improving work parties, and the survey satisfied the requirement of the grant to have measurable results. Because Good Shepherd is on

Seattle Parks Department property, we worked with Parks staff to make sure we were all on the same page. Parks staff also did a great job of trimming the majestic cedar tree in the garden.

Once our grant for more than \$10,000 was awarded, we ordered materials and scheduled work parties. We had a big work party last spring that involved dozens of people, two huge dump trucks of gravel, a wheelbarrow brigade, and a very impressive shed-moving technique!

We needed to move the tool shed out of the way to extend the gravel area. The project involved eight strong and handsome volunteers from a University of Washington fraternity, a few gardeners, and two horizontal steel pipes with ropes tied between the pipes and running under the shed. We gripped the pipes and, on the count of three, we lifted the very heavy shed and carried it out of the way. No one was sure it would work, so there were whoops of joy when we did it!

We laid down heavy-duty landscape fabric, then coarse gravel. The wheelbarrow convoy was impressive! We used a gas-powered plate compactor to tamp down and level the gravel. Then we added a layer of fine gravel, and compacted again. Once the area was ready, we picked up and carried the shed back into place. Human forklifts at work!

Galvanized tanks produce warmer soil

We installed galvanized stock tanks for the enabled gardens. With the extra warmth, they produce crops much faster than non-container gardens. We used hand saws to take down the diseased cherry tree, and now the trees next to it are growing much better. For the shed roof, we used clear Plexiglas instead of new shingles, and extended the roof for a wheelbarrow “carport” so the wheelbarrows are under cover but aren’t cluttering the shed. The tool shed is now much brighter and a lot more functional.

Some lessons learned: We under-budgeted for several items, so we needed to re-allocate some funds. We involved the City staff to help with accessibility issues. We worked with the Seattle Parks Department early in the process to minimize delays. There were nonetheless some delays, so we needed to stay flexible. People were generous with their time, and we ended up with a lot more volunteer hours than expected.

Overall, it was a great way to bring gardeners together to achieve lasting improvements, and a textbook example of a grassroots effort to build community. Everyone agrees it was both a big effort and a resounding success!



Sturdy volunteers using an innovative pipe-and-rope method managed to move the shed out of the way while the plaza was being renovated – and to move it back into place when the work was done.



Two layers of gravel over landscape cloth were tamped down to create an open plaza as well as a stable base for the tool shed.

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