



Soos Creek Growing Groceries Demonstration Garden

...by Nancy Purcell

The newest addition to the Master Gardener Demonstration Gardens is the Soos Creek Growing Groceries Demonstration Garden located in north Auburn at Soos Creek Botanical Garden and Heritage Center.

The new Demonstration Garden grew out of the Soos Creek Fruit and Vegetable Garden which was begun in 2010 under the supervision of Master Gardener Trish Bottorff. It opened to the public in July of 2011. The 600-square-foot garden is equipped with a shade house, hoop house, water, storage shed, compost and worm bins. There are raised beds, fencing, six-foot wide gravel paths and a sprinkler system. The focus of the garden is to provide education to the public and to youth. The vegetable garden contributes food to both the Auburn and Maple Valley food banks. Last year 1600 pounds were donated over the course of the summer and 436 pounds have already been sent this summer.



(left to right) Soos Creek volunteer Robyn Welch, WSU Extension Master Gardener Elaine Anderson, second-year Master Gardener Nancy Purcell

Now that the garden has achieved recognition as a Master Gardener Demonstration Garden, Master Gardeners and interns will receive credit hours for working there. Master Gardeners welcome the visiting public who seek information about gardening practices. Master Gardeners work on Wednesdays and conduct Master Garden clinics at special events such as the spring and fall plant sales. Most plants sold at the two annual plant sales are sown from seed at the garden or propagated on-site.

There is interest in expanding the education program now that demonstration garden status has been achieved. Presently, the garden provides a once-a-month free lecture series to the public with named speakers as featured at other similar Master Gardener presentations. Master Gardeners can request Continuing Education credits for attending the lectures, which are held in the red barn. The red barn was remodeled by the Boy Scouts and the owners to create a pleasant lecture facility. The lecture series content and dates can be accessed on the Soos Creek Botanical Garden web site: sooscreekbotanicalgarden.org/EducationEvents.html .

The Soos Creek Growing Groceries Demonstration Garden is part of the larger Soos Creek Botanical Garden and Heritage Center. Among the attributes of this 22 acre botanical garden is a visually stunning long border, which has year-round interest. This

creation was inspired by visits of the owners Maurice Skagen and Jim Daly to England and Japan where they saw gardens with tremendous visual interest. Over the last forty years they designed and planted the pastureland and old growth forest into a garden that delights visitors. There is an historical museum on the property containing photographs of the early days of the community, artifacts of farming from those times and historical documents of the area. The museum is beautifully maintained and updated as new material becomes available.



Soos Creek Botanical Garden and Heritage Center

On Saturday, August 15th, from 10am to 4pm, the Soos Creek Botanical Garden will host a juried art walk, entertainment with old-time fiddlers and Native-American story tellers. The event is organized to celebrate 125 years of the founding of Kent. This is particularly relevant since the farming area of Soos Creek was largely populated by Scandinavian immigrants, including Maurice Skagen's great-grandparents in 1891. The Botanical Garden is a remnant of that original homestead.

Tours of the garden are available for \$3 per person by appointment, but Master Gardeners are invited to attend a free tour of the Garden in late summer. Look for information about the tour in Elaine Anderson's *NEWS YOU CAN USE*.

The demonstration garden is open annually from March through October, Wednesday through Saturday from 10am to 3pm. Admission is free but donations are welcomed. The garden is located on the boundary between Kent and Auburn in the Soos Creek watershed, and a portion of the creek meanders through the property. It is easily accessible from SR 18. Alternatively, use 132nd Avenue SE which winds from Fairwood in Renton starting at 140th in the north and extends through Kent and Covington to north Auburn. The garden is directly across from Auburn's Mountain View High School.

Soos Creek Botanical and Growing Groceries Demonstration Garden is located at 29308 132nd Ave SE in Auburn, WA 98092. Phone: [253-639-0949](tel:253-639-0949). Website: sooscreekbotanicalgarden.org. To inquire about volunteering as a Master Gardener at the Soos Creek Demonstration Garden, please contact Master Gardener Trish Bottorff at [253-639-0949](tel:253-639-0949)