



Nathan Hale Urban Farm's

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Permaculture Prattle

Countdown to the Spring Plant Sale- by Jessica Torvik

The Spring Edible and Ornamental Plant Sale is almost upon us! This year's sale will occur from Wednesday, May 10 to Saturday, May 13. Horticulture students have been preparing since last December when our fuchsia plugs arrived. We have already potted up 300 hanging baskets and transplanted over 1,000 perennial herbs, geraniums, and hardy fuchsias. During the first week of March we planted flowering annual seeds, including heliotrope, marigold, lobelia, and calendula, and now we are onto members of the *Solanaceae* family (peppers, tomatoes, and eggplant), followed shortly by cole crops (cabbage, Brussels sprouts, broccoli and kale), beans and cucurbits (cucumber, pumpkin, zucchini, and yellow squash.) It is a busy time for Hale's 70 spring semester horticulture students.

For me, the student leadership team, and our volunteer instructors (Randy Kilmer, Matt Jordan, and Matt Davis), this is an exciting and rewarding time where we can see if the adjustments we made during the off-season bring about the desired improvements to our spring horticulture program. One change this year: we have narrowed down our plant list to our best sellers and are focusing on quality over quantity. We anticipate that our most popular varieties, such as Sungold tomatoes, Lemon cucumbers, and Shishito peppers, may sell out before the last day of the sale. Every plant we compost or give away represents a loss of revenue for our program. Raising money is a big focus right now as we plan two very ambitious projects: an outdoor classroom/multi-purpose space, and a system for harvesting and recirculating rainwater. Of course we will continue to grow extra starts for our non-profit





and school garden partners! Growing these partnerships is an essential part of our mission.

For those of you who start dreaming about the flavor of a garden-fresh tomato long before August, or who can't wait to make homemade baba ghanouj from your home-grown eggplants, here's a sneak preview of our vegetable varieties this spring¹ (see footnote). In addition to these edible plants, we are also growing six varieties of Fuchsia baskets, six varieties of sun-loving Trixi baskets (petunia, calibrachoa, verbena, bacopa), three types of hardy (shrub) Fuchsia, colorful potted geraniums, and a wide selection of perennial herbs and annual bedding plants.



Hale senior Mia Kinerk is working on revising our online resources to provide more information about the sale, including pictures and a price list. You will find a link to detailed plant sale information on the Nathan Hale website, <http://halehs.seattleschools.org>, and on our Facebook page (below), in late April.

We are very grateful for the customers who have supported us through 12 years of Spring Edible and Ornamental plant sales. You can see your dollars at work in the growth of our program and development of the Nathan Hale Horticulture and Urban Farm. We look forward to seeing you in May!

¹ **Peppers:** Corcel (ancho), Jalapride (jalapeno), Kapello (sweet), Padron, Shishito, Sinaloa (serrano); **Tomatoes:** Azoychka, Chocolate Cherry, Early Girl, Japanese Black Trifele, Early Girl, Oregon Spring, Opalka, Paul Robeson, Black Prince, Momotaro, Stupice; **Cole Crops:** Long Island Brussels Sprouts, Sprouting Green Calabrese Broccoli, Lacinato (Tuscan) Kale, Rainbow Swiss Chard, Golden Acre Cabbage; **Cucurbits:** Connecticut Field Pumpkin, Small Sugar Pumpkin, Gentry Crookneck Squash, Sunburst Pattypan Squash, Jackpot Zucchini, Lemon Cucumber, Marketmore Cucumber, SMR 58 Cucumber; **Other Edibles:** Tabor Artichoke, Victoria Rhubarb, American Flag Leeks, Genovese Basil, Eclipse Eggplant, Pak Choi, Lettuce (Prizehead, Buttercrunch, and Salad Bowl), Parsley, Cilantro, Arugula, Blue Lake Pole Beans.



The Changing Landscape at Nathan Hale Urban Farm - by Keith Mastenbrook



Great improvements have been made in the garden at the Nathan Hale Urban Farm in the recent past. Change is often hard to see when you are in the middle of it. To see it requires reminders of the way things used to be.



The first big change was tearing down the original raised beds, creating new beds with much higher sides, and moving the soil to the new beds (upper left). The new beds were built using the large timbers of the former beds, which were repurposed to create deeper soil profiles. The painted lines in the photo on the upper right defined the future location of new pathways and Hugelkultur beds, now in place. Rotting logs and brush were used to build the Hugelkultur beds on the ends of the new keyhole raised beds. Hugelkultur beds slowly decay and release nutrients and hold water like a sponge during the dry days of summer.

Another transformational change was the installation of a new irrigation system on site (above). Instead of intensive, almost daily hand watering in the summer, water is now delivered underground to all of the beds on the south side of the greenhouse, including



these four-foot diameter steel planters, also a new addition to the site. The steel planters, along with the pathway paved with compacted, crushed concrete, provide ADA- accessible gardening spaces for all students. In the foreground of the photo are pieces of broken concrete blocks, called “urbanite,” which were used to create a long retaining wall on the south side of the greenhouse filled with soil to create another large growing area (top right of last photo on p.3). This spring, we will complete the wall with a decorative capstone to provide seating and a gathering space for the horticulture class in the heart of the garden.

We are also installing drip irrigation for our hanging baskets inside the greenhouse (see photo opposite).

Reusing or repurposing materials that are close at hand, like existing timbers, broken and crushed concrete; maximizing the use of valuable resources like water through the efficient, automatic delivery via drip emitters for ideal growth; applying innovative design practices like hugelkultur to build healthy soils; and recycling waste products close to the source of origin – all are examples of the practical application of permaculture principles. This contributes to the students’ education in sustainable horticultural and agricultural practices. It is our hope that they will internalize the principles and use them in their future encounters with the landscape.



Friends of Nathan Hale Horticulture and Urban Farm – Our New Nonprofit Organization! - by Katherine Ransel



A little more than a year ago, the former steering committee of Nathan Hale Horticulture and Urban Farm (NHHUF) filed with the state of Washington to become a nonprofit corporation. Around the same time, we applied to the federal government for federal tax exempt status. The primary reason for doing so was to be able to take charge of our own finances, putting fundraising and expenditures for the development of the Farm directly in our hands.

We learned that the IRS granted our status as a nonprofit, public charity on July 28 of 2016, retroactive to our date of application. We currently have a four member board of directors, which by our



bylaws is expandable to nine board members. We are always on the look-out for board candidates who are dedicated to our mission:

Friends of Nathan Hale Horticulture and Urban Farm supports the Farm's mission to provide students with hands-on experience in horticulture, urban farming, environmental science, entrepreneurship and citizenship.

Our board meetings are typically held on the first and third Wednesdays of the month from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. We welcome those who think they may be interested in helping out in any capacity. We would love to have help with fundraising, graphic design and layout, education, and outreach. If you are interested in attending a board meeting, please contact Katherine Ransel at kransel@gmail.com

Work Parties – Where the Shovels Meet the Chip Pile - by Katherine Ransel



We depend on many hands and hearts to transform the once weed-infested site of the NHHUF greenhouse and surrounding grounds into a living laboratory for the horticulture program. Our aim is to develop the site so that it is self-sustaining and capable of producing healthy plants that are useful as edibles, herbs, pollinators, and for other beneficial purposes, and contributes to the students' understanding of the natural interconnectedness of plants, animals, air, water and other aspects of the environment.

Every step taken to begin to realize this vision is attributable to an army of students and community members without whom we could not have accomplished anything. We are so grateful for the steadiness of volunteers who have come time and again throughout the school year to our once a month work parties (this year, held on the third Sunday of the month from 11 am to 1 pm), and to our weekly work parties during the summer (every Wednesday from 6:30 - 8:30 pm).





In addition to these regularly scheduled work parties, we have had a few very special ones. Both last year and this, on the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend, we had enormous turnout. Last year, Nathan Hale horticulture students were responsible for bringing legions of their friends. And this MLK weekend, we had the help of United Way and Seattle Works to hold the largest work party we have ever had! In addition to our students, we had groups from the Washington Conservation Corps, UW's Foster PhD program, Theta Xi Fraternity, the Community Psychiatric Clinic, and a youth group from Calvin Presbyterian Church, as well as several community members. It was awesome, as the kids say about everything. Really!

We also had a terrific work party with Seattle Works volunteers last spring, who came to us from The Boeing Company. They were the heroes who first attacked the belligerent blackberries on the side of the hill.

Work parties are a great way to “get your feet wet” at the Farm, literally and figuratively. Please contact kransel@gmail.com to be added to our email list for work parties.





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Board of Directors:

Jessica Torvik
Katherine Ransel
Keith Mastenbrook
Randy Kilmer

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Seattle Public Schools/Washington Green Schools

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Blooma Tree Experts
DripWorks
Dunn Lumber
Ed Hume Seed Company
Osborne Seed Company
Pacific Topsoils
Seattle Tree Preservation

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Starbucks of Lake City

Professional Services:

Barbara Petty and AccMan Full Service
Accounting
Biobest Integrated Pest Management
FloraFinder
Horticulture Services
Sound Horticulture

Guest Horticulture Class Speakers:

Jenny Glass (WWU Extension Plant Pathologist)
Keith Mastenbrook (Westland Gardens
Landscape Design)
Lisa Taylor (Garden Educator and Consultant)
Matt Davis (Professional Sommelier)

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And the many students, neighbors, families and community groups who have made our work parties successful and fun. We could have accomplished nothing without you.

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