



Nathan Hale Urban Farm's

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Permaculture Prattle

SPRING PLANT SALE/COMPOST GIVEAWAY

The Nathan Hale Plant Sale is next week! It starts on Wednesday, May 6th, (2 to 6 pm) and continues Thursday, May 7 (2 to 6 pm), and Saturday, May 9th, 9 am to 3 pm. It will be held at the greenhouse north of Jane Addams Middle School, 110th and 34th Ave NE, in northeast Seattle. See *Inside the Greenhouse*, below, for more information!

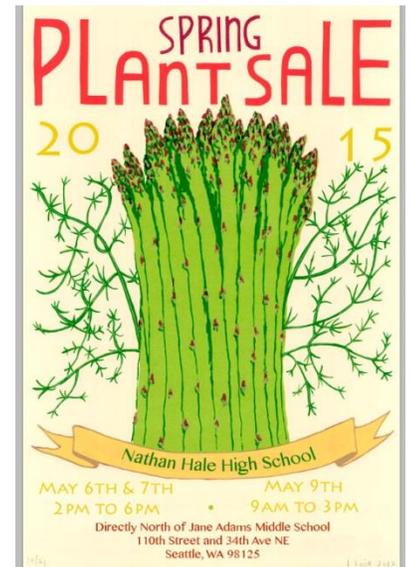
We are also hosting a compost give-away in the lower parking lot directly north of Jane Addams and below the greenhouse. It is sponsored by Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle Tilth, and Lentz Enterprises (which composts all of Seattle's residential food and yard waste up on Camano Island).

Please come and help yourself to 1/2 yard of compost (we will have a display that demonstrates what 1/2 yard looks like). Bring your own containers, shovels, and gloves and follow the signs off of 34th Ave NE between 110 and 115th St to the compost give-away and the plant sale.

Inside the Greenhouse by Randy Kilmer



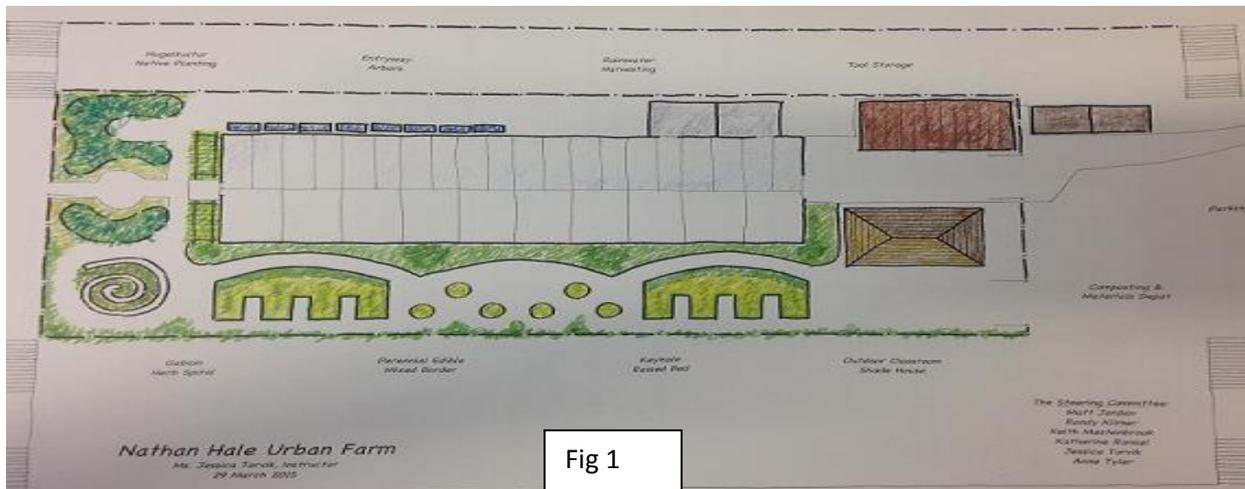
The Nathan Hale Greenhouse Plant Sale is coming up soon. The fuchsias, fuchsia baskets, geraniums, tomatoes and all sorts of fruit, vegetable and herb starts are just about ready for sale. This year we have been experimenting with bio-controls, which are doing a great job of controlling whiteflies and aphids. We have been releasing predatory midges and wasps (non-stinging) into the greenhouse. We



have also sprayed a fungus that grows on the carapace of the insects, killing the white flies and thrips, and spreading to infect new insects. These naturally occurring organisms are harmless to humans and the environment. We look forward to seeing you at our plant sale, as sale proceeds support both student horticulture programs and the Nathan Hale Urban Farm plans.

Outside the Greenhouse by Keith Mastenbrook

This is a time of "firsts" as we initiate our planned changes to the Nathan Hale Urban Farm. Please refer to the Concept Plan for an overview of the many changes we are making to the garden (fig. 1). There are at least two projects that are currently moving forward, one a student's senior project and the other a major reshaping of the core garden area.



Zoe Gluck has been working with the Design & Implementation Work Group to build twin arbors at the western end of the greenhouse. On April 4th, a team of students and volunteers led by Zoe poured the concrete footings for the arbors. They did a great job



lining them up! Each footing was dug deep into the ground and filled with at least 200 pounds of concrete to firmly anchor the arbors. When completed, the arbors will support edible vines that will screen and shade the greenhouse cooling intake vents. The ground under the arbors will be planted with shorter plants to keep the vents flowing freely. The arbors will also frame the future student entrance to the site, improving the aesthetics of the western end of the greenhouse.

Matt Jordan, one of our community volunteers and a member of the steering committee, has led efforts to convert the former raised planting boxes into taller, key-



hole designed raised beds. This new configuration will allow for a deeper soil profile and provide students access to the plants without having to kneel on the ground. The key-hole pattern provides the maximum amount of planting bed with the minimum amount of pathway, and creates beds that don't get stepped on. We decided to reuse the existing timber boxes because we believe that repurposing them is better than disposing of them. The next step will be adding a third level of Juniper timbers, bringing the beds to a height of 30-

inches. Hugelkultur will form the northern edge of these beds, a permaculture technique involving the burial of wood. As the wood decays it becomes like a sponge, holding water. This feeds the roots of plants, which helps to fully anchor all the soil in place. The hugelkultur zone will be planted with perennial plants in order to reduce the need to dig and disturb the soil.

We are reusing existing topsoil on site to begin refilling the beds. On top we will add imported topsoil, which we hope will smoother out the weeds from the reused soil and create a good planting environment. Diligence in weeding is a necessity as we begin in earnest our plan to reshape the Nathan Hale Urban Farm. As part of that process, the Design & Implementation Work Group will be initiating a regular schedule of Sunday afternoon work parties. We all hope to see you there from time to time, as many hands make lighter work.

Spring Networking and Planning Party

by Katherine Ransel

On March 29th, a windy Sunday afternoon, the Farm hosted a spring networking and planning party. We began with a wonderful spread donated by Barbara Petty of Accman, Inc. (accounting and management services) as the steering committee greeted some 35 people who came to learn about the plans to revamp the space around the greenhouse into one that emphasizes a more natural and sustainable approach to Nathan Hale's horticulture program. We call it the Nathan Hale Urban Farm, with a permaculture twist! (see sidebar).

WHAT ON EARTH IS PERMACULTURE?

The word is a combination of two words -- permanent and agriculture. According to one innovator:

Permaculture is a philosophy of working with, rather than against nature; of protracted & thoughtful observation rather than protracted & thoughtless labour; & of looking at plants & animals in all their functions, rather than treating any area as a single-product system.

--Bill Mollison

After an introduction and a bit of Farm history from Jessica Torvik, Nathan Hale's horticulture teacher, Keith Mastenbrook, of Westland Gardens, Inc., presented a Concept Plan for phase I of the Farm (see fig. 1). Keith generously donated his time to create the design, with input from two other permaculturalists, Aaron Armstrong and Em Frothingham, and the other members of the steering committee. Everyone then toured the area, inside the greenhouse and out, to learn about current use of the space and what we plan for stage I of the redesign. We then broke out into 3 groups to brainstorm about the Farm's needs in three areas – design implementation, education and curriculum, and fundraising/community engagement – and began to lay the groundwork for forming work teams for these needs.

A Short History of the Nathan Hale Urban Farm

by Jessica Torvik



If you have gardened in the neighborhood long enough, you might know that Nathan Hale High School has had a horticulture program since the mid-1980's, and that the greenhouse and grounds used to be located just north of Meadowbrook Pond. When the city decided to expand the size of the water detention pond around 2010, the program was relocated to the current spot behind Jane Addams Middle School. Whereas the former site was shady and tucked away, the new location has an abundance of sun and presented the opportunity for a productive school garden.

Staff, students, and community members originally had visions for a year-round urban farm that could provide vegetables for school programs and neighbors in need, and possibly supply our cafeteria and/or a farm stand. Over the past four summers, students have planted rows of vegetables in raised beds and have produced a pretty impressive harvest of peppers, tomatoes, beans, cabbage, strawberries, lettuce, and kale. We have also struggled with poor soil, invasive plant species, and insufficient funds and time to accomplish our goals. These problems began to occupy more and more of our time.

A chance conversation between greenhouse volunteer Randy Kilmer and landscape designer



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Keith Mastenbrook led to the conclusion that in order for our garden to be sustainable and educational, we needed to have a clearer vision and a well-constructed plan. Since September 2014, our steering committee has engaged our larger community to help us develop this plan. Our to-do list is long, and for some of us, our muscles are weary and hands blistered, but we are well on our way!

Looking Ahead to Summer by Jessica Torvik

One of the biggest challenges that school gardeners face is figuring out how to care for the garden over the summer. At Hale, our students grow starts in the greenhouse starting in January and plant these starts outside during the spring months. In mid-June, our crew of approximately 70 students shrinks to a crew of fewer than 5, just as the garden is heading into high gear.

For the first three summers (2011, 2012 and 2013), several Hale students and their families adopted the garden over the summer. They weeded, harvested, checked the drip irrigation lines, donated food, and weeded some more, but were never able to keep up with the huge amount of work required by such a large garden. Inspired by the weekly work parties at the Meadowbrook Community Garden, we adopted a similar



model last summer, with a limited degree of success.

We are hoping that with additional publicity our work parties will be more successful this coming summer. We are planning on gathering on Sunday afternoons (3 to 5 pm) and Thursday evenings (6 to 8 pm) throughout the summer months. Down the road, it is our hope to run summer school programs at the greenhouse and garden in order to engage students year round.

A Call for Leadership, Participation and Materials

by Katherine Ransel

We invite your participation in the Farm. We need and want community involvement and we believe it will not only be fun but that you will learn in the process. I know I have. We envision three different work groups – Design & Implementation, Education, and Fundraising & Community Engagement. We are seeking both leadership and members for each of these work groups.

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We have begun to implement a Phase I Concept Design (see Fig. 1), but not only will there be more phases to design and implement in the future, we also abide by the permaculture principals that instruct (a) to observe and interact; (2) to accept feedback; and (3) to creatively use and respond to change (see Fig. 2). Some scientists call this process *adaptive management*. The point is that we will likely always be designing and redesigning on some level and we welcome your skills on this workgroup. We definitely need your help right now with implementation of phase I.

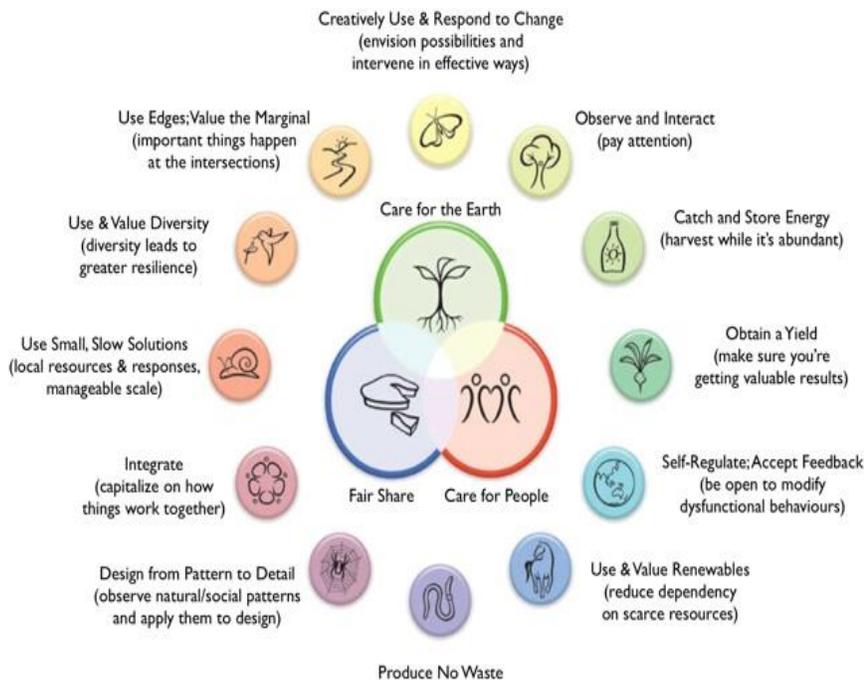


Fig. 2

The Education workgroup will consist of mentoring students and developing curriculum generally and, in particular, designing an effective summer program for the Farm. This is a great opportunity for educators and would-be educators and people who just like hanging around with teenagers.

Finally, we have a need for fundraisers and outreach folks for our Fundraising & Community Engagement Workgroup. It is hard to know just where our program will go, but in order to pay for current changes and plan for the future, we need money! We also want community businesses to support what we are doing. This can take the form of materials' donations, food and drink for events, work groups from businesses in the summer, and the like. And keeping volunteers and potential volunteers informed and engaged is a must.

If you would like to lead or co-lead one of these work groups, or simply be part of one or more of them, please contact me at kransel@gmail.com. We will be in touch with you after the dust from the plant sale and the compost give-away clears. In the meantime, **check the sidebar** for our immediate material needs, and get in touch if you can contribute any of them or have ideas about how to arrange a donation.

- **Grass clippings**
- **Fall leaves**
- **Yard tools**
(shovels, rakes, spading forks, hand tools --new or gently used)
- **Watering cans**
(plastic, with water breaker preferred)
- **Hardware cloth rolls**
- **Hoses in good condition**

