

**Ballard P-Patch
Community Garden**



**Garden
Handbook**

2025

**Dig Deep, Cultivate
Community**

Welcome to the Ballard P-Patch

Welcome new garden member,

The Leadership Team would like to officially welcome you into our wonderful, like-minded community of dedicated gardeners!

Your reasons and goals for joining a community garden are important to us. As you become familiar with our community, please don't hesitate to reach out to us with any questions, concerns, volunteer interests, or project ideas you may have during the growing season.



The Ballard P-Patch is a Community Garden—a welcome and inclusive green space for all. We encourage all our gardeners to participate in the community activities. Volunteering is at the heart of our community and ensures a vibrant, safe, and beautiful garden.

As the weather warms, we look forward to personally meeting you.

See you in the garden!

Leadership Team (2025)

Mike Chidley
Donald Howell, *Treasurer*

Cindy Kruger, *Chair*
Shawn Mincer

Sarah Pancioli
Nancy Shumate

Since 1976, the Ballard P-Patch gardeners have sunk roots in this prime, sunny location. In 2021, with an enormous effort from gardeners, the community, and State and County grants, we were able to purchase the garden from Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church whose congregation founded the P-Patch. The land is now owned by our fiscal sponsor and land-trust GROW, and with a restrictive covenant is guaranteed to remain a community garden and open space for all the generations to come.

Giving Garden Volunteering

One of the cornerstones of our community garden is our Giving Garden program. Join other P-Patch members on **Tuesday evenings, from 5-7 pm** to help with weeding, planting, watering, thin seedlings, and harvesting vegetables for the Ballard Food Bank. At the end of the work party, we gather on the patio for a potluck dinner, beverages, and conversation.

Growing for Giving, (GFG) volunteers do not have to commit for an entire growing season. Drop in and join others to volunteer anytime during the growing season; typically from April–October. We look forward to your support!

**1,500+
POUNDS**

—
**Donated
Each Year**

If you are unable to join us on Tuesday evenings, volunteer to support our neighbors in need in other ways:

Gleaning: If you are unable to harvest all that you grow, let us know, and we will glean your vegetables for the Ballard Food Bank. info@ballardppatch.org

Donations: Anytime you wish to donate from your own harvest, please leave vegetables in the bins by the tool shed by Tuesday, at 6 pm.

Grow-a-Row: Grow a few plants in your plot, specifically for the Giving Gardens. Bright ribbons are available to mark specific plants, so that the GG volunteers know which to harvest.

Watering: The GG beds require watering in addition to the Tuesday work party. If you are interested in assisting, contact info@ballardppatch.org and you will be added to the schedule.



Time spent working in the Giving Garden plots counts toward a gardener's volunteer hours.

Garden Calendar & Events

Monthly Work Party

Second Saturday of every month from 10am-noon.

Zoom News & Business Meeting

Check the [Google calendar](#) for 2025 schedule. *All are welcome!*

Spring Garden Kickoff

March 22, 2025, from 3:30-6pm at Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church

Art in the Garden Festival

August 2, 2025, from 10-5pm

Official 2025 Garden Season

April 30 thru October 31



**Volunteer
Sign Up [Form](#)**

Please visit our website for community resources, upcoming events, and general garden info. ballardppatch.org

Composting at the P-Patch

We have an extensive composting system that recycles green material from our community plots. We encourage you to learn about the system and to follow these guidelines:

Green material needs to be cleaned of dirt and rocks. Dirt and rocks pose a hazard for volunteers who run the chipper and can cause serious injury.

Green material needs to be chopped into smaller pieces (6" lengths). You can find eye protection and chopping tools in the small bin on the east side of the compost system.

Our compost system isn't 'hot' enough to kill invasive weed seeds or plant diseases. Do not compost invasive plants, tomatoes or other nightshades or diseased plants.

Do not compost food/kitchen waste or any materials other than green waste from your p-patch. Branches larger than 1/2" in diameter cannot be composted.

Use completed compost to amend your soil. You are welcome to take a bucket or two at a time. Screens for sifting compost can be found at the end of the bins.



If you are unwilling or unable to chop your green material, you must take it home for your green waste recycling.

King County Conservation District Soil Testing Program

Good soil grows good food. Many issues with plant diseases and failure to thrive will be resolved by proactive soil building.

We strongly encourage all gardeners to test their soil on a regular basis. Amending your soil based on the test results will have a positive effect on your gardening success.

Intensive gardening, such as takes place in P-Patches depletes soils of key minerals. Compost and fertilizer do not make up for these missing elements.

King County offers free testing. Information on how to test your soil is found here: kingcd.org

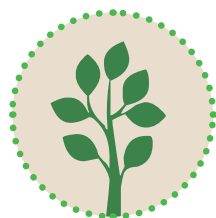
Methods of Winterizing Your Garden

Fall is a great time to build healthy soil that will provide better crop yields, improve soil texture to absorb and hold water during the growing season, and discourage weeds, plant diseases, and pests.

You want to avoid bare soil that will be compacted by the winter rains and lose soil nutrients with runoff.

Before you start, do some serious weeding in the fall. In the spring, follow up with weeding before you plant. Weeds come out much more easily after the soils are softened with the winter rains.

As a requirement by the P-Patch Program, all gardeners must winterize their individual garden plots by Oct 31.



Covering the soil with burlap is not soil building. Be a thoughtful garden steward by nurturing your soil for the next generation of gardeners to come.

Plant a Cover Crop

Benefits: Plants cover the soil; their roots absorb rain; and cover crops create biomass, suppress winter and spring weeds, and support pollinators in early spring.

Bonus: Some cover crops are edible.

Critical: Plant early enough so there is good germination before cold weather begins. (By late August is recommended.)

Fall

Plant a variety of cover crops in late summer or early fall: Legumes (which fix nitrogen) Red Clover, Fava Beans, Austrian Field Peas, Vetch.

Spring

Cut plants to the ground and compost the tops. Dig in the roots two weeks before planting a new crop.

Plant Overwintering Crops

Plant crops that can be harvested in the fall, and/or will overwinter and yield crops in the spring.

August and September are optimum times to plant.

Note: See Seattle's Tilth Alliance's [*Maritime Northwest Garden Guide*](#) for suggested crops to plant.

Methods of Winterizing Your Garden



Bury Garden Waste

Dig a trench in your plot and bury weed-free garden waste.

Cover with soil and plant.

Use Sheet Compost Mulch

Interbay Mulch

Cover the plot with an equal mixture of browns (leaves or straw) and greens (chopped garden waste that doesn't contain weeds that have gone to seed, coffee grounds, grass clippings, or brewery mash.)

Mix the components and pile them on top of the plot to a depth of 6 to 12 inches. Cover the pile with burlap or cotton sheets to hold in place. Worms eventually break down the mulch, improving the soil.

In the spring, make indentations in the mulch and plant vegetable starts.

Lasagna Mulch

The ingredients are the same as in Interbay Mulch, but the browns and greens are layered in alternating layers.

No mixing is necessary.

Cover with burlap, cotton sheets or aged compost.

In the spring, make indentations in the mulch and plant vegetable starts.

A Gardener in Good Standing

Per the Department of Neighborhoods policy, the requirements to be a gardener in good standing are as follows:

Be actively gardening during the growing season, from April 30–October 31. Have properly winterized your garden by the end of the season.

Volunteer and record a minimum of eight community hours during the gardening year.

Maintain organic gardening practices. You may not use non-organic pesticides or other chemicals in your garden or use treated lumber for your borders.

Keep all the paths around your garden weeded. Coordinate with your garden neighbor to share the work.

Do not allow weeds within your garden to go to seed.

Harvest or donate ripe produce. Do not let crops fall and rot—this attracts rodents, increases the possibility of theft, and are a waste of resources.

When possible, please limit the use of plastics in the garden.



A team of your fellow gardeners monitors plots each month. Gardens not in compliance will be given notice. Multiple notices may result in not being able to renew your plot next season.

If you are facing a hardship impacting your ability to meet these requirements, please contact your leadership team ASAP at info@ballardppatch.org

UW 2023 Soil Contamination Study Overview

During the summer of 2023, the UW Bothell undertook a study of heavy metal contamination in the produce from Seattle P-Patches and compared those with organic produce from a variety of grocery stores, including food co-ops. The heavy metals tested were lead, cadmium, arsenic and mercury.

All P-Patches showed some level of heavy metals that were higher than recommended, when eaten at 1 cup per day. This level of contamination would be found in ALL urban gardens in addition to P-Patches due to urban environmental pollution.

You can read the full study on the website, at BallardPPatch.org.

There are specific references to the studies' findings in Ballard on Page 10, and some suggestions for remediation on pages 16 & 17.

The Dept of Neighborhoods (managing Seattle's P-Patches) has reviewed the study, as has the Ballard Leadership Team.

We believe that it's important for everyone gardening at the Ballard P-Patch to have reviewed the study and the recommendations. Each gardener will need to assess their own comfort level with the crops which were of most concern. Please note that only certain plots were sampled. This doesn't mean that if your plot isn't listed that it doesn't have a similar issue.

We have noted that plots that have had consistent soil building efforts by the gardener over a period of some years, had less contamination than those which did not. This is in line with the recommendations provided for remediation.

According to the study, the question of "should I garden" is affirmed with some caveats. 1 cup per day (the measurement of evaluation) of any single type of produce may be an unlikely amount of consumption for many gardeners. You may want to tailor your crops to your comfort level — and to consider the recommendations for remediation provided in the report, as well as consult additional resources available on the website and in the gardener's handbook (also on-line).

Please reach out to members of your leadership team if you have further questions. We are happy to discuss this study with you.

Please note that the free soil testing available through the King Co Extension service does not test for heavy metals.

Garden Safe

Dr. Melanie Malone, University Of Washington Bothell

Community Garden Engagement Project

Email: Drmalone@Uw.edu

Is My Garden Safe?

At this time, there are no definitive standards for soil contaminant levels safe for food production that reflect the soil site conditions and management practices common in community gardens. In the 1990s, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established what are known as Soil Screening Levels (SSLs), which often serve as a general guide regarding levels of contaminants in soils. However, because these values were not developed for Urban Community Gardens (UCGs) specifically, they may not be able to address contaminants in UCGs that may impact gardeners.

Should I Garden?

The possibility of contamination at a Garden Safe garden site should not keep you from gardening there!

By understanding the state of the environment in and around your garden site and by learning how contaminants arrive in and on different produce, it is possible to reduce the amount of contaminants you and your garden come in contact with, while continuing to grow healthy, nutritious food.

Who is most at risk?

While contaminants in gardens can affect anyone who uses the garden, young children and the elderly are most at risk.

In addition to other biological factors like general health and lifestyle, and inherited family traits, possible health effects of exposure to any contaminant depend on its particular toxicity, the level at which it is present, as well as how long and how often the exposure occurs.

What plants should I be concerned about?

Best plants to grow in contaminated soils:

- **Vegetable Fruits and Seeds:** tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, okra (seed pods only), squash (summer and winter), corn, cucumber, melons, peas and beans (shelled or cleaned very thoroughly), onions (bulb only)
- **Tree Fruits:** apples, pears
- **Berries:** blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries (if cleaned very thoroughly)

Less suitable for contaminated soils:

- **Green Leafy Vegetables:** lettuce, spinach, Swiss chard, beet leaves, cabbage, kale, collards
- **Herbs,** like basil and rosemary
- **Other Vegetables:** broccoli, cauliflower
Root Crops: carrots, potatoes, turnips

Garden Safe

Tips to Reduce Exposure:

- Wear a **bandana or face cover** when handling dust and soil.
- **Supervise small children** in garden settings (indoor plants, too).
- **Wear gloves** as a barrier between your hands and soil and **avoid touching your face** while working with soil.
- **Wash your hands** after handling soil and produce.
- **Remove the outermost leaves** of leafy greens.
- **Ask your garden manager** if past uses of your garden site are known or if your site has been tested before.

Why collect soil samples?

We are looking for potentially harmful chemicals in community gardens in order to help gardeners and their communities stay safe. Community gardens provide great benefits (and delicious food!) to the gardener, their families, and their communities, but often the places where community gardens are now have previously been **sites of industrial use**. These sites are not always cleaned up to the highest standard before they are repurposed into gardening spaces,

meaning that the soil that gardeners previously used to grow their food could have potentially unsafe chemicals in it.

What is a soil background?

A **soil background** is kind of like a soil's "family history"— soil backgrounds focus on the concentrations of contaminants that are either naturally occurring or were a result of historical human activity that are not influenced by that area's current use.

Exposure Pathways

Exposure pathways (also called contamination routes) are ways in which contaminants enter gardeners and their communities. For soils, the three general ways contaminants enter our bodies are dermal contact, ingestion, and inhalation.

- **Dermal Contact:** Skin contact with soil amendments or contaminated water, sediment, soil or dust.
- **Ingestion:** Eating or drinking contaminated food, water and other liquids. Contamination can accumulate in soil or water via sources like poor irrigation or manure from livestock raised on contaminated feed.
- **Inhalation:** Breathing in contaminated dust or soil.

Resources

EPA Urban Garden Fact Sheet." 2011. <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields>

Augustsson, Anna. "Metal uptake by homegrown vegetables— The relative importance in human health risk assessments at contaminated sites." 2015.

Turner, Allison. "Urban Agriculture and Soil Contamination: An Introduction to Urban Gardening." 2009.

Shayler, Hannah et al. "Soil Contaminants and Best Practices for Healthy Gardens." 2009.

P-Patch Code Of Conduct

Seattle Department of Neighborhoods Director's Rule #1-2010

While enjoying your community garden, the following are prohibited:

- * Anti-Discrimination Policy:
 - Harassment of a member of the public, gardener, or staff
 - Disruptive/unsafe behavior that disturbs others in the garden
 - Sexual misconduct
- Destruction of property
- Spitting, urinating, or defecating (except in designated restrooms)
- Unleashed dogs (Please pick up after your dog.)
- Theft of plants or property
- Possession, sale, or use of illegal drugs
- Disposing of unwanted items anywhere but in a designated trash or recycling receptacle
- Possession of firearms or other weapons
- Any conduct that unreasonably interferes with other people's use of the P-Patch
- Drinking of alcoholic beverages without a permit
- Smoking or vaping (Washington State Code RCW 70.160.030)
- Camping or setting up structures
- Improper use of water fixtures (no bathing, shampooing, or washing clothes)

Failure to comply with the rules may result in:

- Disqualification from further participation in the P-Patch Program.
- Withdrawal of permission to remain on the property for a specified period of time.
- Any person who enters or remains on P-Patch property after having been notified that their permission to be on the property has been withdrawn is subject to citation or arrest for criminal trespass. (SMC 12A.08.040.)

Please contact the main office with questions or concerns:

206.684.0264

p-patch.don@seattle.gov

seattle.gov/neighborhoods

Gardening & Community Resources

How to Grow

[Better Ground](#)

[Gardenista: Ways to Improve Garden Soil](#)

[GROW](#)

[Grow Smart Grow Safe](#)

[Swansons Nursery Plant Care Guides](#)

[Tilth Alliance](#)

[Westside Gardener](#)

When to Plant

[Washington State Planting Calendar](#)

What to Plant

[Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds](#)

[Charley's Greenhouse Supply](#)

[Nichols Garden Nursery](#)

[Row 7 Seed Company](#)

[Siskiyou Seeds](#)

[Territorial Seed Company](#)

[Victory Seed Company](#)

[Walt's Organic Fertilizer Company](#)

What Not to Plant

[P-Patch Program Invasive Plants Guidelines](#)

Garden Address

8527 25th Ave NW, Seattle WA, 98117

We have access to a restroom at Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church. You will receive information on how to access the bathroom at your orientation. Please be courteous and tidy up after yourself!

Water Keys

You can purchase a 4 Way Water Silcock Key at a hardware store or on [Amazon](#).

Garden Newsletter

In the coming weeks, please make sure you are receiving our Mailchimp newsletter from info@ballardppatch.org.

If you don't receive the garden newsletter please email info@ballardppatch.org and we will make sure you are subscribed. (Check spam folder before emailing us.)

Please do not unsubscribe from these mails. It's the primary way we communicate with the community about work parties, special events, and updates on ongoing projects.

Ballard P-Patch Website

ballardppatch.org

Department of Neighborhoods Garden Coordinator

Alicia Choi: Alicia.Choi@seattle.gov

Email Alicia to sign up for on-line registration and volunteer hours recording on the [DON website](#).

Email Leadership Team

info@ballardppatch.org

Leadership Team (2025)

Mike Chidley

Donald Howell, *Treasurer*

Cindy Kruger, *Chair*

Shawn Mincer

Sarah Panciroli

Nancy Shumate

Garden Steward

Roy Bueler