

# Kids get their hands dirty to learn about healthy eating

**The South Whidbey School Farm and Gardens program teaches kids how to grow their own good food.**

By Valerie Easton

Special to The Seattle Times

*The complete article can be seen in the September 18, 2016 issue of the Seattle Times' Pacific NW Magazine*



A total of 550 students, kindergarten through fifth grade, work the farm; every child at South Whidbey Elementary spends at least 45 minutes weekly, or every other week, at the garden.



The kids practice gross motor skills as they dig and chop. A long, colorful flower border teaches them about pollinators, natural dyes and edible blooms. Most of all, they learn about ecology and seasonal rhythms as they turn over cover crops, plant seeds and tend the plants until it's time to harvest. They meet indoors in an old portable classroom during December and early January, but spend most of the year out in the garden.

photos courtesy of Cary Peterson

Program coordinator Cary Peterson encourages the kids to nibble from the garden.

"I had to plant more sorrel; the kids love it," says Peterson, pointing to plants with leaves shredded from enthusiastic nibbling. "The kids' palates are engaged when they're here; they're excited about all the tastes."



It's taken an island, or the south end of one, anyway, to get the garden up and going. A variety of nonprofits contributed funds, matching grants and work parties to establish the program.

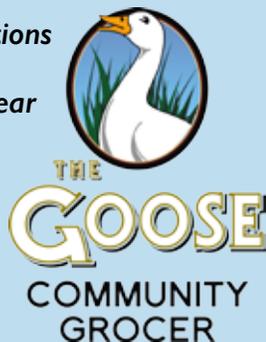
*Valerie Easton is a Seattle garden expert and freelance writer. (And also lives on South Whidbey!)*

**Help us raise \$60,000 for the School Garden Program! The Goose Grocer will match up to \$30,000 raised from our community. Gifts of all sizes —\$5 to \$5,000—are welcome and 100% of your gift goes to the match.**

Support your local School Garden Program!

The Goose will match all donations made to the Garden Program during the 2016-2017 school year —up to \$30,000!

Please return this form to Goosefoot, PO Box 114, Langley, WA 98260. Donate on-line at [goosefoot.org](http://goosefoot.org) (there will be a place to designate your gift for the school garden program). Contact [marian@goosefoot.org](mailto:marian@goosefoot.org) or 360-321-4232 if you have questions.



100% of your donation will go directly to the match!

[www.whidbeyschoolgardens.wordpress.com](http://www.whidbeyschoolgardens.wordpress.com)

Enclosed is my donation of  \$25  \$50  \$100  
 \$250  \$500  \$1,000

My check is enclosed (payable to Goosefoot)

Please charge my credit card:  Visa  MasterCard

Account #: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Card Security #: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## Here's what people are saying about the School Garden Program!

*The South Whidbey Island (WA) project shows how school gardens connect to all aspects of a school day to support academic success, healthy eating habits, and connections to nature.*

—Lauren Howe, Director, Slow Gardens program, Slow Food USA

*It definitely makes science more interesting and fun. I'm able to get kids outside doing science, instead of being in*

*the classroom with textbooks talking about science. That makes me want to come to work every day!*

—Susan Milan, 7th grade science teacher, Langley Middle School, speaking in *Cultivating Kids*, a film about the SWSD garden program by local filmmakers Mark Dworkin and Melissa Young and available from [bullfrogfilms.com](http://bullfrogfilms.com).

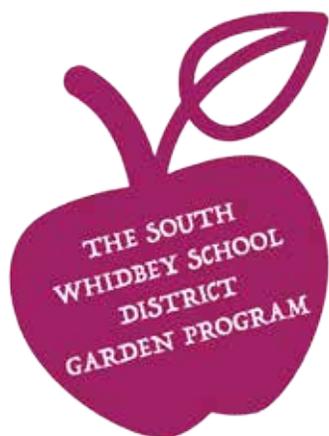
*It is easy to say that change is too difficult. But South Whidbey dug in — into the soil, that is.*

*They turned an unused play field into a farm.*

*First-graders learn about soil and how to plant seeds. Second-graders dissect a pea pod to learn about plant structure. Third-graders write about growing kale, lettuce, spinach, and peas. Fourth-graders map the farm and design pea trellises. Fifth-graders conduct plant-growth experiments with light, nutrition, water, and temperature.*

—Ellen Gray, former executive director of the Washington Sustainable Food & Farming Network, (WSFFN) writing for the May 2016 issues of *Edible Seattle*.

***Well, we have some breaking news right now. There are reports of children eating vegetables. And they're doing it happily!*** —Eric Wilkinson, KING 5 New Report, reporting on the SWSD garden program on May 2, 2016



*"The South Whidbey School District has created a wonderful program that demonstrates the endless possibilities of school gardens to serve as powerful education tools and promote healthy lifestyle habits among students."*

—Chef Ann Cooper  
Founder, Chef Ann Foundation  
Director of Food Services, Boulder Valley School District  
Author, *Lunch Lessons: Changing the Way We Feed Our Children*



A collaboration between the South Whidbey School District, Good Cheer, Goosefoot, Whidbey Institute, and Whidbey Island Nourishes (WIN).