



Seattle
Parks & Recreation

Urban Food Systems Program

Healthy Environment Stories



Seattle Parks and Recreation's (SPR) [Urban Food Systems Program](#) grew out of partnerships with community leaders, nonprofits, and the Department of Neighborhoods' [P-Patch Program](#).

This grassroots program responds to and enhances the efforts of Seattle locavores and gardeners. It takes advantage of SPR's public land and community centers by providing access to healthy food, sustainable environmental practices, and cultural place-making centered on relevant agro-ecological methods. It responds to all of SPR's three broad goal areas (Healthy People, Healthy Environment, Strong Communities) and the City's [Equity and Environment Initiative](#), and engages the power of neighborhood voices.

The first notable effort began in 1995 when the tireless Joyce Moty, activist and leader of [Friends of Bradner Gardens Park](#), applied for and received a [Neighborhood Matching Fund](#) award to create a master plan for the site in the Mt. Baker neighborhood. Many projects and partnerships later, this pesticide-free park now features a community garden and tool shed for gardeners of all skill levels. Partners include [King County Master Gardeners](#), [Seattle Tilth](#), [Seattle P-Patch Program](#) and the [Washington State University Cooperative Extension](#). Solar panels on the shelter house generate enough power that even on cloudy days power is returned to the grid, and proximity to the park's basketball court shows that sports and gardens can share space in harmony.

Under the leadership of founder Gail Savina, the nonprofit [City Fruit](#), the [Washington Department of Natural Resources](#) and SPR teamed up in 2010 to form the Orchard Steward Partnership to train volunteers to care for fruit trees using organic best management practices in five Seattle parks. Today the program services close to 20 parks as far-flung as the [Burke-Gilman Trail](#) and [Dr. Jose Rizal Park](#), engaging over 500 volunteers. By the end of 2018, volunteers will contribute over 1,200 hours of hands-on tending to the trees. In 2017, City Fruit collected 55,000 pounds of fruit and donated most to Seattle's emergency food system of food banks and community kitchens.

Efforts within SPR have grown over the years. By 2008, many of its 26 community centers featured an on-site community garden. The guiding principle is that community members who help grow that food can take what they need from the harvest; the rest, tens of thousands of pounds each year, goes to support community center food preparation programs and the emergency food system.

Urban Food Systems Program Priorities

- Provide access to healthy food and active recreation opportunities
- Community engagement with parkland used for food production
- Provide coordinated recreation and learning opportunities focused on the Urban Food System
- Outreach and engagement of youth, seniors, and other underserved communities

This year, SPR is creating an inventory of fruit trees and gardens with an eye to crafting a strategic plan for their care and use. A contract with the Pomegranate Center will result in a review of the program and recommendations for the future.

Food-related programs at community centers vary in what they offer and what participants take away:

- A program for seniors takes participants from Carkeek Park where they have fruit to Rainier Beach Community Center for green salads, then it's on to Rainier Beach Urban Farm and Wetlands for a strawberry dessert.
- A federally-funded summer lunch program provides sack lunches for children and teens at more than 40 park sites.
- Garden Squad, a group of middle-schoolers from the South Park neighborhood, grow food at [Marra-Desimone Park](#), and hold monthly themed meals at South Park Community Center. For a recent Thanksgiving meal, participants were required to research recipes, create a budget, then buy, prepare, serve the food, and clean up afterwards.
- Two-thirds of community centers feature farm-to-table community kitchens through SPR partner the [Associated Recreation Council](#).
- Teen Top Chef, offered through the Late Night Recreation Program, features teen chefs competing in healthy meal preparation. Judging the efforts is a panel comprised of a teen, a Late Night Recreation police officer, and one SPR staff member.
- In Spring Quarter 2018, SPR is offering more than 60 food-related programs.

Food programs at SPR do not just teach people how to garden, they provide food for the community and train teens in leadership and employment readiness. These skills can lead to careers spanning the food industry, entrepreneurship, non-profit, and public sectors. From community efforts in public parks to neighborhood-based programs in community centers, SPR provides a natural intersection between the community, their environment, and healthy food.

Learn more

www.seattle.gov/parks/about-us/special-initiatives-and-programs/urban-food-systems-program

Community Garden Sites

Check out one of Seattle Parks and Recreation's Community Center Garden or Orchard sites to see the variety of ways healthy food is being grown and shared.

- [Ballard Community Center](#)
6020 28th Ave NW
- [Delridge Community Center](#)
4501 Delridge Way SW
- [Garfield Community Center](#)
2323 East Cherry St
- [Meadowbrook Community Garden and Orchard](#)
10517 35th Ave NE
- [Piper's Orchard, Carkeek Park](#)
950 NW Carkeek Park Rd
- [Rainier Community Center](#)
4600 38th Ave S
- [Rainier Beach Community Center](#)
8825 Rainier Ave S
- [Ravenna Community Garden](#)
5200 Ravenna Ave NE
- [South Park Community Center](#)
8319 8th Ave S
- [Yesler Community Center](#)
917 E Yesler Way

Learn more and get involved in building community through urban farming by contacting the community center in your neighborhood. Discover volunteer opportunities, educational classes, community events, and more!

