



Nathan Hale Urban Farm's

Vol 4, Issue 2, November, 2019

Hale Horticulture Headlines

Message from our Horticulture Teacher, Matt Davis



The late fall frost has arrived. All of the hustle of late summer harvest, squeezing in a fall crop, and putting the garden to bed has been called to halt. Nature has simplified my to-do list to two tasks: reflect on 2019 and dream up new ideas, full of optimism for 2020.

I began my first year leading the horticulture program at Hale one year ago. It has been as much a learning opportunity for me as it has been for my students. Taking the lead meant jumping into a 40+ year legacy, full of success and stamped with the signatures of people who have felt more like mentors than colleagues. It has been easy to point to things in the program that need to continue, and for much of the fall harvest my ambitions were simple: change nothing. However, it was those same mentors who pushed me to plant seeds of my own and see what can grow.

During a chilly January brainstorming session looking at this beloved program, a clear direction emerged: Grow our community, cultivate deeper connections between our farm and our students' lives, as well as their families' and the greater Lake City community. Here are just a few of the things that unfolded:

January-June: Students established new garden beds beyond our fences. People who normally walk past the urban farm on their way to somewhere else have been stopping and taking our invitation to come in.

May: A student-led political action effort began growing heirloom Zapatista corn - a project that has continued through the fall with our Latinx Scholars student group. We have connected more of our Hale community, and learned a lot about the need for diversity in our food chain. Just this month, corn stocks and marigolds from the garden were used in the Latinx Scholars 4th annual El Dia de los Muertos community celebration. Next year, we will build on this year's progress (see article within, *Building Bridges*).

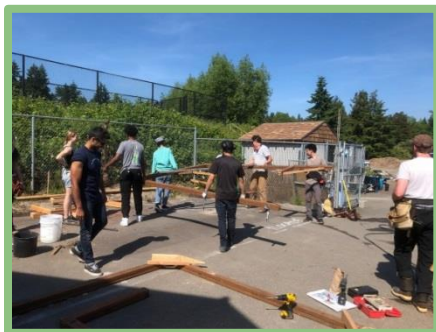
July: Community organizer Cesar Garcia spoke with our summer school students and inspired them to create action plans. Small groups made plans to use our facility to connect the greater lake city community – each plan blew us away!

All year long, the horticulture class has been experimenting with planting in guilds, or companion planting. Each plant in a bed has its needs met by co-planting with another variety. Each of these small beds is an interconnected ecosystem. I can't think of any greater metaphor for the work we are doing here in our small patch of Lake City.



Our New Tool Box! by Katherine Ransel

In our spring newsletter, we reported on this year's collaboration with the UW Neighborhood Design/Build Studio and plans for a new tool storage system (<https://bit.ly/2MCMbab>). In May, architecture class members and instructors began delivering pieces of the tool storage structure to our site (below left); proceeded to lay the foundation for the structure and assemble the framing materials (below center); and finally, began to put the pieces together (below right).



By June, we had a beautiful new tool storage system (opposite) with three separate sections, two with doors opening to wide and deep storage areas allowing for the immediate view and placement of tools. The structure's middle section has shelving and is open to allow for outdoor potting and other activities better accomplished outside of the greenhouse, but with some protection from the elements. The entire structure is fronted by an arbor walkway and elegant laddered pieces that hold movable chalkboards for class instructions.



On June 13th, we dedicated the new structure with a party/ribbon-cutting attended by the UW students, their teachers, relatives and friends. The party was graced with

middle-eastern bites prepared by Nathan Hale Nutrition and Wellness class students and enjoyed by all. We are so grateful to those students and their teacher, Stephanie Konarska, and to Steve Badanes, Jake LaBarre and their architecture students for all they have done for us (opposite).





Two Events to Welcome the Holidays! by Marcia Holiday



Last year we held our first **Winter Open House**. We had so much fun that we are inviting everyone to join us again this year. Just in time for the holiday season, we will be selling our student-created wreaths and student raised-and-nurtured poinsettias while feasting on cookies, holiday breads, and hot cider. We may even have a few surprises in store for those of you who join us! Help us celebrate the season, our new Tool Box (tool storage area), and our new horticulture teacher, Matt Davis. We hope to see you at Nathan Hale Urban Farm (greenhouse north of Jane Addams Middle School, 113th and 31st NE), **Sunday, November 24th, 12 to 2 pm.**

If you miss the open house, come to the **Ballard Sunday Farmers Market on December 1st**, where we have been invited to join the market's vendors for the day. Our students and board members will be at the Market **from 10am to 3pm** with our wreaths, poinsettias and holiday cheer. Join us at Seattle's best Farmers Market (so voted many years running) for wreaths, flowers, food, organic veggies and all the Market's wonderful offerings. The Market operates along the historic cobblestone stretch of Ballard Avenue NW between Vernon Place and 22nd Avenue, and up 22nd Ave from Ballard Ave to NW Market Street.



Building Bridges to our Lake City Community by Katherine Ransel

In June, because of our desire to create a connection with the community that supports and surrounds Nathan Hale's diverse student body, our steering committee members met with two founders of the Lake City Collective (LCC), Peggy Hernandez and Cesar Garcia. The LCC builds the capacity of marginalized populations in Lake City to address issues like economic development, affordable housing, displacement, early learning, across the ages programing, and all aspects of livability in the community.

<https://www.facebook.com/LakeCityCollective/>



The LCC has several goals we can help with, including increasing the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in the community; providing access to ingredients used in the diets of immigrant communities; finding more green space, especially for the Little Brook community, and improvement in the condition of existing green areas; and creating a plan for community gardens and container gardening for apartment dwellers.



Epazote

As a result of our meeting, and in addition to delivering much of our produce to the North Helpline food bank, we have started growing plants of culinary and cultural significance to the Latino community, such as epazote, an aromatic herb commonly used in the cuisine of Mexico and Guatemala; the complex of vegetables known as “the three sisters” (Zapatista corn, beans and squash), one of many components of milpas, an agricultural system which began in Central America; and the marigolds central to the altars created for Day of the Dead.

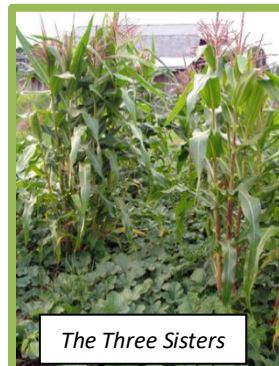
Squash flowers are prized in Mexican cuisine as is squash generally. We have been adding various varieties of squash to the garden, as well as some rare chile peppers, Mexican oregano, the essential Mexican herb hoja santa (aka hierba santa), tomatillos, and a green known as huauzontles. In the goosefoot family along with quinoa, lamb's quarters, purslane and amaranth, huauzontles is an herbaceous plant grown for its buds and seeds.



Hoja (hierba) Santa

Our efforts are in the early and experimental stage. While learning what works and what plants are most important to the community, we also want to devise a way to share them that is equitable and sustainable. We also would like to learn about plants important to other ethnic groups in our community, for instance, East African communities.

Another one of LCC’s founders, Tsegay Berhe, is from Eritrea. And we have many Somalis, Ethiopians and other East Africans in our community as well. We look forward to learning about the culinary and cultural plant preferences of these and other ethnic groups in our community and how we can connect with them horticulturally!



The Three Sisters



Marigolds



Huauzontles

Summer Learning at the Nathan Hale Urban Farm by Jessica Torvik

On a perfect August afternoon, Hale horticulture teacher Matt Davis and I stood on a bluff above Richmond Beach and listened to the final presentations from our second class of summer school students. They connected ideas learned throughout our month together into a “sales pitch” for a product that could be used to increase access to fresh, local produce or that could repurpose waste from food production. We were gratified to hear their unique ideas and find out just how much they had learned about horticulture and agriculture in our 80 hours together.



Introduction to Horticulture is one of many summer courses offered through the [Seattle Skills Center](#). We are grateful to Skills Center Principal Dan Golosmon and our CTE (Career and Technical Education) Pathway Specialist Susan Grant for including us in the summer program, in part because it provided an answer to a decade-long problem familiar to many school gardeners: who will care for the garden and greenhouse when school is not in session? The summer school program has not only solved that problem, but created new opportunities for students and the Farm.

Our students range from 9th to 12th graders and earn a semester of CTE credit toward graduation in just four weeks' time. Students can take on interesting projects that simply aren't feasible during the school year because they are with us 4 hours every day. This summer's students finished a 120-foot long bed along our south fence line; built a trellis system for tomatoes; removed invasive plants from our native [hugelkultur](#) beds as well as the future site of our water harvesting system; and completed work on another large hugelkultur installation begun at our Martin Luther King Day work party. It is rewarding for instructors and students to have the time to plan and tackle major projects from start to finish.



Other highlights included regular visits from our club students and a pair of miniature goats, weekly all-day field trips to local horticulture sites, and a partnership with Hale alumnus Matthew Hilliard (class of 2011)(opposite) for weekly lessons about composting. Matthew taught students the science of composting and provided hands-on experience to improve our composting practices. Students installed two in-ground digesters, re-established our large outdoor worm bin, and built two indoor worm composting systems.

Our field trips included visits to Kubota Garden in the Beacon Hill neighborhood, South Seattle College for a campus tour, Bailey Family Farm in Snohomish for raspberry picking, and Sky Nursery for a behind-the-scenes look at nursery operations. One of my favorites was partnering with the Summer Culinary Arts students to prepare raspberry shortcake with the berries we brought home from Snohomish. We were also treated to vegetarian lasagna prepared by our summer school teaching assistant Maddie Keating, who made good use of vegetables from Bailey Farm and produce from our Urban Farm.



The summer Introduction to Horticulture course is quickly becoming a vital component of horticulture education at Nathan Hale and throughout the district. We have hosted students from not only from Hale, but also from Center School, Ballard, Roosevelt, Ingraham, and Middle College, and a number of students about to enter high school. We are impressed with their creativity and grateful for their hard work, and look forward to many more summer horticulture classes at Nathan Hale Urban Farm.

