Seed Starting for Penny Pinchers

Katie Vincent, Garden Hotline Educator

Seeing that a single transplant can ring up a four-dollar price tag or more, February and March are the “make-it-or-break-it” months for low-budget gardening. True, a little initial funding is necessary to get you started, but a one-time purchase can keep you growing your own plants indoors from seeds for years. Here’s a way to get growing even during the cold and rainy months before spring arrives, with ideas lifted from our book *Your Farm in the City*.

Before you get down to business, consider the placement of your seed germination station. You will want to make sure this area is situated where you walk by regularly and can easily clean up dirt and the occasional flood. Also consider temperature; cool season plants often require temperatures in the low 60°s F to germinate while warm weather veggies may need up to 85° F. As such, the former might be best started in an unheated garage, while the latter may need the warmest part of your house, or require a seedling heat mat. A simple thermometer will be your best friend in monitoring soil temperatures.

The lighting apparatus is the most elaborate piece of equipment required for starting seeds indoors. You’ll need a 4’ shop light fixture and fluorescent tubes in the “cool” UV spectrum, which will most closely mimic the sun’s rays. Affix the contraption to the ceiling with chains for ease of height adjustment; you will need to keep the lights consistently 1-2” above the plants, so establish this mobility early on to make your life easier.

Good hygiene is vital for your little seedlings. You’ll need to purchase a bag of seed-starting mix, as a sterile and fluffy soil medium will keep your babies healthy. As for containers, consider using something with...
Transforming Our Vision into Reality in Rainier Beach

Andrea Platt Dwyer, Executive Director

The first time Will Allen visited the Rainier Beach Urban Farm and Wetlands (RBUFW) was in 2010. At that time, the site still looked like what it used to be—a former nursery used to grow plant stock for Seattle parks. We had barely begun our efforts to transform the site into an urban farm. In fact, the community’s vision for the farm was not yet fully clear.

Fast forward three years to 2013. We now have a shared vision as well as a very active capital campaign. This past November, when Mr. Allen visited the farm for a second time, he was suitably impressed with the progress we have made. That progress can be measured not only by the significant physical changes that have taken place, but also by the tremendous outpouring of community support for the farm.

One specific measure of this progress is our capital campaign—less than six months, we have raised 72% of our campaign goal of $2.4 million! Working in partnership with the Seattle Parks Foundation and the community-based group Friends of RBUFW, we have secured $600,000 in leadership gifts from individuals and foundations, as well as $1.15 million in public dollars. Clearly, many individuals, businesses, foundations and organizations share our enthusiasm for this project.

At this point, we are on track to complete the fundraising by August, and break ground in September. However, now is not the time for complacency. That final 23% is crucial to completing our shared vision for this unique urban farm.

Stay tuned for more progress reports and opportunities to get involved in the final stages of this campaign. With your help, the next time Mr. Allen comes to Seattle, we’ll be able to show him the end result of our community’s determination to fully realize the transformative power of this very special place.

WILL ALLEN CALLS FOR A FOOD REVOLUTION

Continued from page 1

food activists representing philanthropy, local government, corporations and community nonprofits...in other words, a room full of people who can “move the needle” on increasing food access and creating jobs in the new food economy. And Allen did not pull any punches.

“What we are talking about is a good food revolution,” he said to the luncheon crowd. “And Seattle Tilth is really a leader in making this revolution possible in Seattle.”

Will Allen was joined by Seattle Tilth’s executive director in seeking to galvanize community leaders around specific ways in which we can work together to create a better local food system.

“Improving access to healthy, locally grown food is entirely within our reach,” Andrea told the crowd. Increased philanthropic investments, expanded access to public and private farmland, restaurants and grocers who source produce locally...these were just some of the measures that can be instrumental in building a better, more equitable local food system.

“People are looking for leadership on this issue and they are looking to be inspired,” said Lauren McGowan of United Way of King County. “That’s what this luncheon is all about. And it’s what Will Allen and Seattle Tilth are all about.”

However, as inspiring as the Vision and Leadership Luncheon was, the day’s best moments came amid the noise and bustle at Rainier Beach High School, where our Seattle Youth Garden Works farm crew helped build a new school garden with Will Allen looking on. The garden build was followed by a community dinner, prepared by a team of over a dozen high school students participating in Seattle Tilth’s Community Kitchens Northwest.

“This is where people are empowered by the foods they eat and the actions they take” said Allen, a big smile across his face. “This is where the good food revolution starts.”

The mission of Seattle Tilth is to inspire and educate people to safeguard our natural resources while building an equitable and sustainable local food system.
Welcome Spring Gardening at our March Edible Plant Sale

Amanda Boyle, Events Manager and Laura Matter, Garden Hotline Program Coordinator

And...we're back! Seattle Tilth’s March Edible Plant Sale returns for its fifth year of springtime favorites. Expertly chosen varieties for cooler northwest weather will allow you to have a flourishing garden this spring – why wait until summer?!

The sale will again be at the Pacific Market Center, a centrally-located space just south of downtown, March 15, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. The sale will be full of information for your garden and we’ll have food and drink to keep you well fueled.

Go fruity! Consider adding more perennial flavors to your garden this year. We’ll have rhubarb and many varieties of blueberries and strawberries. Burnt Ridge Nursery will have an impressive selection of fruit trees and shrubs, as well as nuts and natives in the parking lot outside of our sale.

Go fragrant! Experiment with new culinary herbs to add intrigue to your garden and flavor to your cooking. You’ll be able to choose from dozens of tantalizing varieties like mint ‘Julep,’ garlic chives, ‘Hot and Spicy’ oregano, lemon thyme and tarragon.

Go green! Be adventurous and try some nutritious gourmet greens. You will not only be nourishing your body, but you will be adding a whole new flavor component to the mix. Here are some great choices:

- **Persian Cress** is a tart, spicy and “good for what ails you” veggie. It’s a small plant that can be grown as a micro green, a good choice for small spaces. It is not fussy and is super quick to harvest, making it great for succession planting. Great with poached eggs, casseroles and some soups.

- **Endive, radicchio and escarole** are cousins in the chicory group. These nutrient-dense greens are often perceived as too bitter. Grown and prepared properly, the tang can be mellowed and become highly desirable. Cultivate these beauties as you would lettuce with well-drained soil in good sun. Cooking will soften their bitterness, and they go well with flavors like anchovy, lemon and garlic.

- **Fennel** is a gourmet grower’s delight! This plant yields delicate tender foliage, crisp firm bulbs and tasty seeds. The trick to getting fennel to perform is well to water it deeply and not let it dry out. Use the leaves and tender stems as a garnish around deviled eggs. Thinly slice the bulbs and toss them into a salad, or add to a good white fish with lemon and bread. We can’t wait to share with you all of the amazing plants we’ve selected for this sale. We’ll also have worms, compost, potting soil, cloche kits and seeds. See you at the March Edible Plant Sale!

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**SEED STARTING FOR PENNY PINCHERS** Continued from page 1

good drainage with a width of about 2-4”. Nurseries sell sterile drip pans and gridded, black plastic pots of all shapes. If you decide to reuse leftover pots, be sure to sterilize them with a bleach solution (1 tsp bleach: 1 gallon water) and rinse.

For watering, think moderation. Lightly spritz the seeds with a pump sprayer to keep the soil just barely damp. This will keep “damping off” (a fungal disease) at bay. And don’t forget the drip pans; empty them regularly to deter humidity—and therefore fungus—and to tame the hordes of fungus gnats.

Lastly, be prepared for a long indoor gestation. Should weather prove inclement and transplanting be delayed, you will need to feed your impatient seedlings. If you notice the leaves turn yellow (and you haven’t over-watered), consider sprinkling them with a slow-release, organic, liquid fertilizer every two to three weeks. Again, this is only necessary if your plants start to look malnourished.

Would you rather learn seed starting with dirty hands? Seattle Tilth is offering three indoor seed starting classes this spring: at Bradner Gardens Park on February 1 and March 1 and at the Good Shepherd Center on February 19. Register online at seattletilth.org/learn.
Carl Woestwin: A Job Well Done

Sheri Hinshaw, Master Composter/Soil Builder Program Coordinator

Great things often start with a few people who have vision, drive and tenacity. Carl Woestwin is one of those people. He helped sow and cultivate the seeds of Seattle Tilth at the very beginning. It all started with the transformation of a ½ acre of asphalt, concrete and compacted soil into a community garden in Wallingford.

In the late 1970s, Seattle Parks Department set aside land at the Good Shepherd Center designated for a community garden. Heavy machinery was used to remove the tennis and basketball courts. As you can imagine, the soil was not fertile. It seemed impossible to grow anything other than weeds that first year.

Carl Woestwin was the original groundskeeper and had a vision of abundant vegetable gardens. He built six two-yard compost bins to begin massive composting. Fresh material was brought in weekly, including truckloads of composted manure from the Love family farm. Woestwin was making one cubic yard of finished compost a week by 1981. That same year, Seattle Tilth received a $5k grant to demonstrate cold frames and to explore food gardening in a scientific way using a public demonstration garden.

The City of Seattle put out a request for proposals in 1985 to develop curriculum and deliver what was then called the Community Composting Education Program. The first class met in 1986, taught by Craig Benton, Jeff Gage and Carl Woestwin. It was the first Master Composter program in the country, with 40 hours of training and 40 hours of volunteer outreach. That program is still going strong and has spawned hundreds of similar programs in the US, Canada and beyond. The Compost Hotline was also created, which turned into the Garden Hotline that we have today.

Woestwin was making one cubic yard of finished compost a week by 1981.

Carl Woestwin’s work was instrumental not only in creating our first community learning garden and creating our Master Composter program, but also in founding Seattle Tilth back in 1978. His vision for Seattle Tilth was to show the viability of urban agriculture in a scientific way, to support local food systems and to help reduce waste. Since then, he continued to be a strong advocate for Seattle Tilth through his role at Seattle Public Utilities, where he recently retired in June, 2013. Few people can boast as significant contribution to the community as Carl Woestwin. Carl, we thank you for a job well done!

Become a Master Composter!

Join our volunteer training and community outreach program. Classes are held at the Good Shepherd Center in Wallingford:
- Tuesdays, 7-9 p.m.
  March 25, April 1, 8 & 15
- Saturdays, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
  March 29, April 5, 12 & 19

Applications due March 3
Find the application at: seattletilth.org/learn/mcsb

Students Make Culinary Expression a Priority

Malaika Robinson, Community Kitchens Northwest Coordinator

At Rainier Beach High School (RBHS), the after-school cooking club is not just about the food. For the 20 students a week who have made it a priority, the cooking club is about gratitude, sharing and service to the community. They came in with goals such as learning to cook, making food taste good and trying new foods. Some students want to socialize and cook with friends. In a survey of participants, the fall cooking club at Rainier Beach was given the highest possible rating by most by respondents. One anonymous student said, “Cooking club is like a class because you learn how to make new things, but it’s laid-back. You can meet new people. You also have fun cooking.”

Students also talked about their favorite sessions. Comfort food, baking day and the Will Allen event made the top of the list. On November 19, the community dinner with Will Allen was a testament to the cooking club’s ability to work cohesively in service to their community, as well as a showcase their culinary talents, preparing for a truly delicious meal for over 100 community members.

Students were given the challenge of thinking about how the cooking club could be the best in the city. They gave suggestions of inviting more students, including students from other schools and exploring new foods. Those sound like good goals moving forward!

As we come closer to spring, collaboration between the student garden club and cooking club will bring the garden-to-table experience to more students at Rainier Beach High School.

Since September, I have been amazed at how much these students have developed—a great basis for them to have life-long healthy habits of mind and spirit. It has been a joy to work with them. Grow strong and cook well, Vikings!
New Year’s Resolution #1: Volunteer!

Amanda Boyle, Events Manager

It’s officially 2014—a year of new beginnings, new adventures and new volunteer opportunities at Seattle Tilth. If you’ve ever thought about volunteering with us on a regular or sporadic basis, there is no better time than now! Our volunteers are a crucial part of what we do every day at Seattle Tilth.

**Group Work Parties**

If your co-workers, friends, school, family or community group are looking to volunteer together, we have plenty of opportunities. We can schedule your group at many of our gardens or farms for fun, educational service days and team building.

H.D. Fowler, a Bellevue-based irrigation company, brought 40 volunteers to Rainier Beach Urban Farm and Wetlands (RBUFW) in November for their day of service. Volunteers mulched invasive species, planted native shrubs and trees, and built two raised beds for increased food production at RBUFW. HD Fowler also donated the materials and labor to install two irrigation systems at Seattle Tilth learning sites. Their efforts helped to increase food production, conserve water, provide healthy habitat for wetland species and continue our wetlands restoration effort.

**Internships**

Looking to earn school credit or valuable work experience? An internship can be a rewarding way to learn about nonprofit programming, organic gardening, event planning and more. Most internship positions are 10 hours per week and 3-6 months in duration.

Many of our interns finish their original commitment and then continue to volunteer with us because, as one volunteer said, “I enjoy being around like-minded people and knowing that I am making a difference for an organization.”

Don’t forget about our drop-in work parties, which happen every Saturday, 10 a.m.–3 p.m. at Rainier Beach Urban Farm and Wetlands. No need to register, just show up and get ready to dig in the dirt!

If you have any questions about the above opportunities, be sure to check out seattletilth.org/get-involved or email Amanda at volunteer@seattletilth.org.

**Thank You!**

Your support in 2013 made it possible for us to...

- **Teach** 5,810 children to be healthier eaters and environmental stewards
- **Serve** 8,013 meals in communities with limited access to fresh, healthy food
- **Grow & distribute** 38,065 pounds of locally and organically grown produce
- **Work with volunteers** who gave 21,105 hours of their time to build a just and sustainable local food system
- **Welcome** 11,000 people to our community events
The season of root vegetables is almost behind us as spring brings us the delicate sprouts of the awakening earth. Beets are still plentiful, but perhaps you’ve had your fill for the season.

Did you know that beets could have a secret life, hidden in your chocolate cake? This recipe delights kids (and adults) who may otherwise scrunch their face at beets. While beets add a subtle sweetness and moist texture, the beautiful red velvet color of the raw batter bakes out to look like any other chocolate cake, giving more disguise to this nourishing treat (enjoyed in moderation…of course!).

Beets are hearty roots which come in fun colors; we especially like the candy cane stripes of Chioggia beets. All varieties are full of health benefits such as providing anti-oxidants and reducing inflammation. Beets are particularly high in folate, fiber and potassium. And because you can eat both the root and leaves, beets provide double value as an edible food.

**Beet Cake**

Makes 4 dozen mini muffins, 18 regular size muffins or a 9x11” sheet cake.

**Ingredients**

- 1 1/2 cup white flour
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 1/4 cups sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1/3 cup cocoa powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup oil
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 2 small beets, grated
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla

**Instructions**

- In a mixing bowl, combine dry ingredients, sifting out any clumps of cocoa powder.
- Combine wet ingredients in a measuring cup.
- Shred raw beets into a bowl. Combine with wet ingredients.
- Add wet to dry ingredients and mix just enough to moisten everything.
- Pour batter into greased cake pan and place in oven at 350°F for 30-35 minutes until middle bounces back when pressed. Muffins take 15-25 minutes, depending on their size.

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**Fun Egg Facts**

**Carey Thornton, Education Coordinator**

An egg has almost every essential vitamin and mineral needed by humans, with only 70 calories.

Eggs are a good source of riboflavin, Vitamin B12, phosphorus and selenium.

Raising hens in your backyard can provide you with a great source of protein for your family.

In the United States, 79 billion eggs are produced every year. Most of those are from large breeding operations.

Free ranging chickens (those that are allowed to eat grass and bugs) lay eggs with higher amounts of beta carotene, omega 3’s and other nutrients.

Anything a hen eats, which includes nutrients as well as contaminants, has the potential to be transferred into the egg.

Want to learn how to raise backyard chickens so you can decide how your food was produced? Seattle Tilth offers classes on raising chickens in the city! See the February/March classes on page 8.
Q. I’m eager to get gardening. Is there anything I can do right now?

A. The one thing you can count on in late winter in the Pacific Northwest is rain. We receive two-thirds of our annual precipitation between October and March. Some days it might feel like spring has already arrived, but don’t jump the gun. Working the soil while it is wet will damage the structure and make it harder for plants to grow. If you are anxious to plant your peas on President’s Day and want to dig in compost first, cover the bed with a sheet of plastic or a cloche for a few weeks before you plant. This will also warm up the soil and speed seed germination. While you are busy planting peas, try sowing some arugula, radishes, lettuce or spinach under a cloche for a super early harvest!

There are plenty more fun things you can do in the garden now despite the soggy weather:

• Plant bare root trees, shrubs and vines. Dreaming of growing your own blueberries or grapes? Check local nurseries for bare root plant sales. Bare root plants are more affordable and plants have an easier time getting established. You can also find many native plants sold as bare root stock. Now’s a great time to add beauty to your landscape with a red flowering currant, evergreen huckleberry or mock orange.

• Sow seeds for hardy annuals and keep the pollinators happy! Sweet alyssum, poppies and nigella are just a few to try. If you let them go to seed after they flower, they will keep coming back.

• Tend your roses. Prune hybrid tea, shrub and climbing roses. Clean up and get rid of diseased leaves. Keep your eyes open for rose pruning clinics.

• Prune fruit trees. Learn how to correctly prune fruit trees for health and increased fruit production at our Prune Fruit Trees class – see page 8 or check our website.

Q. I usually plant just lettuces and tomatoes and am not sure how to branch out. Ideas?

A. One of the keys to becoming a successful food gardener is learning how to plan ahead. Planning in advance can help you increase the diversity of your crops and protect what you grow from disease and pests using succession planting and crop rotation strategies. Learn about these techniques and more in our class, Smart Garden Planning—see page 8 or check our website.

Contact the Garden Hotline for more information about these and other innovative solutions to gardening challenges often found in the Pacific Northwest.
Take a class with Seattle Tilth!

Three prices are listed for each class: for the general public, for Seattle Tilth members and for two members of a household taking the class together. For example: $45 (non-member)/$35 (member)/$68 (household). Become a member through our website or use the form on page 7. Advanced registration and payment are required for classes. Class details and registration information are found on our website under the “Learn” tab or by scanning the QR code. Questions? Call (206) 633-0451 ext. 101.

Class venue:
GSC: Good Shepherd Center, 4649 Sunnyside Ave N, Seattle
BGP: Bradner Gardens Park, 1730 Bradner Place S, Seattle

Organic Gardening

Organic Gardening 101, $45/$35/$68 (special February price)
Saturday, February 15; 10 a.m.-2 p.m., GSC
Saturday, March 1; 10 a.m.-2 p.m., GSC ($55/$45/$88)

Start Seeds Indoors, $36/$25/$54
Saturday, February 1; 2-4 p.m., BGP
Wed., February 19; 6:30-8:30 p.m., GSC
Saturday, March 1; 2-4 p.m., BGP

Composting 101, $36/$25/$54
Saturday, February 22; 2-4 p.m., GSC

Smart Garden Planning, $36/$25/$54
Thursday, February 8; 10 a.m.-noon, BGP
Wed., February 26; 6:30-8:30 p.m., GSC
Thursday, March 27; 6:30-8:30 p.m., GSC

Comprehensive Organic Gardening, $275/$235/NA
7 sessions, Wed. & Sat., March 5-26; GSC

Sustainable Landscapes

Intro to Permaculture, $45/$35/$65
Saturday, February 8; 2-5 p.m., BGP

Prune Fruit Trees, $45/$35/$68
Saturday, February 8; 1-5 p.m., GSC

Grow Fruit in Small Spaces, $36/$25/$54
Thursday, February 27; 6:30-8:30 p.m., GSC

Grow Mushrooms, $36/$25/$54
Saturday, March 29; 2-4 p.m., BGP

Backyard Beekeeping 101, $36/$25/$54
Saturday, February 1; 10 a.m.-noon, GSC
Thursday, February 13; 6:30-8:30 p.m., GSC
Saturday, March 22; 10 a.m.-noon, GSC

Beekeeping 201, $36/$25/$54
Saturday, February 22; 10 a.m.-noon, GSC
Thursday, March 6; 6:30-8:30 p.m., GSC
Saturday, March 22; 2-4 p.m., GSC

City Chickens 101, $40/$30/$60
Saturday, February 8; 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m., GSC
Saturday, March 8; 10-12:30 p.m., GSC

Raise Baby Chicks, $40/$30/$60
Saturday, February 22; 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m., GSC

Raise City Ducks, $36/$25/$54
Sunday, March 2; 2-4 p.m., BGP

Raise City Rabbits, $36/$25/$54
Sunday, March 9; 2-4 p.m., BGP

City Chickens 201, $40/$30/$60
Saturday, February 22; 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m., GSC
Thursday, March 6; 6:30-8:30 p.m., GSC
Saturday, March 22; 2-4 p.m., GSC

City Rabbits, $36/$25/$54
Sunday, March 9; 2-4 p.m., BGP

Save The Date

• Annual Meeting: Monday, February 24
• March Early Bird Sale: Friday, March 14
• March Edible Plant Sale: Saturday, March 15
• May Early Bird Sale: Friday, May 2
• May Edible Plant Sale: Saturday and Sunday, May 3-4
• Chicken Coop and Urban Farm Tour: Saturday, July 12
• Harvest Fair: Saturday, September 6
• Gala Auction: October TBD

Summer Camp

Send your kids to summer garden camp with Seattle Tilth!

Visit our website to learn more: seattletilth.org/learn