

P-PATCH COMMUNITY GARDENING PROGRAM

BEACON FOOD FOREST INFORMATION

What is the [Beacon Food Forest](#)?

It is a community-driven P-Patch community garden utilizing a gardening technique that mimics a woodland ecosystem. Fruit and nut trees make up the upper level, while berry shrubs, edible perennials, and annuals make up the lower levels. The project is located in the Beacon Hill neighborhood (15 Ave S. and S. Dakota St) on Seattle Public Utilities property and is managed by Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. To learn more, view Seattle Channel's video at seattle.gov/living-in-seattle.

What makes this community garden different?

As the first large-scale public food forest, this garden has captured the imaginations of people all around the world with visions of how communities can come together in urban places to grow food and revitalize the landscape with permaculture practices. The site also includes several individual plots that community members can rent to grow their own plants on an annual basis.

What is the role of the City of Seattle in this project?

The construction and oversight of Phase I of the Beacon Hill Food Forest received funding from the 2008 Parks and Green Space Levy. The levy provided \$2 million to develop community gardens which was managed by [Seattle Department of Neighborhoods](#) P-Patch Community Gardening Program. Using **\$100,000 from the levy**, plus two individual [Neighborhood Matching Fund](#) (NMF) awards totaling an additional **\$106,295**, P-Patch staff worked with the community to design the larger vision as well as do the permitting and physical development of Phase I. During this time, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods NMF staff provided support as well.

Beyond Phase I, P-Patch staff provides ongoing program management of the site and is the liaison between the volunteers and other City departments. In addition, P-Patch program staff manage individual plot rentals, help with any property management and compliance items that arise, and support the garden community with leadership development, resource acquisition, and enforcement. Staff also are working with the community to develop Phase II of the Forest's development.

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) owns the property of the food forest. It made 1.75 acres available for Phase 1 of the project and has made an additional 1.75 acres available for Phase II. SPU staff reviews the plans and works with P-Patch staff to ensure the project plans are doable and feasible on this site.

In addition, the project receives support from **Seattle Parks and Recreation** which provides frequent deliveries of gardening materials and from the **Office of Arts and Culture** which encourages artists to collaborate with the project. All in all, hundreds of City staff hours have gone toward this project to help make it a reality.

How was the community involved?

This project is a significant grassroots effort, initiated and driven by community members. With funds from Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, the group launched a community design process and invited neighbors and permaculture enthusiasts from around the region to participate. Hundreds of people have participated in all aspects of its vision, design, and construction. Hundreds more participated in work parties to build the food forest with tasks ranging from spreading woodchips to installing a water system. Community volunteers are responsible for ongoing stewardship and maintenance of the garden.

What else is cool about this Beacon Food Forest?

It combines aspects of native habitat rehabilitation with edible forest gardening. Special elements include:

- Edible arboretum with fruits gathered from regions around the world
- Berry patch for canning, gleaning, and picking
- Nut grove with trees providing shade and sustenance
- Garden plots for vegetable growing
- Gathering plaza for celebration and education
- Bee hives for pollination and honey
- Kids' area for education and play
- Living gateway to connect and serve as portals as residents meander through the forest

Can anyone harvest from the food forest?

With the excitement this project has generated, it's clear that the idea of a garden where gleaning and grazing is free and open to all is intriguing and inspiring to many. The Beacon Food Forest has three main priorities:

1. Create a community around food.
2. Educate the community about growing food.
3. With those two goals in place, harvest the food.

Beacon Food Forest visionaries stress the many benefits of the project to the community beyond just the harvest. They echo the P-Patch Program's emphasis on the "community" in community gardening. Their plan is to produce an abundance of food so that "ethical" harvesting from the collective areas will be available to all. By "ethical harvesting," they mean taking only what a person needs without damaging the plant. Signs on the site will provide guidelines for harvesting. In addition, volunteers work together in organized ways to harvest and share the food with the broader community. Some areas of the garden are not available for open gleaning.

How long did it take to design and build the food forest?

It will take years for the food forest to grow to full maturity. Major construction began in the late winter of 2013. Earthmoving and grading was done by a contractor, but the rest of the food forest was and continues to be built by volunteer labor. Regular work parties bring volunteers together to create new elements and care for those that are already built and planted. Much of the initial 1.75-acre area of the food forest was planted in the fall of 2013, and the 29 annual vegetable plots were ready for gardeners in the early spring of 2014. It will take several years for the trees to bear fruit and reach their full size. In the meantime, berries, herbs, pollinator plants, and annual vegetables continue to grow and produce.

About the [P-Patch Community Gardening Program](#)

As part of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, the P-Patch Community Gardening Program is made up of many different public community gardens throughout Seattle's neighborhoods. Community gardeners care for small plots of land, individually and collectively, to grow organic food, flowers, fruits, and herbs. Together, they also care for common areas in the gardens. Many community gardens have large shared areas dedicated to growing food for donation. Presently there are 90 P-Patch community gardens.

P-Patch community gardens are open to the public to enjoy. Each community garden is different and reflects its surrounding neighborhood and the volunteers who care for it. Their amenities may include picnic areas, benches, art, flower gardens, educational signage, sustainability demonstrations, and children's gardens. Gardens are built on property owned by various city departments and other public and private owners. Learn more at www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/ppatch.