



## The Urban Farm: Turning dirt into farmland to benefit local food banks

The Urban Farm, located on the site of the King County South Treatment Plant in Renton, combines the best of all worlds. This collaborative effort between the county's Wastewater Treatment Division and the Environmental Studies Program at Seattle University uses GroCo compost made from Loop™ biosolids from the treatment plant to turn dirt into good farm soil. An urban farm is created, with all produce going to local food banks.

### 2010

- King County establishes an agreement with the Environmental Studies Program of Seattle University's College of Arts and Sciences, allowing access to land for the SU Urban Farm. The land, an underutilized site with poor soil, is nourished with GroCo compost made with Loop™. In exchange for use of this land, SU provides public outreach and education and demonstrates use of recycled products recovered from the wastewater treatment process.

### 2011

- January: SU students and faculty clear the land and amend the soil with nutrient-rich GroCo compost. Students begin planting with chard, kale, spinach, lettuce, broccoli and cauliflower.
- March: Volunteers from area food banks and community groups assist students with planting and weeding.
- April: Volunteers and students bring the first harvest of cabbage and kale to the Renton Food Bank.
- May: Outreach to middle schools begins; first group from Washington Middle School plants potatoes, spinach, and kale.
- November: Wells Fargo supports expansion of crops and materials to increase productivity of the Urban Farm.

**By year's end, almost 7,000 pounds of fresh produce, including onions, garlic, spinach, kale, chard, beans, peas, potatoes, beets, and carrots, were delivered to these area food banks: Rainier Valley Food Bank, Renton Food Bank, and White Center Food Bank. More than 200 volunteers worked at the site.**

### Plans for 2012

- Create an orchard with 40 fruit trees (apple, fig, and plum) and plant blueberries to stabilize sloped area. Erect trellises and plant kiwi. Triple the number of growing beds.
- Conduct educational activities at the farm for elementary and middle school students including sponsoring a pumpkin growing contest for elementary students.
- Community engagement: work with area businesses and nonprofits to develop a corps of volunteers engaged in community service at the farm.



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