

IMPACT

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Potlatch Kids Co-op Garden; working with community partnerships

AT A GLANCE

A community garden in Potlatch, Idaho, provides educational opportunities for 30 children in a University of Idaho 4-H Youth Development program.

The Situation

A community garden grows in Potlatch, Idaho, and with it grows the engagement and educational opportunities for 30 children in an afterschool program operated by University of Idaho 4-H Youth Development in partnership with Potlatch School District.

Healthy living is one of the goals of the afterschool program, which is funded by a Children Youth and Families At-Risk grant (CYFAR). A garden on the school grounds encourages children to learn about the source of their food, gives them a greater understanding of sustainability, and develops life-long appreciation for how fun gardening can be.

Our Response

When space was made available on the school site, University of Idaho Extension staff saw an opportunity to introduce youth to gardening and help them develop the skills necessary to can grow their own food in the future. Developed in 2013 with funding from Whole Foods, Latah County Community Foundation and Potlatch Parks and Recreation Department, the terraced Potlatch Kids Co-op Garden grows on a hillside adjacent to the school. The 60 by 90-foot Kids Co-op Garden has been a true community partnership: the site was donated by the school, a separate water connection was provided by the City of Potlatch and community partners helped with mulch, seeds, plants and topsoil. Outside grants were se-



CYFAR students harvesting their 1st produce.

cured to provide for the unique landscape needs of the site. Since the donated garden spot was a hillside, two terraces were needed to create a flat area for the garden. The majority of the \$5,000 raised for the project was spent in placing 80 eco blocks weighting 3,500 pounds each to create the two-tier embankment. Grant money also funded 200 feet of fencing that was installed by the Potlatch Wrestling team to finish the first phase of the project.

Program Outcomes

Potlatch now has a garden that is used by elementary school students and community members who otherwise would lack access to garden space. Program staff offered Idaho Junior Master Gardener programs for the past two summers for up to 25 children for a six-week period. Students planted and maintained the garden during the hot summer months when school was not in session. Their duties ensured the sustainability of the garden while they learned

valuable lessons about composting, weeding, and growing vegetables and flowers. The young gardeners delivered flowers and vegetables they grew to a senior center. Some of the variety of vegetable grown at the site included seeds developed by the University of Idaho, “IdaGold” tomatoes and “Idelight” green beans. When the afterschool program resumed, the children planned a Fall Food Festival for their families that featured salsa and soup made with the garden’s bounty. The festival was a partnership with Eat Smart Idaho, another University of Idaho Extension program, which provides nutrition information for low-income families. Fall Festival goes visited stations with different food groups to try samples and learn cooking tips from the children and others.

The Future

Future plans include, continuing to offer Junior Master Gardeners, encouraging teachers at the Potlatch Elementary School to use the garden in classroom activities, using food harvested from the garden in the school lunch program and increasing awareness about the benefits of eating local produce. Space has been donated to the program on school property for a green house location. This is phase two of the project since a green house will extend the growing season.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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