

Jan. 30, 2025

OSU Extension statewide seed giveaway returns for sixth year

By Chris Branam, 541-737-2940, chris.branam@oregonstate.edu

Source: Lauren Tobey, 541-737-1017, lauren.tobey@oregonstate.edu

This news release is available online: <https://beav.es/GDy>

Photos: <https://flic.kr/p/2ptY5sP>, <https://flic.kr/p/2ptY6kk>

Video that describes the program: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9I4NVSEBZu4>

CORVALLIS, Ore. — The Grow This! Oregon Garden Challenge, Oregon State University Extension’s statewide seed giveaway, has returned for a sixth year in 2025 featuring a continued partnership with the Oregon Bee Project and Territorial Seed Company as a new seed source.

Starting Feb. 3, individuals and households, schools and groups can [sign up](#) to receive an individual/household seed kit, group kit or seed-starting teacher classroom kit through the mail. The seed-starting classroom kits include an Explore the Bees of Oregon book, reusable grocery tote, foil pans, seed markers, classroom spray bottles and a peat pot for each child.

[The challenge](#) is spearheaded by Food Hero, a statewide initiative of the Oregon Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) program that was developed by OSU Extension in English and Spanish. This year’s goal is to mail seed kits to 3,300 individuals or households and enough classroom kits to reach over 45,000 classroom students and their teachers, said Lauren Tobey, Food Hero coordinator.

The seed giveaway has been growing since it started in 2020. In 2024, an estimated 120,000 Oregonians participated in the Grow This! Oregon Garden Challenge by growing seeds at home and in school and community gardens.

About 1,360 classroom kits were distributed to 440 schools or Head Start Early Learning programs, reaching 40,500 students. This was a 31% increase from the previous year in new schools and Head Start programs participating. The program distributed over 4,500 individual/household seed kits.

Of the returning participants from the 2023 challenge, 89% said they planted seeds, 75% tasted what they harvested from their home gardens, and 93% reported an increase in using their garden harvest in a meal.

“We want to grow food together and share gardening tips and experiences to learn together,” Tobey said. “Food Hero’s bottom-line goal is to increase fruit and vegetable intake and access among all Oregonians.”

Throughout summer and fall, participants will receive a monthly Grow This! Oregon Garden Challenge email with gardening information, harvest recipes and storage tips. Challenge information will also be available in English and Spanish on the [Food Hero gardening page](#).

The individual/household kits will include a seed for a flower and seeds for vegetables that can be made into a salad plus a pollinator friendly seed packet. The seeds were purchased at a discount from Territorial Seed Company, which is based in Cottage Grove.

The Grow This! Garden Challenge originated with 800 household kits in response to increasing requests to Food Hero about growing food at home as the pandemic started. The project continued to grow in interest and partnerships and has resulted in many households and teachers and group leaders who request the seeds every year.

Since it launched in 2008, Food Hero has been used in communities and schools across Oregon, building children's cooking skills through sharing recipes and sampling new foods.

Food Hero recipes are tested according to criteria, such as overall flavor, color and texture. The meals are low-cost and feature easy to find ingredients, easy to follow instructions and minimal preparation time. Recipes and cooking tips are also shared through a Food Hero monthly publication in Spanish and English.

-30-

About OSU Extension: The Oregon State University Extension Service shares research-based knowledge with people and communities in Oregon's 36 counties and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. OSU Extension addresses issues that matter to urban and rural Oregonians. OSU Extension's partnerships and programs contribute to a healthy, prosperous and sustainable future for Oregon.

On-campus TV and radio services: Oregon State University is equipped with on-campus television and radio studios/services that can be used by journalists. Live or live-to-tape broadcast television and radio interviews can be conducted using Vyvx, Zoom, Webex or Comrex (IP Audio). Oregon State staff can also gather b-roll and coordinate live-to-tape interviews on locations throughout campus. For radio, Oregon State's Comrex (IP Audio) provides a broadcast-quality audio feed.