

Grow This! Works for Oregon 2025

The Challenge

Increase Oregon's Fruit and Vegetable Access and Intake

Oregon is a leading state for fruit and vegetable (F&V) intake, which can increase Oregonians' health and lower health care costs.

	Oregon Adults Consuming At Least 1 Serving/Day	US State Ranking (includes DC)
Vegetables	83.6%	5th highest
Fruits	64.3%	9th highest

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data, 2019. Retrieved June 1, 2021, from cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/index.html

A SNAP-Ed Solution

The Food Hero *Grow This!* Oregon Garden Challenge

Since the inaugural year in 2020, households, schools, and communities have come together to build gardens, share gardening knowledge and skills, and *grow* Oregon's health and food supply. Challenge materials are in English and Spanish.



A look inside the household *Grow This!* seed mailing.

Free garden tip sheets on the Food Hero website.

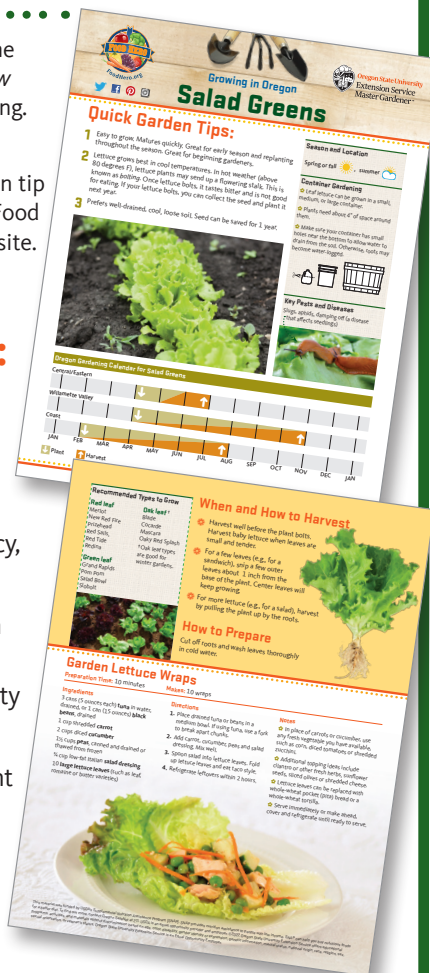
Our Food Hero Garden Challenge:

builds gardens, gardening skills, inspiration and self-efficacy through partnerships with the Bi-Mart chain of retailers, Oregon State University Master Gardeners, the Oregon Potato Commission, Oregon Bee Project, and hundreds of community organizations through which policy, systems and environmental (PSE) change activities occur.

provides easy-to-understand garden tips with common terms familiar even to new gardeners. Practical tips for cooking, stretching food dollars and increasing food security are included.

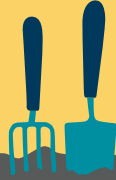
celebrates diversity, aiming to make *Grow This!* relevant and adaptable for many audiences.

increases growth, access and use of fruits and vegetables in households and community sites.



September 2025

Grow This!



Oregon Garden Challenge



Oregon has Food Hero educators on the ground. Here a class is being taught in a new courtyard school garden classroom Food Hero helped design!



Oregon State University

Email: food.hero@oregonstate.edu

Grow This! Garden Challenge By the Numbers

5 -Year Averages for Reach and Participation



475,620

Estimated number of Oregonians who engaged

in some way with the Challenge across a 5-year period. *Grow This!* was launched in 2020 during the height of the pandemic and enjoyed a 6-year run of delivering free seeds, seed-starting kits, home food gardening information and tips to students, teachers, and new and experienced gardeners each year.



4,600

4,600 Home seed kits distributed to individuals and their households each year. An average of 18,372 Oregonians grew along with the Challenge using home seed kits. In 2025, each kit contained sunflowers, lettuce, and pea pods for growing microgreens, encouraging pollinators in a home garden, and growing with Oregon farmer-grown seeds!

77

OSU Extension Master Gardeners participated in the *Grow This!* Garden Challenge each year by growing along in demonstration gardens across the state and posting their success and failures on Food Hero social media platforms, sharing their food gardening expertise with thousands of Oregonians each year.



386



Group leaders signed up on behalf of over 36,425 Oregonians each year to engage in seed-starting and gardening activities in community gardens. Groups included schools, public libraries, food banks, 4-H groups, small farms and gleaners' groups, Girl and Boy Scouts, and cultural affinity groups.



1,415

Oregon schools (pre-K to 12th grade) on average, represented in *Grow This!* with at least one student/-household participating each year (from 2021 - 2025).



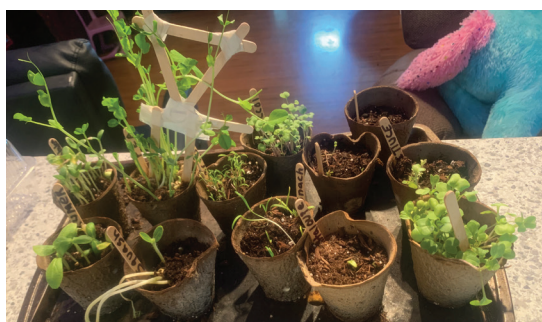
Tomatoes

The seed type individual/household participants most wanted to grow for food (17%). Second choice were green beans (6%) and cucumbers (6%).

Benefits Reported by 2025 Participants

1,464 returning participants shared the following feedback on their 2025 *Grow This!* Engagement:

- **89%** planted seeds
- **92%** reported an increase in confidence in using their garden harvest in a meal.
- **72%** said they were very or extremely likely to recommend the Challenge to someone else.



Transplanting berries and herbs

2025 Participant Characteristics

- **58%** were returning participants. **19%** said they had participated for three or more years, and compared to newer participants who saw themselves as beginners, were more likely to describe their gardening skills as "I garden each year with lots of success"
- **33%** said they first heard about the *Grow This!* Challenge from friends or family members, or from a Facebook or Instagram post/group.
- **84%** said they were planning to grow their seeds outdoors (in raised beds, containers, and/or in the ground) and 16% indoors.
- **67%** recalled seeing Food Hero ads or messages, at least once.

A few of the many thoughts on growing tomatoes:

"I have been somewhat successful growing tomatoes and would like to be successful with cucumbers and onions!"

"Really enjoyed tasting my first heirloom tomatoes last year and using romas in my salsas."

"They taste so much better than those purchased in the store."



Connect with Food Hero!

Explore the Bees of Oregon

Explore Oregon Bees is a bee-themed nutrition and garden environmental education program developed at Oregon State University by the Oregon Bee Project and Food Hero. It was created by experts on bees, gardens, and healthy eating. Native American Indigenous experts, farmers, elementary school teachers, and students all helped to make this project special! The second edition (2023) is aligned to 4th grade educational standards, but like the first version (2020) there are activities, recipes and images engaging to all ages. Objectives include broadening readers' knowledge of the role bees play in pollination to make healthy foods, to increase willingness to taste vegetables and fruits, and empowering readers to know ways to help bees make healthy foods.

In spring of 2024 through spring of 2025, while supplies lasted, over 20,500 activity books were mailed to 692 teachers in 376 schools (for their PreK to 12th-grade classrooms) in 35 of the 36 Oregon counties and covering more than 115 school districts.

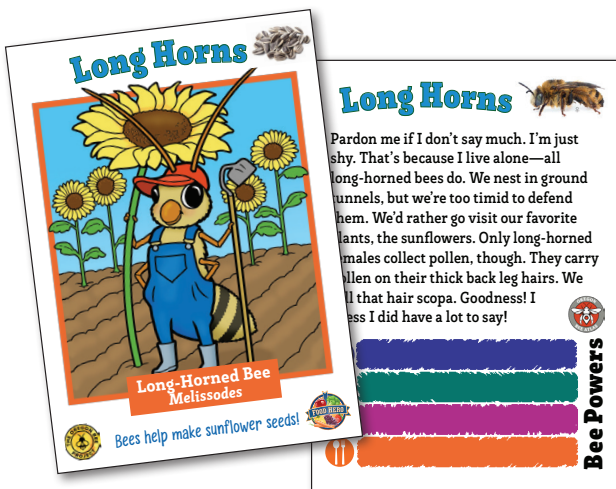
Results from a 2024 feedback survey of mostly 4th grade

teachers (91%) who received classroom sets (n=144) were used to create a 3rd-Edition, final version of the *Explore the Bees of Oregon* books.

Findings from their input included:

- Teachers wanted to use EBO activity books to boost students' understanding of pollination and food production, biodiversity, environmental stewardship, and the process of scientific inquiry.
- They also wanted content that tied directly with 4th grade science standards relating to plant and animal structures.
- 75% of teachers who used the books in 2024 said their students enjoyed the *Explore the Bees of Oregon* books "very much" to "extremely."
- 88% of teachers, when asked about activities and resources to include in future offerings, wanted to materials and instructions for building bee houses with their classes, and 77% wanted seed-starting kits for planting a pollinator/food garden with students.

Learn while playing with our Bee Cards.



Teacher Favorites

Teachers selected the following activity book components as most important for student engagement:

- 66% Reading fluency passages
- 64% Indigenous Peoples content
- 62% Bee trading cards
- 61% Coloring activities

"I think it is EXTREMELY important that schools such as ours--with students who may not have as many enrichment experiences--receive these types of materials. Thank you!"

"Kids love the bee cards!"

"Kids like the 'weird facts' about different bees so having a page that has weird facts about some rare Oregon native bees would be interesting to them."

"We would have liked the trading cards to have the real names and real photographs of the bees."

Second Annual Pre-K to 12th-Grade *Grow This!* Classroom Seed-Starting Kits

Each *Grow This!* classroom kit contained all the essentials to seed-start with up to 30 students and grow microgreens as well as indoor and outdoor plants. A project goal is for teachers and students across Oregon to develop lifelong skills and confidence in growing food from seed, and pass along food-growing skills to future generations.

Quick Facts

- 1,500 Full *Grow This!* Classroom Seed-Starting Kits were mailed to 672 teachers and 557 Mini Seed-Starting Kits were mailed to 151 community or youth club leaders covering all 36 Oregon counties and 4 tribal locations.
- 437 schools participated including 82 Head Start/Early Learning Centers, representing 115 Oregon school districts.
- An estimated 53,355 students engaged in seed-starting activities with the classroom kits.
- In 2025 there was a 32% increase from 2022 baseline levels of new schools participating in Food Hero activities and a 25% increase in teachers and educators signing up for *Grow This!* for their SNAP-eligible schools or programs.



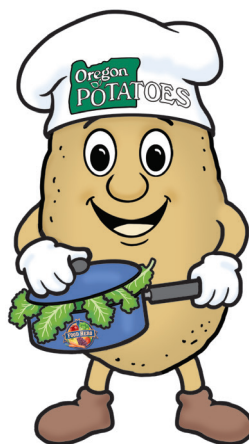
Grow This! Classroom Seed-Starting Kits – Optional Add-On Components

Potato Grow Kits

Each *Grow This!* seed-potato grow-bag kit contained everything a teacher needed to start potatoes with students in spring and harvest in the fall. The kit was available—one per school—to teachers as an add-on when they signed up for their classroom seed-starting kit.

Quick Facts:

- 493 teachers received a seed-potato grow bag in May (a good time to plant seed potatoes throughout Oregon) after they received the initial classroom seed-starting kit. In most cases, one kit was sent to each participating school or Head Start/Early Learning Center.
- Over 15,000 students interacted directly with the seed-potato kits.
- The seed potatoes were sourced through an Oregon Klamath County farmer in partnership with the OSU Klamath Basin Research and Extension Center.



Oregon State University
Extension Service
Master Gardener™



The *Grow This!* Oregon Garden Challenge has been adapted from the *Grow This!* West Virginia Garden Challenge through a partnership with West Virginia University.

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