



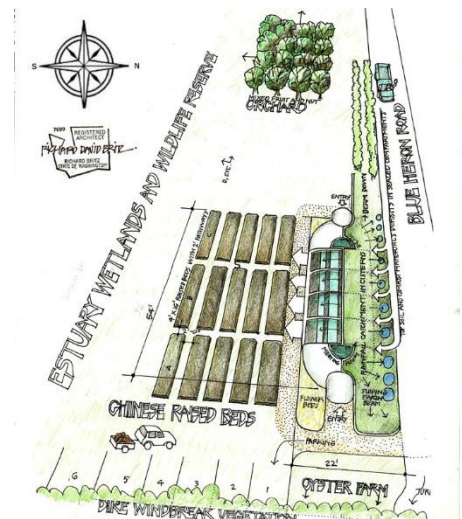
## Samish Island Community Garden: A brief history

In 2011 a group of Island residents got together monthly to discuss the feasibility of jointly creating a Community Garden. We all wanted a source of nearby “non-gmo, non-pesticide, mostly organic, and healthy food”, not only for members, but to help nearby families in the community who need food assistance.

We spent all of 2011 meeting with Master Gardeners, reviewing different organizational models, considering 4 different island locations, inviting different people of community garden experience to help our evaluations, etc. In January 2012, we met and decided to initiate the garden on the property made available to us by the Samish Island Campground, courtesy of the Community of Christ on the island.

Our members are half Samish Islanders, and half Community of Christ Church members. Our non-profit status is part of the church non-profit status; we use their donated land for this project, so we fall under their non-profit classification. The IRS Federal Identification Number is 44-0552038.

2022 marks our 11th year of community gardening. We began creating the beds and did some planting and harvesting in 2012. The original plan is pictured at the right. We have doubled the number of beds shown here, on the south side, and added a large squash bed to the west in 2016. Each of the long beds is 20’ long x 4’ wide.



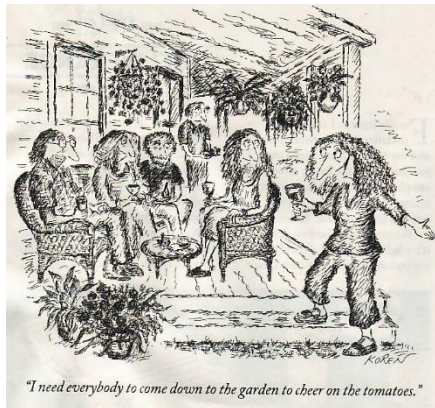
The garden is a true community garden, not a pea patch garden. This means we plan together, and agree on what will be planted. We all pitch in to help wherever possible. Some enjoy seed-planting in the spring. Some people enjoy the composting and bed preparation. Some enjoy planting starts from the Master Gardener’s sale or islanders’ greenhouses. Some love harvesting for

the Food Bank. Some even enjoy weeding! Some enjoy taking the produce to the distribution center in Sedro Woolley, and celebrating the number of pounds donated.

We take great pride in the fact that the poundage we have donated to the Community Action of Skagit County's Food Distribution Center in Sedro Woolley (which supplies food to 14 food banks in Skagit County) has increased yearly. Several of our island neighbors bring excess produce from their gardens and fruit from their orchards weekly during the harvest season; those donations added to what we were able to grow, resulted in a total of 4104 pounds of food donated in 2021. This picture illustrates a typical harvest ready to be delivered



Pre-pandemic, we met monthly, on Monday evenings, at the Community of Christ social hall, usually with a potluck dinner, when we discuss what has been done and what needs to be done. Since 2020, e-mail and zoom have been a substitute vehicle for keeping in touch with one another. We take minutes of each meeting to keep us all informed, and as a record of our non-profit activities.



*"I need everybody to come down to the garden to cheer on the tomatoes."*

There are 15-20 dedicated gardeners that keep the garden going, but many more behind-the-scenes people who are donors or members that can be called upon when needed. Many support the garden, with monetary donations, and gifts of garden tools, hoses & other equipment, as well as produce from their personal gardens.

Cartoon courtesy of the New Yorker Magazine, 4 Nov 2013, Ed Koren

From the beginning, watering the garden was a major undertaking. Members signed up for a time to water (about 1-2 hours a week) the gardens and fruit trees. In 2014, we doubled our garden bed space, and put timers on our hose sprinklers, which were useful, but many people still preferred hand-watering.



Thanks to a generous grant from the Community of Christ and the experienced handy people in our group, 2014-2015 saw the installation of a watering system and deer fencing, as well as the building of the garden shed and the planting of an orchard. In 2016, a “low-tech” bulletin board was added, allowing workers to communicate with each other with maps of the garden, what needs done next, etc. We all check the board when we get there to see what needs doing. We also communicate by an e-group on general happenings.



In 2016 we received several grants, from the Schiff Foundation (\$2,000), and the Jeffris Fund (\$1000), which enabled us to install an automated watering system in 2017. Our handy-people did most of the work. After years of watering by hand, it is great to have a system that is easy to program and adjust in order to keep the garden healthy and beautiful in changing weather conditions.

In 2019, the deer finally won the battle with the fruit trees that had been planted on the property – outside of the fence. In early 2020, we had ordered replacement trees, dug the holes for planting the new trees INSIDE the fence, prepared an irrigation system, and arranged for pick-up of the trees when everything shut down due to Covid-19. Fast forward to February 2021 – 8 new trees were planted! We look forward to the fruit that we can distribute to the food banks when the trees mature.



The Community Garden is a fun, beautiful, and rewarding opportunity to share great moments and food with community members, and enjoy lovely, healthy food ourselves!

By Glen Fishel, Eileen Andersen, Charlene Day, and Linda Larson