

SUCCESS STORIES

Georgeson Botanical Garden

Botanical garden partners with Nanook Grown, variety trials for education, food donations

Issues

Food distribution centers like The Bread Line's Stone Soup Cafe and the Fairbank Community Food Bank have seen increased community need during the COVID-19 pandemic. Programs that teach people how to grow their own food, have also seen increased interest. Getting fresh, healthy food into the hands and mouths of those who need it not only requires growing plants, but also harvesting at the correct time, appropriate storage and handling, and timely transport to the recipients.

Response

The Georgeson Botanical Garden collaborated with the UAF Office of Sustainability to accommodate twice the number of students who usually participate in the Nanook Grown Student Gardener Training Program. The program teaches students through experiential learning how to grow their own food. The botanical garden partnered with Nanook Grown and the Fairbanks Experiment Farm's Vegetable Variety Trials program to grow and distribute a large amount of fresh produce to community distribution centers in Fairbanks.

An award from the American Public Garden Association and the U.S. Botanic Garden supported the project, which increased the number of garden plots for hands-on education, hired more student instructors, purchased the needed materials and supplies to accommodate more participants, and hired a harvest coordinator. The coordinator ensured efficient coordination and distribution of the food that was harvested.

Results

The collaborative project with the Georgeson Botanical Garden and Nanook Grown helped teach and empower



A UAF student in the Nanook Grown Student Gardening Training Program harvests kale at the Georgeson Botanical Garden. UAF photo by J.R. Ancheta

15 students to grow their own food and food for others. Individuals who grow food for themselves and/or others increase food security in their communities. This collaboration, in addition to produce raised from the vegetable variety trials, resulted in the donation of over 5,500 pounds of produce to the Fairbanks Food Bank, UAF Food Pantry and Stone Soup Cafe. Increasing the amount of food that is donated to food distribution centers leads to an increase in the number of people served healthy meals or ingredients and accommodates community food needs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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