

Kwantlen Polytechnic University

Department of Sustainable Agriculture

KPU Farm @ Garden City Lands

2025 Activity Report



City of Richmond

Department of Parks, Recreation, and
Cultural Services Committee

February 24, 2026



Introduction

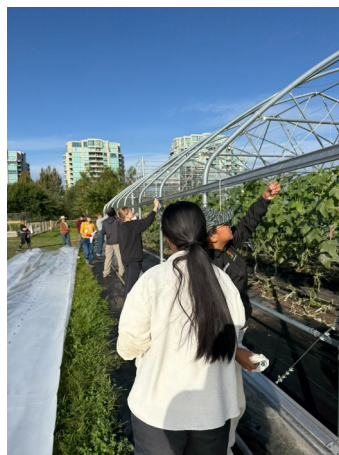


Kwantlen Polytechnic University has now completed eight growing seasons at the KPU Farm on the Garden City Lands. We have continued to expand our perennial plantings, maintain infrastructure and introduce new programs for the community. In 2025 substantial progress was made by the City staff in preparing the North field for agricultural production with importation of mineral soil and we began to establish the Food Forest.

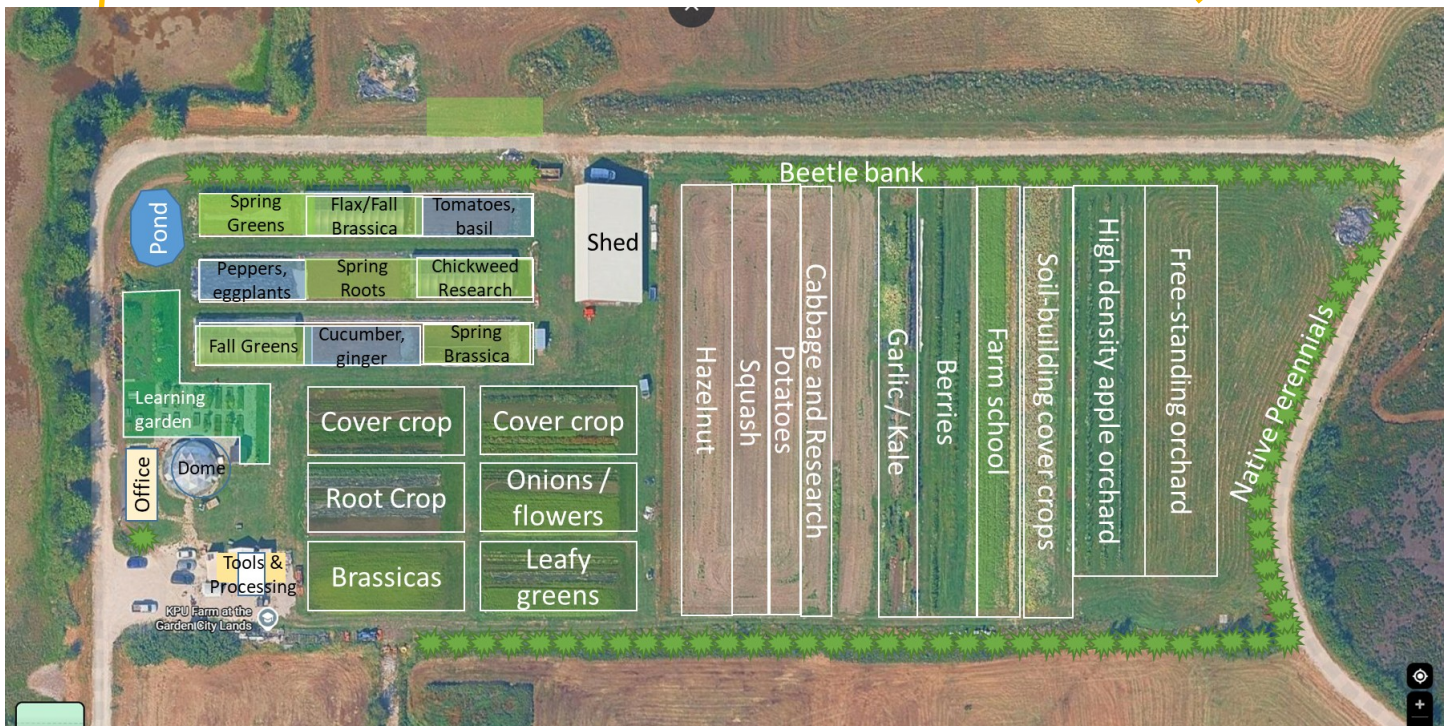
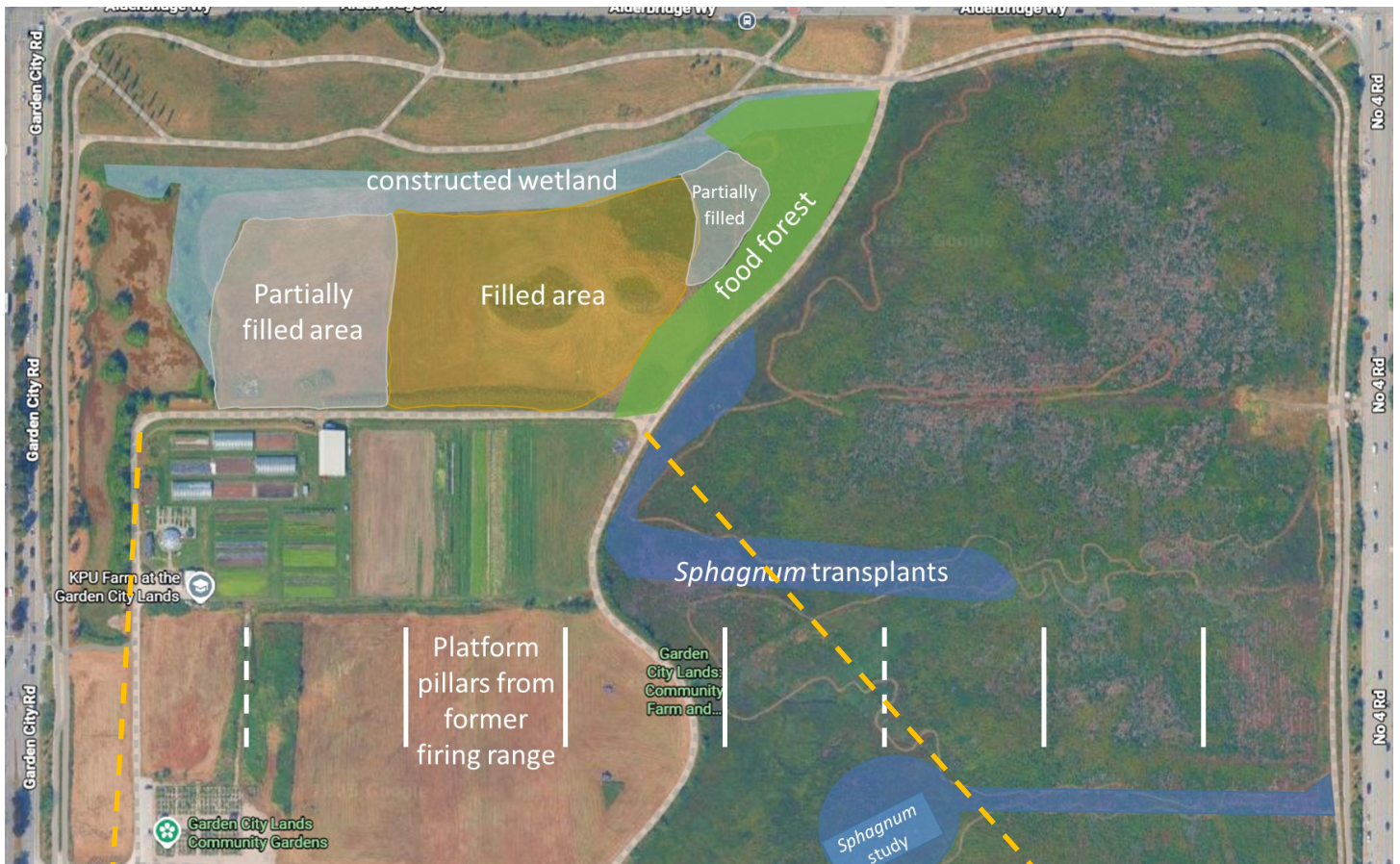
Highlights of 2025:

- In 2025 we harvested 15 metric tonnes of certified organic produce from the site, with a retail value of 95 thousand dollars.
- GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) Certified two crop groups; leafy greens and cucumbers. This allows the KPU Farm to sell produce to wholesale buyers which required GAP certification.
- Phase I of the food forest was completed involving the construction of a berm, and planting the first three sections of native edible perennials.
- Our volunteer program continues to thrive , offering opportunities for students and Richmond residents to build community, participate in events, and engage in crop production on the site.
- One of the high tunnels was re-skinned with new plastic to replace plastic that was degraded after 6 years of use.
- We had our largest class of first year students in 2025 and are seeing growth in our program.

We are grateful for the partnership with the City of Richmond that allows the KPU Farm to teach and demonstrate community-engaged sustainable agriculture.



Farm Maps—2025



Vancouver Island beggarticks (*Bidens amplissima*)

Vancouver Island beggarticks is a rare wetland annual plant listed as a species of special concern (Canada Species at Risk Act, Schedule 1).

This unique plant was first observed on the Garden City lands in August of 2022 and has also been found in different location across Richmond, primarily outside the dyke.

This plant spreads by seed and requires unique growing conditions, so the population density shifts from year to year. We are working to ensure this important species is able to persist on the Garden City Lands by fostering suitable habitat and monitoring populations.

The map to the right indicates areas where plants have been identified in 2025.



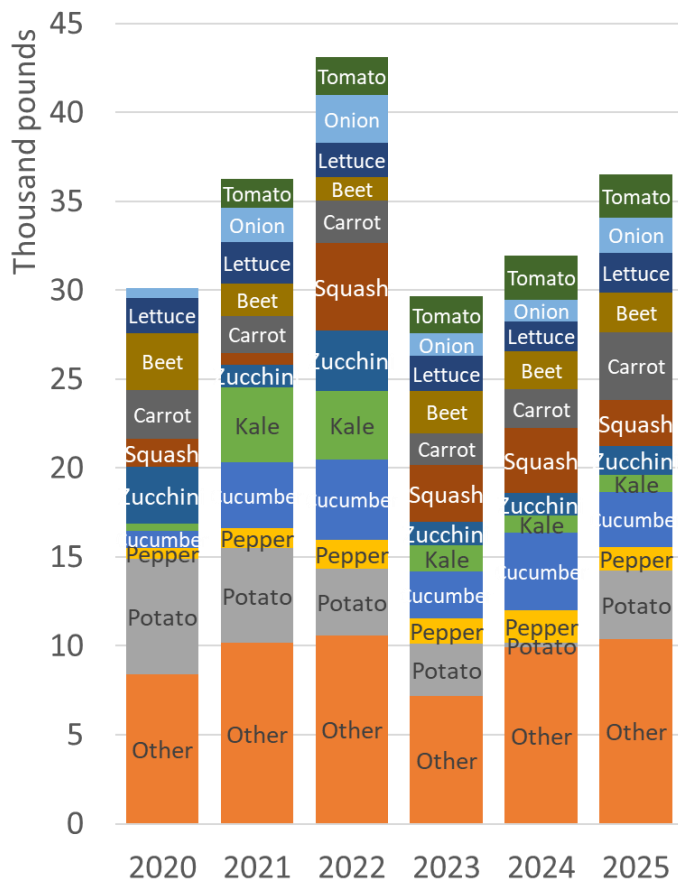
Individual observations archived in iNaturalist are shown for 2025 (left) and 2023-25 (right)

Crop Production

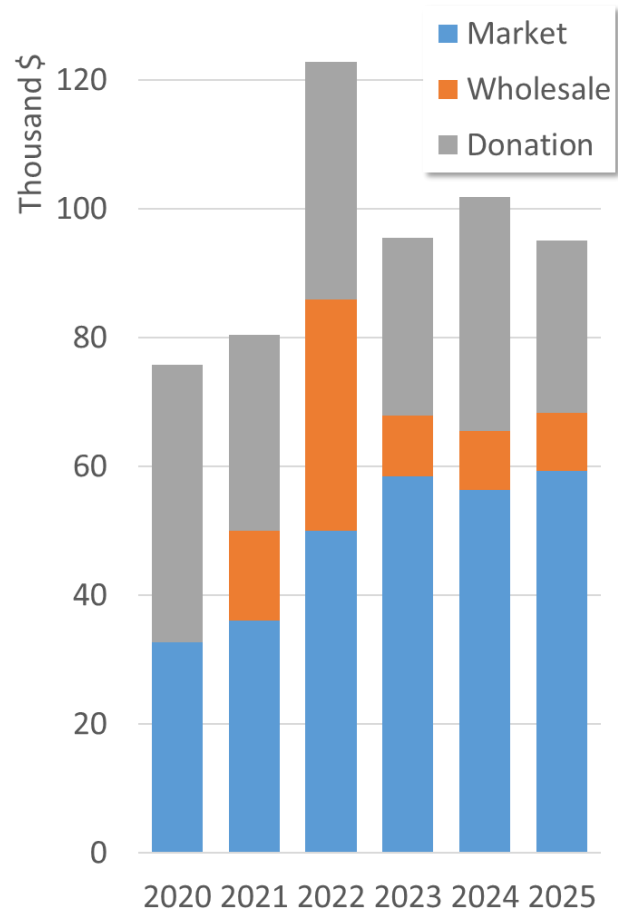
The KPU Farm produced over 36 thousand pounds (16.5 metric tonnes) of certified organic produce and flowers in 2025, with a retail value of almost \$95,000. The farm continues to produce a diversity of crops with more than 40 different crops grown. The 10 most productive are shown by the coloured slices in the Crop Yield bar graph below.

The harvested produce was either sold or donated, as shown in the Crop Value bar graph below. The Richmond Food Bank accepted almost 17 thousand dollars worth of produce donations in 2025. In addition to donations to the food bank, 10 thousand dollars worth of produce was provided to the community through the community fridge and the student food security program. Sales in 2025 totaled \$78,142, with approximately 59 thousand dollars in direct sales at the Kwantlen Farmers' Market, and approximately nine thousand dollars from wholesale distributors that prioritize local organic produce, including Discovery Organics and Spud. This year, the KPU Farm certified two crop categories with GAP (Good Agricultural Practices); leafy green and cucumbers. This certification became a requirement of several wholesale buyers in 2022 which resulted in a significant drop in wholesales. These are the first two crops to be GAP certified with additional crops to be certified in the coming years.

Crop Yield



Crop Value



Crop yield by weight (left) and dollar value (right) from 2020 to 2025. Yield bars are divided to show 10 most productive crops. Value bars are divided to show distribution between direct-market sales, wholesale sales, and donations.

Small farm production types at the KPU Farm include movable high tunnels, market garden plots and field plantings. High tunnels facilitate in-ground production with added protection creating warmer environments. These tunnels allow for early season spring production and late season fall production as well as warm season crops throughout the summer (top image: late fall production of greens in 20 m beds).

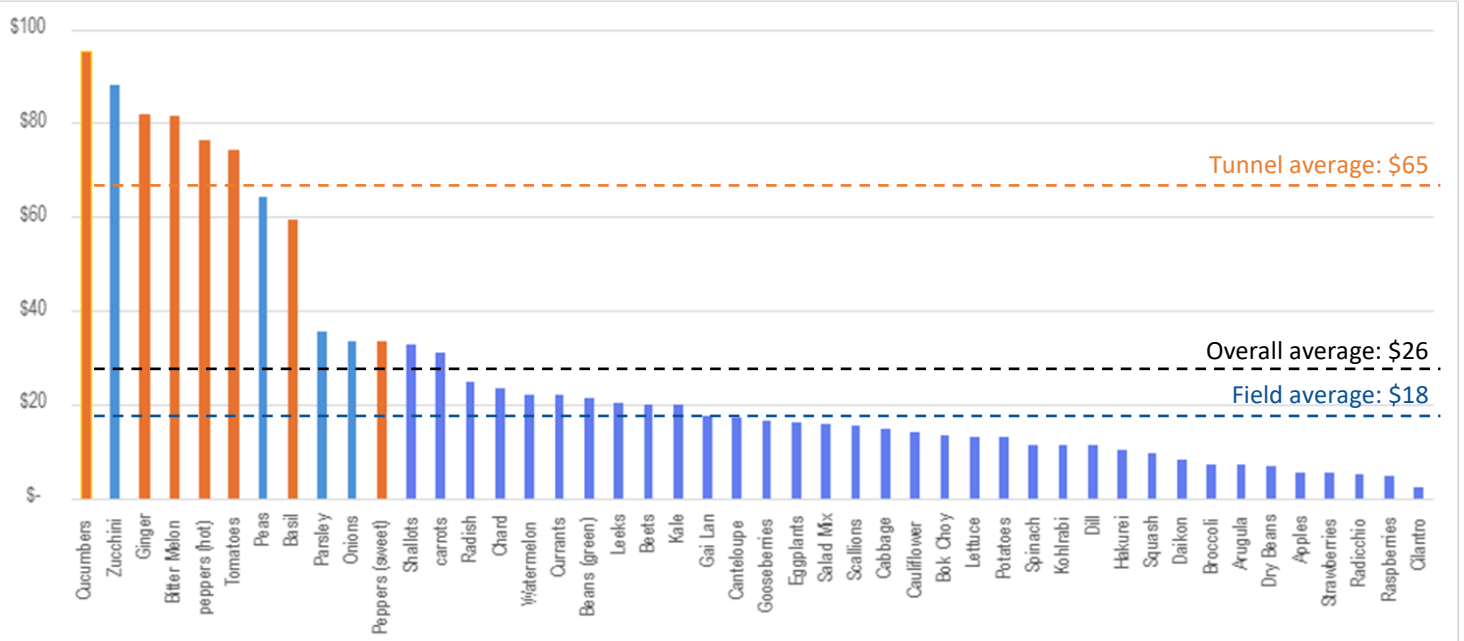
Market gardens are diverse plantings which require intense management and are high producing fields. These market gardens have many types of annual vegetables and cut flowers (middle image shows zucchini, onion and shallot planting, 30 m beds).

Field crop zones (bottom image, 90 m beds) provide large spaces for crops that require lower labour and increased space and are positioned further from the entrance hub in the southwest corner of the farm.



Below: Farm income per bed meter by crop variety for 2025. Orange and blue bars denote warm season high tunnel and outdoor field beds, respectively. Orange and blue dashed lines show the average income per bed meter for high tunnel and outdoor field beds, respectively. Income does not include value of donated produce.

Sales (\$) per bed meter



Perennial Plantings

New Fruit Trees

In March 2025, the orchard was expanded with the planting of several types of free-standing semi-dwarf fruit trees including; persimmons, pear, plum, apples, and hazelnuts. These trees will be evaluated for suitability of production in Richmond.

First Apple Harvest

2025 marked the first apple harvest from the high density trellised apple trees that were planted in 2023. Student monitored apples as they approached maturity and we successfully harvested from 4 different varieties? Farm Fest visitors were able to participate in this first harvest and press the fruit to make apple cider. Apples were also sold at the Kwantlen Farmers Market, and consumed by students.

Food Forest Planting

The Food Forest is a perennial planting composed entirely of native species and, once complete, will include over 60 different plants. The project spans a 220 × 10 meter site, with three of the ten sections planted as of 2025. Interpretive signage is currently being developed to support public education and encourage meaningful community engagement. KPU students and community volunteers are actively involved in the planning, planting, and maintenance of the site, fostering hands-on learning and stewardship. The Food Forest is intended to serve as a hub for community learning about the many benefits of native plants, while also providing important habitat and



Left: South-edge view of the Food Forest, Middle: students planning food forest, right: first apple harvest.

Student Research

KPU Sustainable Agriculture students completed six research projects at the Garden City Lands in 2025.

Student	Project	Key result
Rue Badanic	Baseline insect survey at Garden City Lands Miyawaki Forest	Pollinator abundance increased in a young Miyawaki forest.
Anupjot Badesha	Effects of compost, biochar, and Gurbani on bean vigour over two generations	Compost increases bush bean vigor and survival; offspring of Gurbani exposed plants have stronger response to temperature stress.
Shannon Campbell	Effects of biodegradable mulch on dryland rice	Biodegradable mulches suppress weeds in dryland rice.
Rachel Cassidy	Do black plastic mulch and <i>Metarhizium brunneum</i> interact to protect beets from wireworm feeding?	Beet root weight increased with the application of black plastic mulch and <i>Metarhizium brunneum</i> .
Elyse Farmer	Effect of soil solarization on chickweed (<i>Stellaria media</i>) seed viability across burial depths	Solarization reduces chickweed seed survival near soil surface.
Elise Ryan	Intercropping drying beans with oyster mushrooms and its effects on bean yield	Intercropping with oyster mushroom does not increase bean yield.

Project results were presented at the annual student research symposium, jointly presented by KPU's Departments of Sustainable Agriculture and Physics, and at a KPU research showcase. Student posters and papers are available at www.kpu.ca/agriculture/student-research.

Images left to right: solarized and non-solarized plots, Elyse R. sharing mushroom research with class, harvesting rice research plots, Miyawaki forest at the Garden City Lands (established by Garden City Conservation Society in 2024) where insect survey was carried out.



Farm Fest and Sunset Snacks

Farm Fest

Richmond Farm Fest took place on September 7, 2025, at the KPU Farm and Garden City Lands and welcomed over 3000 participants. This free, family-friendly festival featured activities such as a farmers market, live culinary demonstrations, interactive agricultural and garden displays, kid-friendly zones, a plant labyrinth, and hay wagon tours, engaging visitors of all ages in learning about sustainable food and farming practices. Community partners, including small businesses and local NGOs, were invited to help educate and connect with the public. A group of community and student volunteers supported event delivery throughout the day, helping ensure activities ran smoothly and enhancing the overall visitor experience.



Farm Fest visitors enjoying a guided hay wagon tour

Sunset Snacks

On August 8, the KPU Farm hosted Sunset Snacks, welcoming over 40 youth for an evening of hands-on activities and social connection. Hosted in collaboration with the City of Richmond and in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health, participants took part in bouquet making, a mini harvest, and story telling about native strawberry plants. Food was provided at the table, fostering community connection as youth gathered, shared, and socialized. The event offered a relaxed, inclusive space for participants to learn about growing food, sustainability, and healthy eating while enjoying time outdoors with peers.



Sunset Snacks event: flowers harvested from the farm by volunteers for the bouquet-making workshop (left), and participants enjoying a story about native strawberry plants (right).

Other Events

KPU Farm Open House

On July 24, 2025, the Sustainable Agriculture Department hosted its annual Open House at the KPU Farm, welcoming community members, partners, alumni, and students. The event provided an opportunity to share updates on current projects, express appreciation, and strengthen relationships with collaborators. Attendees included representatives from government, the non-profit sector, the agricultural industry, and education. The day featured knowledge sharing, community building, and refreshments prepared by students and volunteers, making it a successful and engaging event for all.

Earth Day, Doors Open, and Flax Harvest Party

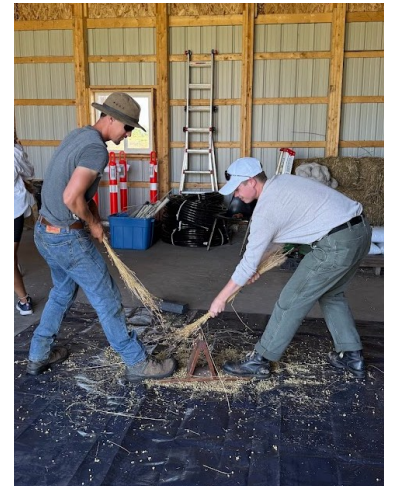
On April 26, the KPU Farm held an Earth Day Food Forest Event, where students and community members were invited to come learn about native plant species and see the site where the new Food Forest would be planted. Visitors helped the farm pot-up hundreds of native strawberry seedlings that would later be planted in the community Food Forest.

On June 7, 2025, the KPU Farm participated in Doors Open, offering hands-on activities such as button-making and eco-print card making, along with tasting farm tours.

On July 12, the KPU Farm hosted a Flax Harvest Party and Sustainable Fibers Workshop, where visitors learned to harvest and process flax for fiber and seed. Participants explored tools and techniques for turning flax into linen, gaining hands-on experience with sustainable textile practices and traditional farming methods.



Students harvesting flowers for the display at the Open House



Community members helping pot-up strawberry seedlings (right), bundles of harvested flax laying out to dry (middle), and volunteers harvesting flax seed (left).

Learning Garden & Community Outreach

Public School Visits

In 2025, the KPU Farm welcomed several school groups to our Learning Garden for hands-on experiences with plants and sustainable agriculture. Frost Road Elementary students visited on May 30 to help build trellises and deepen their understanding of seeds and plant families. On September 24, two classes from Britannia Elementary planted seeds, harvested flowers, and stomped beans to collect seeds. Station Stretch School students joined on October 2 for a bouquet harvesting and making activity to take home, and the following day, John Knox School students explored the foundations of sustainable agriculture while creating bouquets and harvesting and cooking a meal onsite for their class.



Frost Road Elementary School students working together in the Learning Garden to build bean trellises

Community Volunteer Program

Now in its fourth year, the KPU Farm Volunteer Program ran again from March to November and welcomed a variety of participants from different backgrounds. Many participants were newcomers to Canada, creating a diverse group eager to share their agricultural knowledge and experiences. Volunteers supported community learning about food systems by attending events, helped maintain a wide variety of flowers, vegetables, fruits, and herbs, in the Learning Garden, and assisted with harvesting produce for the Kwantlen Street Market and the Richmond Food Bank. All of the produce grown in the Learning Garden was either used for community workshops or donated to the volunteers.



Community Engagement

Farmers Market

The Kwantlen Farmers' Market remains a critical part of our program, running 12-4pm every Tuesday from April to November. The market is located in Minoru Plaza in the heart of many other important community amenities.

The Kwantlen Farmers' Market is registered with the BC Association of Farmers' Markets. It is the only market in Richmond that is registered this way, which offers the community many benefits. One such benefit is that as a vendor, the KPU Farm has partnered with the BC Farmers Market Nutrition Program to provide coupons to lower-income families, pregnant people, and seniors.



Twilight Tours

The tours have been a longstanding feature of the Farm and continued in 2025. Held on the second Tuesday of each month between May and September, covering themes such as Bog Vegetation, Flavours of the Farm, Fruit Production, Native Perennials, and Organic Farming. The tours welcomed visitors from the Community Garden at the Garden City Lands and beyond. Attendance has been lower at the Twilight Tours compared to the many other community-focused events we host, prompting us to reflect on the best way forward for 2026.

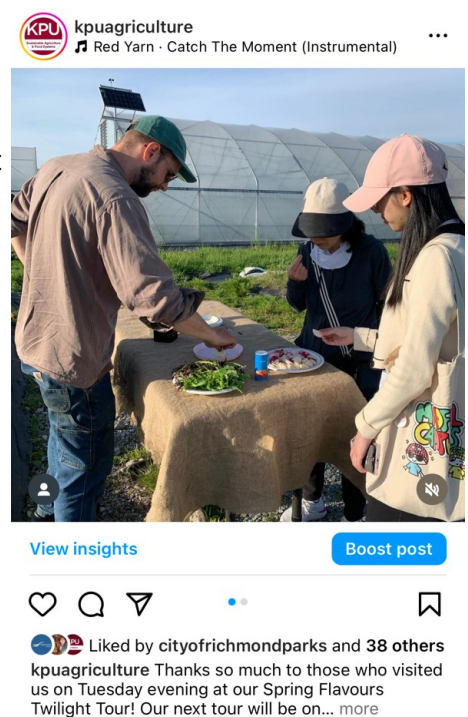


Social Media

We have utilized social media extensively to share with the community about what is going on at the farm. Our students and staff contribute to the stories that we tell. This has been an important tool to let people know what we are about and what we are doing on the farm! Check us out at KPUAgriculture on Instagram and Facebook.

Community Fridge & Richmond Food Bank

Fresh food donations with a value of over \$24,000 was donated to the Richmond Food bank and other food insecurity programs. The Sustainable Agriculture Student Association has volunteered their time to provide produce to the community fridge, which provides low barrier access to fresh produce to the community as well as the food insecurity program with the Kwantlen Student Association.



Farm Expansion and Next Steps



North Field Expansion

KPU continues to collaborate with the City of Richmond in the development of the North Field. As with the south field, the peat will be buried beneath clean mineral soil with drains positioned above the peat. This strategy is intended to preserve the sequestered carbon in both the native peat and the imported peat that was added in 2022, avoiding substantial greenhouse gas emissions. In 2025 a significant portion of the North Field has been brought up to final grade. A small section adjacent to the Food Forest will be filled with soil stockpiled on site when the conditions allow. When this section is filled, drain tile can be installed and production can begin.

The constructed wetland is continuous with the pond on the site and will ensure that there is area on the Garden City Lands with suitable habitat for Vancouver Island Beggarticks and other riparian species. This will also allow space for water to accumulate in heavy rain events and allow fields to drain.



Top image: Northeast corner of the north field that is filled to final grade.

Middle Image: Western edge of the filled area, photo shows drop to partially filled area.

Bottom image: Northern edge of filled area, lower elevation area is constructed wetland.