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Interview with Weston Miller, OSU Extension Service, 2011 (audio)

Weston Miller

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Index for Oral History Interview with Weston Miller

Manager, OSU Extension Service, Portland Metro area

How long have you lived in Portland

1. What brought you to Portland? (if you were not born here)

Four years

2. What kinds of education did you pursue after high school?

Small scale farmer and landscaper

3. How did you learn to be a horticulturalist?

By practicing it.

4. What prior professional experiences prepared you for the work you do now?

5. Which OSU Extension Office services did you use before you worked for them?

6. How do you define sustainability?

Doesn't use the word, it has no meaning anymore, over used

7. How would you define sustainable food?

6:00 min topic of interest which has made it easier for people to get involved

8. Please describe your typical work week.

9. What are some atypical experiences that you have had working here?

7:00 Min educate public, public service, diagnose problems, emails and phone calls

10. Describe one aspect of your job that gives you a lot of satisfaction and why.

9:00 min Manage employees and 400 volunteers, works in gardens and on project

11. I know the SE Portland garden was started in 2005. During your tenure there how has the garden evolved – for example, what parts have been eliminated, and what has been added?

10:20 best job in Portland

12. On the OSU Extension Office website there is a lot of information about gardening and landscaping sustainably. Which sustainable practices have you introduced?

11:12 The learning gardens

13. If you could give a beginning gardener one sustainable practice to use, what would it be?

12:10 Invite beneficial bugs, collaborate with the universities,

14. Which sustainable practice, if any, has not been as sustainable as you thought it might be?

16:25 start small

15. I see that the funding for the SE Portland Learning Garden comes from Portland State University, Portland Public Schools, and Portland Parks and Recreation in addition to the OSU Extension Service. Please tell me about any challenges you have between your goals for the garden and the goals of your funding sources.

16:47 has challenges with organic, it is not always cost effective

16. Please provide an example or two of ways government regulations can affect the way you manage the gardens.

14:00 min Need more money to do anything better

17. In your work at the LGL you've been deeply involved in both teaching people how to grow their own food and in providing fresh fruit and vegetables to families at Lane Middle School. In what ways do you see these practices as complementary?

19:35 Organic makes life difficult

18. It has been said that the act of gardening makes people more aware of food choices. How have you personally experienced this awareness?

20:45 Food Policy Council and social networking effects the way people can and cannot grow food

19. How do you help the Master Gardeners, students and volunteers engaged and interested in volunteering?

22:05 stay away from politics

20. What obstacles to volunteering in the garden have you seen and how do you eliminate them?

22:55 sharing knowledge. Kids are easier to manage

21. What is your proudest achievement in your job here?

25:00 respect for people who are able to make money off of farming, we are lucky to have food.

22. What projects do you have planned for the future?

26:45 keeping volunteers happy and acknowledged

23. What changes would you like to implement?

29:10 no more micromanaging, ,manage more gardens