



## Grant Application 2023-2024

This SEJF grant application is for all fund requests. Please fill out the application completely, utilizing additional space as appropriate. Supplementary documents may be added in the appendix at the end of the document. For questions about the application, reference the SEJF Grant Proposal Toolkit or ask a program representative.

Submit your completed application (including signatures) by emailing it to the SEJF Grant Program Coordinator, Zinta Lucans. Applications must be signed by your advisor, all members of the project team, and all stakeholders, in order for them to be reviewed. Email: [lucansz@wwu.edu](mailto:lucansz@wwu.edu).

Application Level: Determine the amount of funding you will require and check or highlight the appropriate category.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| X | Small Grant: Up to \$5,000. Applications of this size will be reviewed by the Director of the Sustainability Engagement Institute. Small grant applications may be approved, declined, or sent to the SEJF Committee for consideration.   |
|   | Medium Grant: Between \$5,001 and \$35,000. Applications of this size will be reviewed by the Director of the Sustainability Engagement Institute for alignment and completeness and then provided to the SEJF Committee. The committee will review the grant application, receive your presentation, and approve or decline the funding request.   |
|   | Large Grant: Over \$35,000. To request funding at this level, you must first complete an SEJF Committee feedback session – please ask an SEJF representative for more information regarding this process or refer to the SEJF Grant Proposal Toolkit. Applications of this size will be reviewed by the Director of the Sustainability Engagement Institute for alignment and completeness and then provided to the SEJF Committee. The committee will review the grant application, receive your presentation, and approve or decline the funding request. |

## SECTION 1: Project Concept.

a. **Project Title:** Green Thumb Initiative: Upcycled Mini Gardens

b. **Statement of Purpose:**

*Summarize your project idea, including a problem statement, in 1-2 sentences.*

Green Thumb Initiative is a sustainability-focused project that aims to educate students in the practices of both up-cycling and gardening. This will be a hands-on workshop where students will be guided through the process of creating their own upcycled planters and mini greenhouses to take home at no cost.

Many Western Washington University students don't have adequate budgets for buying a proper amount of fruits and vegetables. Also, not everyone has the prior experience, access, or encouragement to grow their own produce. We want to empower students to explore gardening by providing affordable supplies and practical knowledge.

c. **Project description:**

*Describe your proposed project in detail, including a description of costs associated with the project.*

Our project addresses the root issue of students having a lack of fresh vegetables due to rising prices and the abundance of recyclable waste. Students don't have sufficient money to consistently buy healthy food like vegetables. Although we cannot change inflation or the labor-intensive process of commercially growing vegetables, we can supply our students with their own, free, replenishable source of greens. We also want to incorporate the art of upcycling into our project and introduce students to ways they can repurpose everyday recyclables.

The Green Thumb Initiative's goal is to educate and empower the students at Western to create their own sustainable home gardens. Students live busy lives and often have limited space to work with. Despite this, we believe they also have the power to reduce waste and save money by growing their own herbs and produce. Using locally obtained recyclable materials, we will show students how they can transform waste into a useful household planter box. These planters will be crafted from toilet paper rolls, milk jugs, and other common recyclable items.

Our workshop will take place during Earth Week, which is a multi-day event hosted in Red Square that aims to educate Western students about sustainability and eco-consciousness. Our booth will be split into two parts: education and upcycling. One half of the booth will be dedicated to demonstrating thrifty ways students can reuse produce in their own homes. We will display green onion propagation, a potato box, food scraps sustained in water, and any other cheap and easy ways to reuse scraps. The second half of our booth will be a station for students to make their own take-home gardens. We will walk them through the process, starting by selecting a milk jug and seedling containers for them, then prompting them to select seeds, and finally planting the seeds with them. We will send them home with an instructional QR code that provides all information necessary to replicate the gardens and propagate their own food, as well as extra dirt for the future propagation of their gardens.

Our process and result photos are below. We have created prototypes and found that they are quick and easy to make. Also, the seeds in our prototypes sprouted relatively quickly.



We are asking for a small grant with the cost of our project being under a thousand dollars. Our exact numbers are provided in the budget portion of our application. The majority of our cost will consist of purchasing the seeds and soil for our hands-on activity. Unused materials will be donated to the Outback Farm at Western Washington University.

Our project approaches a significant issue surrounding sustainability: the amount of waste we accumulate, and how that waste relates to agriculture education in our current schools. The primary ethical lens which relates to this issue most is ethics of care, defined as the "relational and contextual nature of any ethical question or problem...not limited to caring for sentient beings" (White and Cuomo, 2016, pp. 2, 19). This framework places emphasis on relationships, more specifically, how humans, flora, fauna, and other natural processes relate to one another.

Particularly in the United States, a massive amount of trash is being thrown into landfills and disposed of in unsustainable ways. Viewing this through an ethics of care framework, we can acknowledge that it is violating the requirements of caring. There is inattentiveness in regard to where the waste goes when thrown away. We can assume there is also a lack of responsibility - those disposing of the trash feel like their actions are unrelated to the consequences the trash will cause for both people and the environment down the line. Finally, there is no competence or responsiveness as disposers do not follow through; they do not assist in plastic cleanup in developing nations where landfills are located, which are thousands of miles away.

Our project seeks to address these issues at Western Washington University. Primarily we will focus on education, which addresses ignorance around the issue of waste. Ethics of care specifically supports our proposal because when students learn about upcycling and practice it themselves (by making their own upcycled gardens with us), they are becoming more aware of how their disposal of items relates to environmental degradation.

**d. Goals:**

***What are the goals and desired outcomes of your project?***

1. Expand students' knowledge of sustainable upcycling by encouraging critical thinking about sustainable issues, healthy eating, and establishing basic knowledge in growing food.
2. Provide a positive outreach for students to be creative, curious, and engaged with the possibilities of sustainable upcycling.
3. Enhance multiple aspects of student life. Gardening and upcycling are useful skills and plant cultivation is known to improve mental health.
4. Supply students with a functional planter to take home, along with the knowledge to replicate it.

**e. Student impact:**

***How does this project directly impact the Western student community?***

We are set to impact 90-200 students with our event. They will be able to take home the materials, tools, and knowledge to grow a manageable small garden at home. This workshop will also expose them to the process of growing their own food, possibly for the first time.

Many students turn to processed store-bought foods that don't provide the same abundance of nutrients as fresh produce. Our project specifically focuses on leafy greens, herbs, and vegetables which contain key vitamins, minerals and fiber that support a healthy diet.

We hope that our event will encourage the habit of up-cycling and plant cultivation. Our goal is to instill confidence in students in their ability to grow food from seed that they can enjoy and share with their friends and neighbors.

**f. Education and outreach plan:**

***How do you plan on promoting your project on campus? How will the Western community learn about your efforts? Is there an educational component to your project?***

Our outreach plan is low cost and multifaceted. First, we will make flyers to post all over Western's campus. These flyers will be eye-catching and highlight the opportunities to get free materials and learn a new skill. The values of sustainability and self-sufficiency will also be emphasized in our flyer.

We won't only rely on passive advertising to boost student awareness. We also plan on connecting with related hobby clubs (Western's Plant Club, the Environmental Club, the Cozy Club, etc.) and advertising our event to their members. They will be given sample flyers and will be encouraged to save a reminder on their phones. We believe this method will be effective since it connects students likely to be interested in the Green Thumb Initiative with the details of our event. Awareness will naturally spread through word of mouth with the help of club members' social circles.

Lastly, on the day of the event, our booth will be set up in Red Square. We expect most of our attendees to be curious drop-ins. Booths in Red Square tend to attract people with extra time, whether they're between classes or leaving campus for the day.

**g. Metrics:**

*How will the impact of this project be measured? What are quantitative and/or qualitative metrics that can be tracked?*

| <b>Metric</b>   | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Impact</b>   |
|---|---|---|
| Number of jugs and paper towel rolls taken<br>(Quantitative)  | Provide a unit amount of materials used & attendees   | Informs us of the number of students who participated in the hands-on activity                            |
| Success in collaboration within the workshop<br>(Qualitative) | Discuss the overall outcome, engagement of students and the overall success                             | By discussing our own contribution, we are able to reflect on what went well and what we can improve upon |
| Survey<br>(Qualitative)                                       | 5-7 questions relating to new knowledge, engagement, and the probability of attending a future workshop | Provides critical data we can use for the future  |
| Track Updates<br>(Qualitative)                                | Emailing volunteers to keep us updated on their home gardens  | This will allow us to measure the long-lasting effects of our project                                     |

**h. Lasting impact & Ownership:**

*What is the longevity of this project? How will it impact sustainability, in the long-term, on campus? Which individual, office, or department is taking ownership of this project? Identify the post-SEJF-funding plan.*

Although this event will only take place on one day and within a span of hours, we anticipate that the knowledge and practices students learn will create a lasting impact. We are designing a streamlined and comprehensive guide to easy indoor gardening using recycled materials. Our intention is to spark attendee's curiosity and cultivate a lifelong habit of gardening and upcycling. Getting started is often one of the hardest parts of trying something new. By supplying attendees with seeds, an upcycled planter, and dirt, we are giving them what they need. The guide will be online and accessible to anyone who wants to view it. If these practices become habits in the long-term, over multiple years the benefits (both economically and environmentally) will multiply.

## SECTION 2: Sustainability Impact.

**a. How will your project positively support at least one of the four pillars of sustainability at Western?**

1. Create economic vitality; 2. Promote well-being; 3. Protect the environment; 4. Uphold social justice.

**1. Create economic vitality**— Our project aligns well with the economic vitality of students in a variety of ways. Firstly, growing their own fresh herbs and greens reduces weekly grocery bills, but also helps encourage students to eat healthier. The transportation cost will hopefully decrease as the students need to drive to the store less.

**2. Promote well-being**— Tending to a small garden, even if it is only one or two plants, can significantly enhance overall well-being. Engaging in gardening provides a therapeutic outlet, reducing stress and promoting relaxation through connection with nature. Witnessing the growth of plants and cultivating fresh produce instills a sense of accomplishment and pride, positively impacting mental health. Moreover, the consumption of homegrown vegetables encourages a nutritious diet, supporting physical well-being and providing a direct connection between one's efforts and personal health. Fresh herbs are antioxidant powerhouses and far cheaper when grown at home. Overall, tending to a small vegetable garden offers a holistic approach to well-being by nurturing the body and mind.

**3. Protect the environment**— By creating their own mini-gardens, students will participate in a variety of waste-reducing activities. Primarily, up-cycling plastic containers to use as plant pots keeps the containers from being dumped in landfills, or at very least postpones their entry into the recycling process. Secondly, it is important to note that produce bought in the grocery store creates carbon emissions through transport and other business processes involved in connecting the producer and consumers. Many vegetables come in pre-packaged plastic containers which are costly to the environment to produce and recycle. By growing their own produce, students are skipping these wasteful steps and still accessing the desired products at the end: healthy produce.

**b. How will your project positively align with Western's Sustainability Action Plan (SAP)?** Please determine how it advances one or more of the ten SAP chapters. *For information on the SAP, please refer to the Sustainability Engagement Institute's website ([sustain@wwu.edu](mailto:sustain@wwu.edu)) or ask a program representative. The ten SAP chapters are:*

1. Built Environment
2. Campus & Community Engagement
3. Curriculum and Research
4. Dining Services
5. Grounds
6. Investments
7. Procurement
8. Student Life
9. Transportation
10. Waste

### **Primary chapter of alignment: Waste**

**Explanation:** This project embodies the essence of sustainability by transforming discarded items like milk jugs and toilet paper rolls into practical pots for growing herbs and vegetables. We will provide opportunities for waste reduction education for all participants through hands-on activities, informational QR codes, and visual displays that focus on food waste. We strive to mitigate air and water pollutants driven by waste, minimizing negative environmental impacts through repurposing existing materials rather than relying on traditional manufacturing processes. Additionally, forgotten vegetables contribute to a substantial amount of household waste, despite everything but the packaging being biodegradable. Having freshly grown herbs and vegetables at your fingertips will reduce food waste. Beyond waste reduction, the project fosters a culture of resourcefulness and eco-consciousness, empowering students to make environmentally responsible choices in their daily lives.

### **Additional chapter of alignment: Dining Services**

**Explanation:** The Dining Services vision for Western's SAP is as follows, "Western provides healthy, delicious meals that reflect diverse cultures, encourage learning about the impacts of consumer food choices, and support socially- and economically-just, and ecologically responsible food production and delivery systems". Through our project, we encourage participants to learn about the impacts of their food choices as consumers. The choice to grow greens at home and reuse store bought produce is an ecologically responsible production of food because it prevents repeat purchases and subsequent potential waste.

### **How the UN's Sustainable Development goals intertwine with our project:**

#### ***Climate action***

The climate action goal proctored through the UN's Sustainable Development is relevant in our project. We are solely collecting single-use containers and other materials that are typically thrown away, then upcycling them to create planter pots and mini green houses with students. Through this, we are promoting sustainable actions while decreasing the amount of waste that contributes to the exponential rise in climate change.

#### ***Health and wellbeing***

Our project aligns nicely with the UN's Sustainable Development goal of good health and wellbeing. Fresh herbs are rich in antioxidants, a key player in preventing disease and promoting physical wellbeing. Vegetable scraps can be reused, and people can seize the opportunity to grow key ingredients in their small garden. Additionally, exposure and education to the practice of indoor gardening will hopefully lead to sustainable good habits.



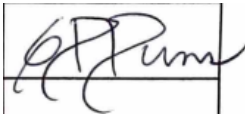
### SECTION 3: Project Participants

Project Advisor (Faculty or Staff) Student proposals must include a staff or faculty advisor. The role of the advisor is to assist the team during the development, implementation, and post-implementation stages of the proposal process.

Project Lead: There must be a team lead designated for the project. This individual is expected to serve as the communication liaison for the project.

Financial Agent: The project must have someone with budget authority to manage funds for all purchases. Should funds require transfer, this individual will have to provide a FAST Index and Activity Code to the SEJF Program Coordinator. Financial agents must be permanent staff and/or faculty members on campus, and cannot be student employees.

Program Coordinator: A member of the SEJF team will serve as the primary contact for the program and committee.

| Role                            | Name             | Department/School:<br><i>Students provide major/minor and expected graduation quarter/year</i> | Position:<br><i>Faculty/ staff/ student</i> | Western email address                                      | Signature to verify agreement   |
|---------------------------------|------------------|--|---|--|---|
| <i>Team Advisor</i>             | Kate Darby       | Environmental Studies  | Staff                                       | <a href="mailto:Kate.Darby@wwu.edu">Kate.Darby@wwu.edu</a> |    |
| <i>Team Lead</i>                | Eddie Mechling   | Business and Sustainability; 2025  | Student                                     | <a href="mailto:mechlig@wwu.edu">mechlig@wwu.edu</a>       | <i>Eddie Mechling</i>   |
| <i>Team Member</i>              | Anna Brinkerhoff | Business and Sustainability; 2024  | Student                                     | <a href="mailto:brinkea@wwu.edu">brinkea@wwu.edu</a>       |  |
| <i>Team Member</i>              | Sarah Duckstad   | Accounting; 2025   | Student                                     | <a href="mailto:ducksts@wwu.edu">ducksts@wwu.edu</a>       | <i>Sarah Duckstad</i>   |
| <i>Financial Agent</i>          | Craig Dunn       | Business & Economics   | Faculty                                     | <a href="mailto:Craig.Dunn@wwu.edu">Craig.Dunn@wwu.edu</a> |  |
| <i>SEJF Project Coordinator</i> | Zinta Lucans     | Sustainability Engagement Institute  | Grant Program Manager                       | <a href="mailto:lucansz@wwu.edu">lucansz@wwu.edu</a>       | <i>Zinta Lucans</i>   |

**SECTION 4: Project Timeline.**

- a. Describe how your project will progress, both before and after the approval of your proposal. Outline all tasks that are required to complete the project, including all the means in which you will promote the project on campus, in the table below. Insert additional rows, as necessary.

| Task   | Purpose  | Estimated Date of Completion                         |
|--|--|--|
| Early preparations: outreach and informational materials | Flyers, social media, survey, and informational QR codes completed   | January 9th - March 15th                             |
| Acquire recyclables for upcycling                        | This is ongoing until we have enough materials   | January 9th - April 20th                             |
| Prepare for event  | Purchase supplies, collaborating with clubs/volunteers, and any other tasks required for Earth Week; advertise at clubs            | During spring quarter<br>April 2nd - April 20th      |
| Set Up booth   | Food scrap display, hands on activity, and informational QR codes complete and ready for participants, booth is visually appealing | Earth week April 21st - 28th<br><br>*Exact date TBD* |
| Send out survey  | Acquire data about how what students learned and how they were impacted by our project; metric gathering                           | June 12th (Before school year ends)                  |

**GREEN THUMB INITIATIVE TIMELINE**

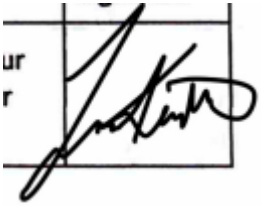


**b. When is the planned project completion date?**

The project ends when Earth Week is over. This will be between April 21st-28<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

**SECTION 5: Project Stakeholders**

- a. Does your project involve labor/participation or require permission from organizations, departments, or individuals on campus?** Who will be impacted if this proposal is implemented? All stakeholders must provide a signature of approval for this project. *Note: Only stakeholders internal to WWU must be listed.*

| Stakeholder Name | Department and position | Involvement  | Signature   |
|------------------|-------------------------|--|---|
| Terri Kempton    | Outback Farms Manager   | Coordinate with us to accept our donation of seeds and dirt after the event. |  |

- b. Does your project propose a temporary or permanent facility or property modification?** If so, is a Project Owner Form attached to the appendix of this application? Please ask a program representative for this form.

Our project does not propose a temporary or permanent facility modification.

**SECTION 6: Project Budget.**

Provide an itemized list of the budget items required for this project. Include equipment, construction costs, publicity, labor, and any other costs.

| Green Thumb Initiative: Upcycled Mini Gardens                   |                |              |                 |
|---|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Budget Statement  |                |              |                 |
|   | cost/unit      | quantity     | Total           |
| <b>Materials</b>  |                |              |                 |
| Joe's Garden soil mix   | \$13.99        | 7            | \$97.93         |
| Joe's Garden veggie pack  | \$1.99         | 50           | \$99.50         |
| <b>Total for Joe's Garden</b>                                   | <b>\$15.98</b> | <b>57</b>    | <b>\$197.43</b> |
| <b>Seeds</b>  |                |              |                 |
| Bohan F1 Untreated <u>Beet</u>                                  | \$5.39         | 1000 (seeds) | \$5.39          |
| Green Star Untreated <u>Lettuce</u>                             | \$8.25         | 1000         | \$8.25          |
| Evi Untreated <u>Basil</u>                                      | \$5.08         | 1000         | \$5.08          |
| Roquette Untreated <u>Arugula</u>                               | \$6.40         | ~11000       | \$6.40          |
| Asain Green Early <u>Mizuna</u>                                 | \$7.55         | ~11000       | \$7.55          |
| Win Win F1 <u>Pak Choi</u>                                      | \$5.40         | 1000         | \$5.40          |
| <b>Total for Osborne seeds</b>                                  | <b>\$38.07</b> | <b>26000</b> | <b>\$38.07</b>  |
| <b>Other Cost</b>   |                |              |                 |
| Outreach (poster boards, flyers etc.)                           | -              | -            | \$75.00         |
| Miscellaneous (duct tape, bucket, gloves, measuring cups, etc.) | -              | -            | \$125.00        |
| <b>Total other cost</b>   |                |              | <b>\$200.00</b> |
| Expected Tax  | 8.8%           | -            | \$38.32         |
| Margin of Error   | 3.0%           | -            | \$13.07         |
| <b>Total Operating Expenses</b>                                 | <b>\$76</b>    | <b>-</b>     | <b>\$527.53</b> |

The SEJF program encourages the identification of additional funding sources to augment SEJF funds, though it is not required. List pending, approved, and denied applications for funding from other sources, along with amounts requested from those sources.

| Additional funding source(s), if applicable | Status | Amount    |
|---|--------|-----------|
| n/a   |        |           |
|   |        |           |
| <b>Total of all other funding sources</b>   |        | <b>\$</b> |

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| <b>Total funding amount requested from SEJF</b> | <b>\$527.53</b> |
|---|-----------------|

**Dirt cost analysis:** We estimate we will use 5.25 cups of dirt per student.  $5.25 * 200 \text{ students} = 1,050 \text{ cups of dirt}$ . 1,050 cups of dirt in cubic feet is  $\sim 8.77 \text{ cubic feet}$ . Each bag of dirt at Joe’s Garden is 1.5 cubic feet, so  $8.77/1.5 = \text{approximately } 5.85 \text{ bags of dirt}$ . We want to get 7 bags of dirt to be safe and allow room for error.  $7 \text{ bags} * \$13.99 = \$97.93 \text{ pre-tax}$ .

**Veggie pack analysis:** One microgreen starter plant we plan to split between 4 people to be used in milk jugs.

**Seed cost analysis:** We plan on dispersing the seeds between toilet paper rolls (5 seeds per one pot) & milk jugs (2 teaspoons).

If the project is implemented, will there be any ongoing replacement, operational, maintenance or renewal costs? If yes, has a source of funds been identified to cover those costs? This must be communicated to the appropriate stakeholder.

| Ongoing cost          | Amount/year | Responsible Stakeholder | Signature |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| n/a – no ongoing cost |             |                         |           |
|                       |             |                         |           |
|                       |             |                         |           |

Our project will not have a project owner as we don’t expect our project to carry over to another year. However, if any of our above stakeholders enjoy our event and like the metrics we share with them, they may choose to implement parts of our project in the future. The SEJF program and the Outback Farm have an established connection and may choose to work together in the future on a similar project.

**References :**

McDonald, J. (2022, July 13). How much waste does the U.S. produce? Dumpsters.com.  
<https://www.dumpsters.com/blog/us-trash-production#:~:text=The%20average%20American%20consumer%20produces,6%2C570%20pounds%20per%20family%20annually>.

Schmutz, U., Lennartsson Turner, M., Williams, S., Devereaux, M., & Davies, G. (2014). The benefits of gardening and food growing for health and wellbeing. Garden Organic and Sustain.

Tronto, Joan C. (2005). “An ethic of care”, in Cudd, Ann E.; Andreasen, Robin O. (eds.), *Feminist theory: a philosophical anthology*, Oxford, UK Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 251–263, ISBN 9781405116619.

White, K. and Cuomo, C. (2016). “Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies” *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics*. Edited by S.M. Gardiner and A. Thompson, 234-247. Oxford University Press.