

Solstice P-Patch Spring Plant Sale Guide

Background

The Solstice P-Patch has held an annual plant sale in the spring as its major fundraising activity since 2009. Profits are used for maintenance and to purchase supplies for the giving garden, tools, and supplies for common areas. In addition to plants, the sale has also included garden-related items including tools, pots, books and sometimes home baked goods and bundles of fresh cut rhubarb.

Many volunteers are needed throughout the year to plan the sale, and complete all the numerous tasks (see list of tasks with approximate time frames below).

This guide was prepared so that future plant sale volunteers will have an idea of what was done in the past in order to plan and carryout successful plant sales in the future. It is only a guide - future plant sales are encouraged to try new approaches.

Sale Date and Time

With the exception of one year, the sale has always been held the same day as the West Seattle Garage Sale (second Saturday of May). The P-Patch registers to be a garage sale site through the sale organizers – the West Seattle Blog, as participation provides publicity in exchange for the fee. The West Seattle Blog announces the WS Garage Sale in early spring.

The P-Patch plant sale has traditionally been held from 10 am to 3 pm. (Note that the WS Garage Sale has historically started at 9:00 am, but it is not possible to get the plant sale set-up by then).

Plant Sale Team

A plant sale team is formed each year for planning and carrying out the tasks for the sale. It usually includes the following volunteer roles, which can be modified or divided to spread out tasks as needed. The team meets in the spring at least once to coordinate tasks for the sale and also usually meets a few weeks after the sale for a debrief and discussion of what might be done for the following year's sale. The results of the debrief should be published on the Meeting Minutes page of the Solstice website for easy reference for future plant sale volunteers and the P-Patch Leadership Team.

- Team Leader – overall responsibility for working with other plant sale team members during the year. Communicates with gardeners about plant donations (dividing/potting, veggie starts, delivery to plant sale site, etc.). Holds a planning meeting with the team.
- Publicity Coordinator - registers for WS garage sale, gets posters made, requests volunteers to post on social media, posts on social media sites. Oversees any needed changes on plant sale boards used on day of sale. Coordinates with P-Patch Communications Coordinator and Finance Coordinator as needed.
- Logistics Coordinator – takes care of getting supplies for the sale (tape, plant tags, loaned tables, loaned canopies, table covers, etc.), recruits volunteers for the day of the sale, and ensures that there are refreshments for volunteers on sale day.
- Plant Labeling and Pricing Coordinator - Checks nurseries, hardware stores, other plant sales & nursery websites for current pricing for plant categories and sizes, sends out pricing and labelling

guidelines to plant donors, ensures plant tags and pens are available; holds work party to tidy, label and price plants in P-Patch holding area.

- Plant Sale Set-up Coordinator – Works with Logistics Coordinator re: tables and canopies needed for sale. Organizes setup (placement of canopies, tables, signs for plant categories, directs volunteers in taking plants to correct categories, coordinates as needed with volunteers in charge of organizing plant categories (i.e. perennials, native plants, bulbs, etc.).
- Finance Coordinator – Coordinates cashiering tasks for the day of the sale (e.g. capacity to use a “Square” reader for debit and credit card purchases), provides some small bills for making change for cash purchases, tallies the results of the sale, and reimburses gardeners who purchased supplies for the sale.

Plants

Where do we get plants?

Plants are donated by P-Patch gardeners and their friends and neighbors. Plants are usually perennials or bulbs from gardener’s gardens, or have been started from seeds or cuttings. Some plants come from divisions of plants in the P-Patch perennial bed.

In recent years we have also purchased plants for resale in order to broaden the selection and variety of plants for the sale. For example, native bare-root plants have been purchased from the King Conservation District. They are potted up by P-Patch gardeners and held at their homes for the sale. Due to the high demand for native plants, and the low cost of the bareroot plants, this has proved profitable but it requires volunteers to pot and steward the plants until the sale. Note that prices for the native plants have been increasing each year, which means that they will need to be priced higher for the P-Patch sale.

We have also purchased and potted up various types of summer blooming bulbs (such as lilies and alliums). This has had mixed results in terms of sales. Plants sell well if they are blooming at the time of the sale. Those not sold can be held for the next year.

What kinds of plants?

We have sold many categories of plants including:

- Vegetable starts (mostly summer veggies like squash, cucumbers, peppers and tomatoes)
- Herbs (perennial and annual)
- Fruit (like raspberries, strawberries, figs, plums and other fruits)
- Annuals (like sweet peas, violas, calendula & other flowers)
- Perennials (the largest category - which includes groundcovers for sun and shade)
- Native trees, shrubs and perennials
- Bulbs, corms, tubers (like dahlias, lilies)
- Trees and shrubs
- Houseplants

How do we price plants for the sale?

A couple of weeks prior to the sale volunteers scout nurseries and hardware or grocery stores for ideas on what their prices are for different categories and sizes of plants. We then price plants a few dollars lower than those prices, but not so low as to lose possible profits. Prices are also adjusted up or down depending on the quality of the plants.

The Plant Labeling and Pricing Coordinator sends out pricing guidance by email to all gardeners with the hope that they will label and price their own donations.

Plant labeling and information

All plants need individual labels/tags and prices. Ideally the plant donors do this task. To help sell plants, having color photos of the flowers or fruit and a brief description really helps customers know what they are getting and helps sell plants. Only one photo for plant variety is needed. There is already a large collection of photos, either laminated or taped on cardboard backing that were saved from previous years. However, each year new ones are needed for new plant varieties. They are taped on to bamboo sticks prior to the sale and put in pots as part of the sale setup.

Publicity

Registering to participate in the West Seattle garage sale provides publicity. In addition, a gardener volunteers to design a poster and creates print and digital copies for other gardeners to place on West Seattle community bulletin boards and post to social media, including the West Seattle Blog. The Publicity Coordinator also sends a notice to the P-Patch list-serve and various social media sites.

Sandwich boards with plant sale information (stored in the shed) are put out on Fauntleroy & Webster on the day of sale (maybe one on the day before too)

Logistics/Supplies

The following items are needed for preparing for the plant sale (purchased, donated, scrounged):

- Plant tags
- Permanent markers
- Thin stakes for mounting plant photos
- Small pieces of cardboard for mounting photos that haven't been laminated
- Wide clear tape
- Staple gun for mounting signs on tall stakes
- Canopies (at least 3 – P-Patch currently has one), folding tables (P-Patch has some in shed but 4 or 5 more are always needed), a few chairs, table coverings for cashier table and garden items table and plastic covering for loaned tables that will hold plants (there are pieces of black plastic in a box in the shed for this purpose).
- 5-gallon buckets to hold wire closet shelves, picnic table benches, and smaller picnic tables
- Boxes for buyers
- Mallet for plant sale set up day to pound in stakes holding signs (entrance/exit, plant categories).
- Cash box
- Coffee, tea, snacks for volunteers
- Ribbon/basket for bundling rhubarb for sale.

Volunteers & Tasks for Plant Sale set-up, Operation and Clean-up

Volunteers are needed the day of the sale for set-up, working the sale, and clean-up, as follows:

Korean Chrysanthemum Pink/Apricot single flowers, clumping habit. Blooms fall.



- Set-up – 10-11 people (see the set-up section below for tasks) 7:30 – 10 am
- Working the sale – volunteers are needed to work shifts – First shift 10 am – noon. Second shift noon to 3 pm
 - Cashiers (2 people per shift);
 - Floaters (3-4 people per shift) Helping shoppers with plant information and suggestions (it helps to have people knowledgeable about plants), helping customers get/carry boxes, answer questions;
 - Talliers – (1-2 people morning shift only) Tallying plants by number and price to help speed check-out when lines form for purchase;
 - Rhubarb harvester (1 person morning, 1 person afternoon) Note: the morning volunteer also sets up the rhubarb station - signage, price, bundling stalks;
 - Plant waterer (1 person morning 1 person afternoon, using watering cans);
 - Customer helper to haul plants to cars (1 person morning, 1 person afternoon)
- Clean-up 2:30 – 4 pm – (6-8 people) to close up canopies, haul all supplies and plants to be held back up to the P-Patch. Note that many plants are taken home by gardeners for stewarding for the next year, especially more valuable plants. Clean off loaned tables.

Sale Set-up

The sale site has always been set up the morning of the sale starting at 7:30 or earlier to be ready for the sale to start at 10 am. Originally the sale was held in the P-Patch driveway, but in recent years we have set up next to the tennis courts along Webster Street in the grassy area. This provides more space and some parking as well as load/unload capacity. A sample site layout is provided below, but exact locations will always be shifted, depending on how many plants of each category are donated).

Sidewalk next to tennis courts

Vol. refresh.

Plant pick up

(Canopy needed, chairs)
Cashier Station

table

Shrubs & Trees area
(on ground)

Shrubs & Trees Table

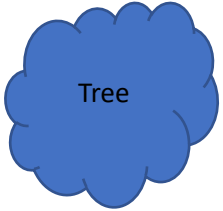
Native Plant table



Exit

Rhubarb Table
(Canopy needed)

Garden Items Table
(Canopy)



Tree

Veggie Starts Table

Veggie Starts Table

Veggie Starts Table

Fruits Table

Native Plant table

House Plants Table

Annuals Table

Perennials

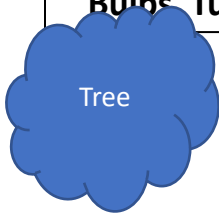
Bench

Bench

Bench

Bench

Bench



Tree

Closet rack on buckets
Bulbs, Tubers, Corms

Greeter Table



Entrance

Not to Scale

Parking area next to Webster Street

Set Up Tasks

- Step 1. Bring down all tables (including table in front of shed and brown picnic table); picnic table benches (brown ones and those from upper picnic table); white wire closet shelf and three buckets; all folding tables (loaned ones and those in shed), canopies.
- Step 2. Place tables as directed by Plant Sale Set-up Coordinator and site layout schematic.
- Step 3. Put on table coverings as needed.
- Step 4. Using site layout schematic and Plant Sale Set-Up Coordinator guidance, pound in stakes with plant sale categories & exit and entrance signs. Note that signs for plant sale categories are stored in the shed (in the rafters).
- Step 5. Carry plants to designated areas and set on ground near the tables/benches(Plant Sale Coordinator (or other) should direct volunteers.
- Step 6. Plant Sale Set-up Coordinator(s) should assign people to different plant categories, then be available for consultation. Volunteers move plants to their designated categories from the staging areas and place plants on, under and around tables/benches or on ground, grouping plants by variety so that plant signs will be in right place.
- Step 7. Put plant photos in pots with matching plants (usually one photo per plant species). This task will need direction from Plant Sale Set-up Coordinator and other volunteers familiar with the plants in their area.
- Step 8. Tidy & water plants as needed.
- Step 9. Make tags/price plants missing prices
- Step 10. Organize boxes
- Step 11. Organize cashier table, volunteer snack table, garden items table.

Summary Table - List of Tasks and Timing

Task	Timing	Responsible	Comments
Send out requests for perennials/bulb divisions	Fall	Plant Sale Team Leader working with P-Patch Communications Coordinator	Offer potting soil/containers. Offer reimbursement for potting soil as needed

Order native bareroot plants, as agreed by the Plant Sale Team at the post-sale debrief	Mid- November	Plant Sale Team Leader or other	King Conservation District – on-line ordering https://kingcd.org/
Pick up native bareroot plants & arrange for potting & holding	Late Feb-early March	“	Usually in Tukwila, scheduled pick-up time
Send out request for perennial divisions, starting tomatoes, peppers, tomatillos, etc.	Early March	Plant Sale Team Leader and/ or Communications Coordinator	Offer potting soil reimbursement, pots at PPatch
Sign up for West Seattle Garage Sale & pay registration fee	April	Publicity Coordinator	Check West Seattle Blog for details. Include info on kinds of payment accepted and start and end time
Send out request for starting summer veggies (like summer squash, cucumbers, winter squash, pumpkins, peas, greens) and annual flowers. Also, houseplant donations	Early April	Plant Sale Team Leader/ Communications Coordinator	May need to offer potting soil/ containers
Start recruiting volunteers for day of sale – set-up, work sale, clean-up	Early April	Logistics Coordinator	This will require multiple asks
Hold work party to pot donated plants as needed	Early April	Plant Sale Labeling and Pricing Coordinator or other	
Start requesting loans of tables, canopies, boxes	Mid-April – early May	Logistics Coordinator	“
Ask for volunteer to design poster, arrange for printing copies, distributing to volunteers for posting	Mid-April –end of April	Publicity Coordinator	
Post sale announcement on West Seattle Blog and send copy of poster	End of April	Publicity Coordinator	
Research plant prices at nurseries, hardware stores, etc. & send out pricing guidance to plant donors. Remind gardeners to label & price each plant and provide photos/brief desc for each type of plant.	Early May	Plant Sale Labeling and Pricing Coordinator, others	

Get photos& descriptions laminated	Early May	Plant Sale Team Leader), or Logistics Coordinator, or other	
Post posters, publicity on social media sites	Early May	All gardeners under direction of Publicity Coordinator	
Hold work party to tidy, label and price plants in holding area; mount photos/plant descriptions, check/fix signage as needed; bundle mounted photos in groups and store in shed. Check plant category signs and repair as needed.	Early May – 1-2 weeks before sale	Plant Sale Labeling and Pricing Coordinator or other	Will need supplies (tape, shears, colored markers, cardboard, thin bamboo stakes, black permanent markers, plant tags, etc.
Ask people loaning tables, canopies to drop off the day before (shed) or morning of	Week before sale	Logistics Coordinator	
Ask people to drop off donated plants & other items – preferably early morning of the sale, otherwise hidden in P-Patch somewhere. Remind about pricing	Send requests starting late April	Logistics Coordinator	
Arrange for coffee, donations of snacks for volunteers	Week before sale	Logistics Coordinator	
Plant sale set-up, operation and clean-up coordinate volunteers	Day of Sale	Plant Sale Set-up Coordinator, Logistics Coordinator, Cashier(s), volunteers	
Plant Sale Team Debrief meeting	Late May early June		