

# WSSOG 2021 Natural Yard Care Pilot Final Report

## Executive Summary

The West Sound Stormwater Outreach Group, or WSSOG, is a multijurisdictional partnership between Kitsap County, the Cities of Bainbridge Island, Bremerton, Gig Harbor, Poulsbo, Port Angeles, Port Orchard, and the US Navy. The group is working to improve water quality by reducing pollutants in stormwater runoff, which are a major source of pollution to local waterways and the Puget Sound. C+C worked with the WSSOG to develop a behavior change pilot campaign to address the issue. The following report details results and findings from the pilot to inform a large-scale campaign in the following years.

The effort satisfies the current Western Washington Phase II Municipal Stormwater NPDES permit. Planning for the program began in 2019, and the pilot occurred in 2021. The following activities were conducted through the multi-year effort:

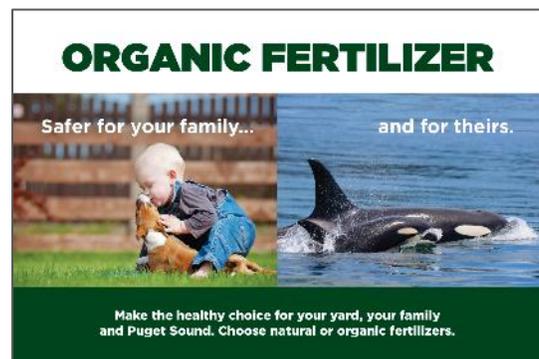
- **Social Marketing Sessions** - The WSSOG conducted five social marketing planning sessions to define key project elements, including the campaign's focus on getting residents to reduce the use of chemical fertilizers on their lawns.
- **Initial Audience Research** - Research was conducted to better understand the priority audience's perceived barriers, benefits, and motivators in relation to the desired behavior.
- **Creative Development and Testing** - Based on research findings, creative concepts were developed then tested among the priority audience.
- **COVID-19 Pivot to Research** - Due to COVID-19, the 2020 pilot was delayed to 2021. While the pilot was delayed, additional research was conducted to further refine planned campaign tactics and messaging.

## **Pilot**

The pilot was conducted in Poulsbo during peak fertilizer season in spring 2021, and included webinars hosted by WSU Kitsap County Extension's Master Gardeners; and organic fertilizer discount offered through a partnership with a local retailer; and campaign communications including a Facebook ad campaign, a postcard, and government delivery channels such as e-newsletters, organic social media, and utility bill messaging.

## **Pilot by the Numbers:**

- 23,131 People reached on Facebook
- 2,933 Direct mail impressions
- 1,177 Link clicks on Facebook
- 68 Webinar registrations
- 35 Webinar attendees
- 18 Coupons redeemed in-store
- Successful partnership with Master Gardeners



## **Campaign Planning**

### **Social Marketing Sessions (December 2018 - February 2019)**

Social marketing is a process that applies marketing principles and techniques to create, communicate, and deliver value to influence a priority audience's behaviors to benefit society. In line with social marketing best practices, the WSSOG participated in five social marketing planning sessions led by C+C Social Marketing Strategist Nancy Lee. Lee has over two decades of experience in social marketing, co-authoring 13 books on social marketing with Philip Kotler; teaching Introduction to Social Marketing at the University of Washington; and consulting with over 100 governmental agencies in Washington state.

Each of Lee's sessions included an overview and presentation of a social marketing tenet, and a corresponding workshop to design each plan element. The purpose of the campaign was defined as: To reduce pollutants in stormwater runoff by increasing the amount of safe products used in yard care and decreasing the amount of harmful products used in yard care. The five sessions were as follows:

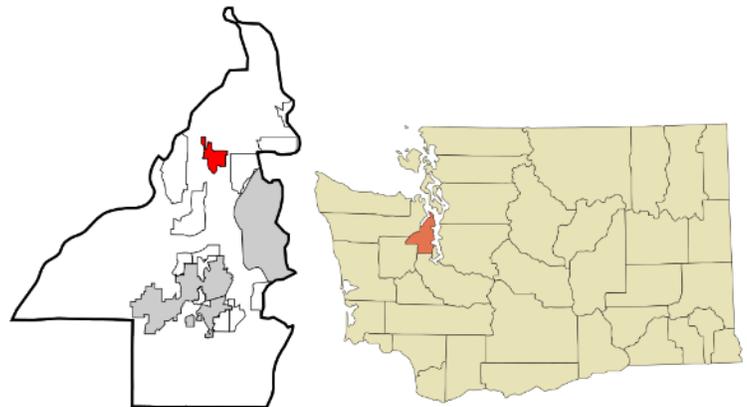
1. Background, Purpose, and Focus
2. Situation Analysis
3. Priority Audience
4. Desired Behavior Objectives & Goals
5. Priority Audience Barriers, Benefits, Motivators, Competition, and Influential Others

The end result of the workshops was a complete social marketing plan, ready for pilot development and implementation. The following key elements were chosen:

**Campaign "Ask"** - In order to reduce pollutants in stormwater runoff, fertilize only with safer products, if you plan to fertilize your lawn.

**Campaign Audience** - Single family home or townhome residents with kids and/or pets who have "Do It Yourself" yards and are currently using harmful products.

**Pilot Area** - The WSSOG chose the City of Poulsbo for the pilot based on a number of factors including the availability of Master Gardener outreach channels, the city's mix of representative demographics, and its central location within the county. With roughly 4,126 households and a population of 10,602, Poulsbo makes up just 3.9% of the population - making it an ideal fit to pilot the campaign and build toward Kitsap County-wide implementation.



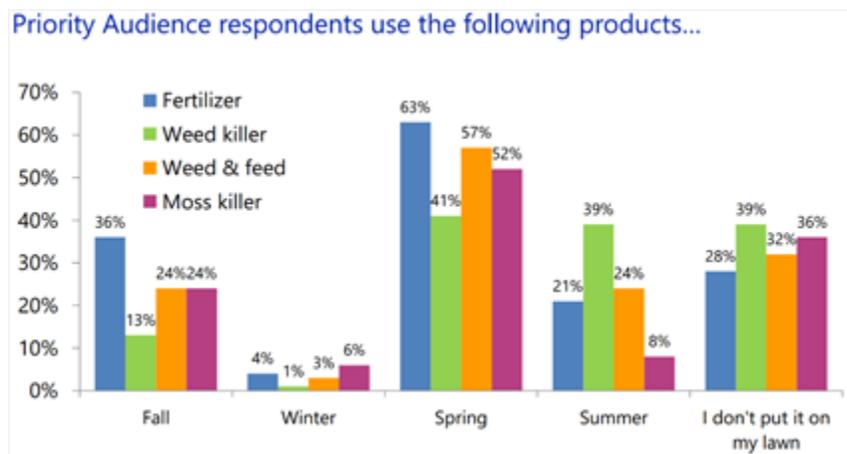
### Initial Audience Research (December 2018)

Between social marketing sessions four and five, the WSSOG and C+C worked with Hardwick Research to gain a better understanding of the priority audience. A survey was designed to identify the perceived barriers and benefits related to lawn care and fertilizer usage by Kitsap County residents. The priority audience was defined as those who:

- Live in Kitsap County, Poulsbo, Bremerton, Port Orchard, Gig Harbor, Bainbridge Island, or Port Angeles
- Own a single-family home, townhouse or duplex
- Have grass on their property
- Maintain the grass themselves
- Have at least one child under 18 years of age living in their household OR have a pet that goes out in the yard
- Uses a fertilizer on the lawn

The survey was promoted through Facebook, government delivery channels, and digital neighborhood groups such as Nextdoor. A total of 212 people responded to the survey, with 164 falling within the priority audience parameters. Some of the key high-level findings were:

- When asked “have you ever considered switching to ALL organic yard care products,” 56% of the priority audience indicated they have considered making the change.
- The top three concerns the priority audience had about using organics:
  - 50% believe organic products cost more
  - 27% do not think organic products would work as well
  - 35% are not sure where they would purchase organic products
- The priority audience said Master Gardeners are the spokespeople they believe most when it comes to using organic products. 43% believe Master Gardeners; 39% believe professional gardeners (groundskeepers, golf course managers, landscapers, etc.); 34% believe university researchers; 27% believe local nurseries or garden centers; Friends/neighbors, governments, celebrity gardeners, medical experts,



- major brands, veterinarians, and the internet all ranked below 17%
- 64% of priority audience respondents thought that free or discounted organic products or a list of what products to use would make them more likely to use organic products on their lawn.
- Spring is the peak season for participants who were putting chemical products on their lawns, followed by fall.

## Creative Development and Testing (April 2019 - June 2019)

Once the social marketing plan was developed, the WSSOG worked with C+C to develop campaign creative and determine the best combination of imagery and messaging to resonate with the priority audience. Message testing with the priority audience helped determine which combination of image and text would be most motivating to get them to switch from using harmful products to using safer ones. The survey was conducted using the online tool Ask Your Target Market. For this testing effort, C+C and the WSSOG developed four separate adcepts (pictured below).



Respondents answered questions to capture the following information:

- Open-ended (qualitative) questions regarding **understanding**
- Likert rating of each ad to determine success factors: **important, relevant, believable, motivating, engaging**
- Rank order from most motivating to least motivating
- Open-ended explanation of elements that contribute to most and least motivating
- Open-ended description of an ad that would be most motivating

Research Results:

- The “Child & Puppy” creative performed the strongest overall, and performed strong enough that no changes to the image and message were needed
- The “Child & Puppy” and “Otter” adcepts both scored very well in comparison to the group.
- “Otter” performed well, especially among those who already have some knowledge about the issues associated with natural yard care – as the audience becomes more aware/educated, “Otter” could be the “next generation” key message.
- All of the messages were well understood, including the nuances beyond organic is better than chemical fertilizers.
- Images with children were ranked as engaging and relevant.

With research finding the “Child & Puppy” adcept was the strongest, the WSSOG finalized the campaign creative (pictured below).

# ORGANIC FERTILIZER

Safer for your family...



and for theirs.



**Make the healthy choice for your yard, your family  
and the Puget Sound. Choose natural or organic fertilizers.**

## **COVID-19 Delays Outreach, Pivot to Research (January 2020 - June 2020)**

Based on the results of social marketing sessions and research, in-person events with Master Gardeners at gardening supply retail stores were chosen as the main outreach tactic. Ahead of the spring fertilizing season, Master Gardeners would be on-hand to answer natural yard care questions from the priority audience, while organic fertilizer would be discounted and offered to store attendees.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, the WSSOG's natural yard care pilot campaign was postponed from spring 2020 until spring 2021. With a need to restructure pilot tactics for the pandemic, the team utilized the remainder of 2020 to conduct additional market research on the priority audience. Results and analysis from the research would be used to better inform the execution of the 2021 pilot.

## **Further Research - Tactics and Messaging in the COVID Environment**

With the delay of the pilot campaign due to COVID-19, the WSSOG and C+C conducted additional surveying to refine the tactics within the campaign, such as interest in virtual versions of the events, and preferred descriptions for virtual events. WSSOG also sought to narrow the pilot's Facebook ad strategy by testing which topics would drive the most engagement.

Respondents were recruited by placing two Facebook ads letting Kitsap residents know the WSSOG was seeking people who do their own yard care to participate in a paid research study. Residents who were interested clicked on a link that took them to a short survey to ensure they fit the target audience profile. If they did, they received information about how to participate.

This online research was conducted using the Revelation™ platform with 13 people – or the equivalent of two focus groups. Respondents spent about 1 hour over a 2-day period participating in the research and were compensated \$80 each for their opinions. Select key insights were provided below.

#### Planned Pilot Insights:

- The target audience is very receptive to online Master Gardener events because they are more convenient. Although a few respondents complained of “Zoom fatigue,” most respondents were excited about the idea of having lawn care education online, provided by Master Gardeners.
- Although cost is a significant barrier to purchase, the way a campaign expresses price reduction has potential to deter people from purchasing organic products.
- Keep focusing on kid / pet health and safety as a motivator. The majority of respondents are not connecting their lawn care practices to the health of the Puget Sound. However, a number of respondents were already concerned about the negative health implication of chemicals on their kids and pets.

#### Facebook Ad Strategy Insights:

- The Facebook ad that highlighted Master Gardener informational events was preferred over the Facebook ad that provided a coupon. The drivers were:
  - Respondents are eager to interact with Master Gardeners, and believe they would learn useful information from them. Credibility is very high.
  - Those who said they would attend a Master Gardener event were motivated by the educational aspect. This also made some respondents believe that the ad wasn’t just an advertising gimmick.
  - Respondents liked the idea of a coupon at the Master Gardener event, but that was not a significant driver for attendance.
  - Respondents would be more likely to click either ad if it was posted by a friend or trusted source.
  - Although some people loved the idea of coupons, many felt that coupons or discounted products, especially without a familiar brand name, signal lower quality products and/or products that have been sitting around and need to be sold.
  - The ads with coupons didn’t promote a specific product, so respondents didn’t feel confident that the coupon would be worthwhile.
  - Additionally, when respondents found that they had to fill out a form to get a coupon mailed to them, they thought it wasn’t worth the effort. Others were concerned that it would just get their name on a mailing list.

### **Pilot Activities**

The pilot was timed for spring 2021, based on survey findings showing that the majority of the priority audience fertilized their lawns in the spring.

### **Virtual Events**

Based on the insights and recommendations from the 2020 research, Master Gardeners were featured experts. In spring 2020, the pandemic was going strong. Stay at home orders were still in place, and the Master Gardeners were not doing in-person events. The project shifted from the original plan of

tabling at lawn and garden retailers, to conducting natural yard care webinars. The events would cover the basics of natural yard care and would be led by a Master Gardener, with a WSSOG representative serving as the host. Based on the research, the events were titled “Natural Lawn Care with Master Gardeners: For Healthier Yards and Safer Families”

Dates and times were chosen based on volunteer availability, timeliness for the spring fertilizer season, and with the goal of providing options on both a weekday and weekends. Events were held:

- Thursday, March 25, 6-7pm
- Saturday, April 3, 10-11am
- Saturday, April 10, 1-2pm

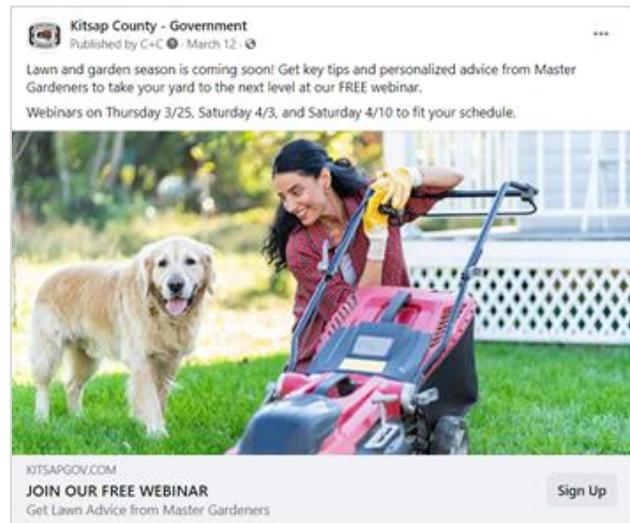


**Outreach Mechanisms**

**Facebook**

A paid social campaign was used to promote the virtual events and the campaign. With roughly two-thirds of U.S. adults (68%) reporting that they are Facebook users, and roughly three-quarters of those users accessing Facebook on a daily basis, Facebook was chosen for its widespread usage, flexibility and scalability.

Two ads were created with the goal of A/B testing different images and calls-to-action for effectiveness. One ad promoted the Master Gardener virtual events, while the other promoted the coupon discount offered at Valley Nursery. The webinar ad ran from March 15-April 10, and the coupon ad ran slightly longer, continuing past the end of the webinars, from March 15-April 30. Both ads drove click-throughs to a Kitsap County landing page for the pilot program.



**Retail Partnership and Product Discount**

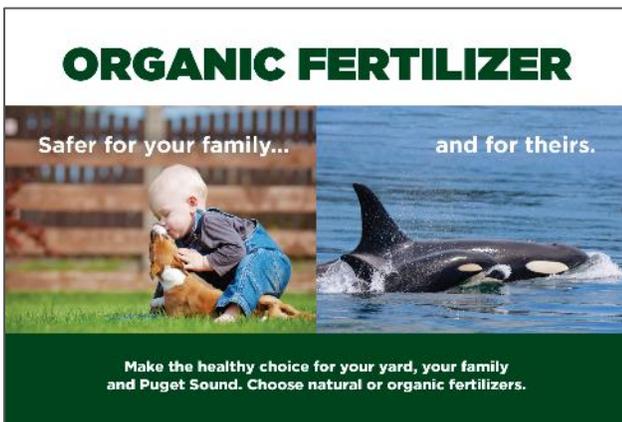
With two-thirds of the priority audience saying free or discounted products were their top motivator to try the desired behavior, the WSSOG sought to offer a discounted product. Organic lawn fertilizers range between approx. \$20-\$70 per bag or carton, so they are not a small, inexpensive “giveaway item”. Further, a small sample amount would not be a strong behavior-change incentive, since it would only cover a very small part of the lawn and would be used next to synthetic fertilizer, and organic fertilizer may take longer to get results.

Due to these factors, the WSSOG sought a way to conduct an innovative partnership to provide free or discounted product as part of the pilot project. In order to offer a discount, Kitsap County put out a solicitation to every retailer that sells organic lawn fertilizers at a physical location in the City of Poulsbo, with the goal of onboarding one retail partner for the pilot. Valley Nursery in Poulsbo agreed to partner with the program. Residents would be able to purchase a 20 lb bag of E.B. Stone Organic Lawn Food (pictured) with a 15% discount. The WSSOG would reimburse Valley Nursery for the cost of the discount. Valley Nursery also agreed to commit to stock organic fertilizer throughout the spring season (once the discount is over), an added benefit since other [similar programs](#) in the region have found that one barrier to these programs is that retailers may not keep organic product stocked throughout the popular spring fertilizing season.



**Direct Mail**

A large, attention-getting 6”x9” postcard was sent to 2,933 Poulsbo households, using a mailing list provided by the city. The postcard conveyed the benefits of using safer products, encouraged residents to attend a webinar, and included the coupon.



**Government Delivery Channels and County Website**

The virtual events were promoted through the City of Poulsbo's monthly E-newsletter and monthly utility bill insert. Kitsap County also hosted two web pages to serve as a central source of information about the campaign and the webinar.

## **Campaign Results**

### **Facebook Results**

In total, the pilot's Facebook campaign reached 23,131 people and received 1,177 link clicks - a strong showing for an audience limited to the city of Poulsbo. The average cost per click (CPC) was \$2.01.

The Facebook campaign also had a high frequency, with people seeing the ads roughly 14 times on average. Research shows that a person has to see an ad around 7 times to recall it later, making this a memorable effort for the pilot area. Below is a breakdown of how the ads performed separately:

#### **Webinar Ad (March 15, 2021 to April 10, 2021)**

- 383 link clicks
- Over 98,000 appearances on people's newsfeed
- 8,559 people reached\*
- \$2.26 cost per click
- This ad received 5 comments, 31 reactions, 7 shares, and was saved 6 times by Facebook users
- On average, this ad was seen ~11 times by each person

#### **Coupon Ad (March 15, 2021 to April 30, 2021)**

- 794 link clicks
- Over 239,000 appearances on people's newsfeed
- 22,363 people reached\*
- \$1.89 average cost per click.
- This ad received 10 comments, 153 reactions, 25 shares, and was saved 10 times by Facebook users
- On average, this ad was seen ~10 times by each person



*\*\*"People reached" is larger than Poulsbo population due to various factors in how Facebook counts this metric, including users viewing the ad on multiple devices, users accessing Facebook on multiple accounts, and users who are visiting or passing through Poulsbo accessing Facebook.*

*\*7,791 people saw both ads leading to \*23,131 total people reached*

#### **Ad Comparison While Both Ads Were Running (March 15, 2021 to April 10, 2021)**

- While both ads were running, the coupon ad had a slightly stronger performance compared to the webinar ad.
- The coupon ad drove 467 link clicks while the webinar ad drove 383 link clicks.
- The coupon ad had higher post engagement indicating it was the more relevant ad for the target audience.
- The webinar ad had a higher frequency, meaning the ad was shown more times to the same people than the coupon ad.
- Having a high frequency can negatively impact ad performance, since people may start to tune out ads that they have seen several times in their feed already.

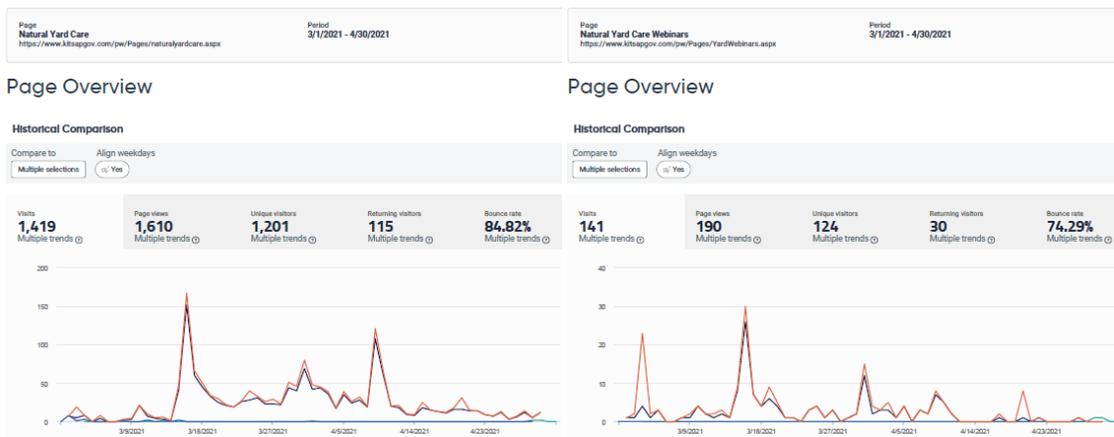
Both the coupon and webinar ads performed well in the pilot area, though were impacted negatively by “creative fatigue”, when Facebook users are seeing each ad too many times on their newsfeed. This is a common issue when the priority audience for an ad is as small as the pilot area. On average, each user saw one of the two ads on their newsfeed 14 times. Creative fatigue is demonstrated in the chart below as link clicks peaked for both ads during the end of the first week in April - just ahead of the second webinar.

The chart also shows yard care ads perform best when they are more relevant to users planning gardening activities for the weekend, and as the weather is getting nicer. The demographic who had the most link clicks, and interacted the most with both ads, was females ages 55-65+.



### Website Results

Two landing pages were hosted on the Kitsap County government website, sharing information on the virtual events, the coupon, and more information about using only natural or organic lawn care products. Both pages received strong traffic, with a total of 1,325 unique visitors from 3/1/2021 through 4/30/21.



### Coupon Redemption

Valley Nursery reported that 18 coupons were redeemed over the eight weeks between March 30 and May 22. Of these, 11 were redeemed by 4/12 (during the webinar series), and seven more were redeemed by the expiration date of 5/22. All coupons redeemed were physical - residents did not show

the coupon on their phone from the website. Valley Nursery reported that spring sales were busy overall. The average response rate on direct mail is .5-2%. If all coupons were from the postcard, the response rate is .6%, average for a general (non-targeted) mailing list.

### Virtual Events with Master Gardeners Results

Overcoming barriers such as Zoom fatigue, COVID-19 and competing webinars from various organizations, the WSSOG saw success with 68 registrants and 35 attendees for an average of 12 attendees per webinar. Insights from the webinars:

#### Attendance

- 51% of people who registered attended a webinar (35 attendees, out of 68 registered).
- 63% of people who attended one of the webinars had kids or pets at home (22 out of 35 attendees).
- 54% of attendees took the post-event survey (19 of the 35 attendees).
- Of the webinar dates and times, Saturday at 10am was the most popular (18 attendees).

Event Registration & Attendance					
Webinar Date	Registered	Registrants with Pets or Kids at Home	Attended	Attendees with Pets or Kids at Home	Took the post-event survey
Thursday March 25, 6:00 p.m.	24	19	8	6	5
Saturday April 3, 10:00 a.m.	27	20	18	13	11
Saturday April 10, 1:00 p.m.	17	7	9	3	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	68	46	35	22	19

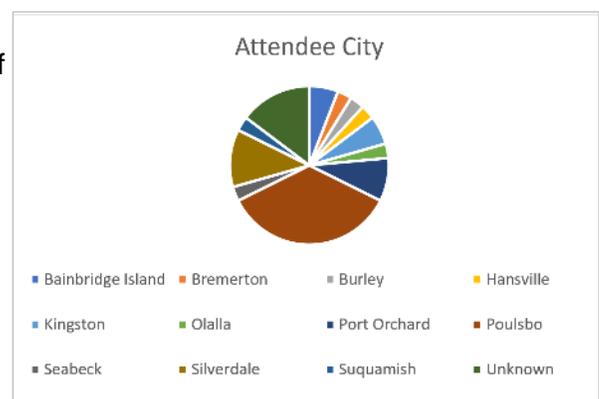
*Registrations refers to the number of people who completed the registration form (not including panelists or event support). Attendees refers to the number of unique viewers logged into a webinar (not including panelists or event support).*

While attendees came from throughout the peninsula, **35%** said that they lived in Poulsbo, where the majority of communications were focused. Other attendees came from around the peninsula.

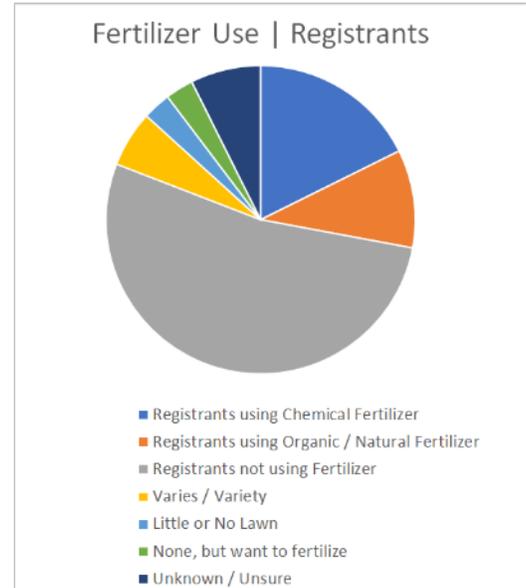
#### Registrant Fertilizer Use

When asked, “What kind of fertilizer(s) do you use on your lawn currently?”

- Of the 68 people who registered, at the time of registration:
  - 53% said they did not use fertilizer



- 18% said they used chemical fertilizer
- 10% said they used organic or natural fertilizer
- 6% said their fertilizer use varied
- 3% said they had little to no lawn
- 3% said they do not currently use fertilizer, but would like to in the future
- 7% were unsure what type of fertilizer they were using



From the comments about fertilizer use, two sub-groups stood out within the people not using fertilizers. The first sub-group was made up of those who may want to use fertilizer, but are wondering what to use/what to do. And the second sub-group was made up of those who don't think it's a good idea, and want other strategies.

### Participant Engagement

The average time attendees spent in a webinar was 37 minutes (each webinar ran between 30-45 minutes). This is a substantial amount of time to engage with the topic – much longer than a conversation an attendee might have in a hardware store setting, and more in-depth than viewing an ad, postcard, or other communication.

### Registrant Questions

Of the 68 registrants, many people asked questions pertaining to a variety of lawn and garden topics. A large segment of pre-event questions were relevant to lawn care and/or fertilizer, including:

- How to do weed control without using harsh chemicals?
- Would like to promote healthy grass, less moss, all while not impacting our cats/dog, or the Puget Sound?
- Help my grass get green. Also, getting rid of moss in my grass. Have a couple patches of moss in the front and backyard?
- I just want to learn more about caring for my yard?
- Curious about weed control?
- What are the best products to use on weeds in large rock beds?
- What is best for new flowers, shrubs, trees? Can I use the same one? Do I do it before planting or after planting (how long after)?
- How can I get grass to grow when my yard is taken over by moss?
- Would love to hear about alternatives to lawns, some other options that can be walked on, grows well in the NW and doesn't require all the maintenance and chemicals of a traditional lawn.

Another segment of the registration questions had to do with other lawn and garden topics:

- Is this only about lawn care? We're curious about everything related to gardening excluding lawns since we only have a small patch. Thank you!
- I'm definitely a beginner; however, I am interested in how best to design flower beds and

gardens using permaculture or regenerative practices.

- When can I trim my trees? My lithodora had black in the center of the plants last year, what can I do this year to keep them healthy? Is there anything that helps heather flower better, mine looked skimpy this year. When can I fertilize my lawn and my garden?

### Post-Event Survey Results

19 respondents, approximately **half of attendees** took the post-event survey (54%), which showed up on-screen immediately post-event and was also emailed to attendees.

With 19 respondents, this information should be considered qualitative. That said, 42% of post-event survey participants said they would like a follow-up from a Master Gardener.

Attendees reported they were very likely to try organic fertilizer (79%) and likely to use the coupon: How likely are you to try using organic fertilizer?

- 15 said "Very Likely,"
- 3 said "Somewhat Likely"
- 0 said "Somewhat Unlikely"
- 0 said "Very Unlikely"
- 1 said "Not Sure"

How likely are you to use the coupon?

- 9 said "Very Likely"
- 4 said "Somewhat Likely"
- 1 said "Somewhat Unlikely"
- 3 said "Very Unlikely"
- 3 said "Not Sure"

Environmental health was also an influential factor in reasoning behind using organic/natural fertilizers. Of 19 surveyed, 8 mentioned the environment as a reason they would be "Very Likely" or "Somewhat Likely" to try organic fertilizer (42%). In the comment space for the post-event survey, attendees noted:

- I am currently very interested in establishing a natural lawn, garden and flower beds. I am a novice/beginner and am hopeful that I can add to my property without harming my environment.
- I don't use anything in my yard that isn't good for the environment. I try to be as natural as possible.

### Post Pilot Survey

A qualitative post pilot survey was distributed via the monthly Poulsbo e-newsletter, receiving 20 individual responses.

[For those that saw the ads] Did the ad(s) cause you to consider using organic fertilizer?

- 5 yes, and I might try organics
- 1 yes, and I probably won't try organics
- 1 no, the ad(s) did not cause me to consider using organics

[For those that DID NOT see the ads] Would the ad(s) cause you to consider using organic fertilizer?

- 9 yes, and I might try organics
- 1 yes and I probably won't try organics
- 2 no the ad(s) did not cause me to consider using organics

[For those that saw the ads] Did the ad(s) cause you to consider using organic fertilizer?

- 5 yes, and I might try organics
- 1 yes, and I probably won't try organics
- 1 no, the ad(s) did not cause me to consider using organics

[For those that DID NOT see the ads] Would the ad(s) cause you to consider using organic fertilizer?

- 9 yes, and I might try organics
- 1 yes and I probably won't try organics
- 2 no the ad(s) did not cause me to consider using organics

Four respondents identified as chemical fertilizer users. Here's how they responded:

Did you see these ads?

- 3 no I haven't
- 1 yes I have (Facebook)

Would/did the ads cause you to consider using organic fertilizer?

- 4 Yes, and 1 might try organic fertilizer

What caused you to answer, "Yes, and I might try organic fertilizer"?

- *I am willing to try organic fertilizer, but it is hard to find, especially at larger stores like Home Depot. When I do find it at smaller stores (i.e. Olmsteads), it's terribly expensive.*
- *It's never too late to learn something new*
- *Recently moved to area from desert and need to learn more about what to do with lawn that doesn't harm environment*

When asked about other barriers and benefits to trying organic fertilizer, respondents noted:

- Barriers include "financial cost" and "very expensive"
- Benefits include taking care of the environment:
  - We compost, grow a garden, and have used only organic and safe products on our lawn and garden for years. Thanks for promoting it!
  - I like helping keep my community safer
  - I would only use organic that has ingredients that are safe for the environment and especially to people and pets.
  - I buy organic veggies and having had multiple chemical sensitivities it would be healthier and better for dogs and wildlife
  - Any reminder that an organic fertilizer is better for human, animal and sea life contact.

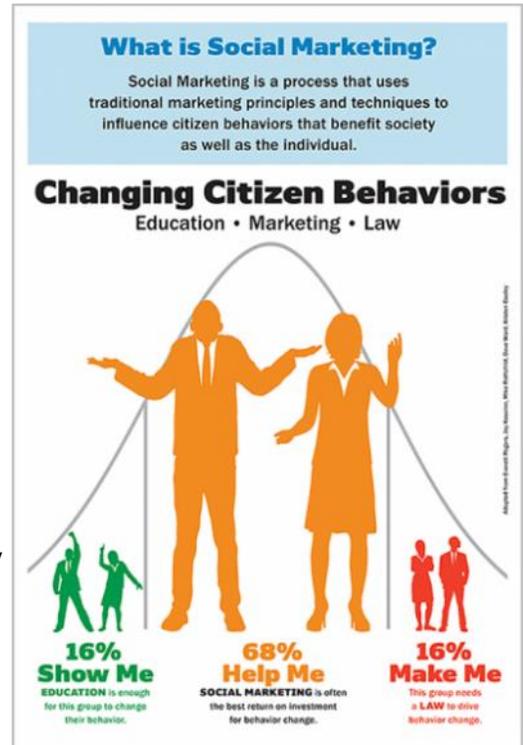
### **Virtual Events with Master Gardeners Insights and Recommendations**

Many registrants and attendees did not know their fertilizer usage, or noted no fertilizer use, or noted "very likely" when asked post-event if they would try natural/organic fertilizer.

Based on these responses, attendees are most likely in the “help me” group, not the “make me” group, as defined by Social Marketing (see chart to the right). The “help me” group is the most likely to benefit from behavioral interventions like this program.

As the WSSOG considers virtual events in the future, some attendees would prefer a broader range of topics to be covered during webinars. For example, many of the submitted questions had to do with other lawn and garden topics, from moss to compost to taking care of specific plants. Two registrants mentioned that they have little to no lawn area.

When continuing with virtual events, a few other high-priority natural yard care behaviors could be included along with using organic and natural lawn fertilizers such as native plants, mulch, moss, safely getting rid of insecticides.



Post Campaign Survey Results

A post-campaign survey was announced to the general public via the City of Poulsbo’s e-newsletter; participants were entered to win a gardening kit with gloves and tools. Twenty people filled out the survey; results should be considered qualitative.

When asked about their fertilizer use:

- 4 survey participants were using chemical fertilizer
- 7 survey participants were using organic/natural
- 9 survey participants were not using fertilizer

When asked, “Have you seen either of these advertisements?”:

- 13 did not see either ad
- 2 saw webinar ad
- 6 saw coupon ad
- \*1 person noted seeing both ads

**[For those that saw the ads]** Did the ad(s) cause you to consider using organic fertilizer?

- 5 - Yes, and I might try organics
- 1 - Yes, and I probably won’t try organics
- 1 - No, the ad(s) did not cause me to consider using organics

**[For those that DID NOT see the ads]** Would the ad(s) cause you to consider using organic fertilizer?

- 9 yes, and I might try organics
- 1 yes and I probably won’t try organics
- 2 no the ad(s) did not cause me to consider using organics

**Looking at just the four chemical fertilizer users, their responses were as follows:**

Did you see these ads?

- 3 - No I haven't
- 1 - Yes I have (Facebook)

Would/did the ads cause you to consider using organic fertilizer?

- 4 - Yes, and I might try organic fertilizer

What caused you to answer, "Yes, and I might try organic fertilizer"?

- I am willing to try organic fertilizer, but it is hard to find, especially at larger stores like Home Depot. When I do find it at smaller stores (i.e. Olmsteads), it's terribly expensive.
- It's never too late to learn something new
- Recently moved to area from desert and need to learn more about what to do with lawn that doesn't harm environment

Though these results are qualitative, it is encouraging that the four chemical fertilizer users said the ads would cause them to consider using organic fertilizer, and helpful to see their varied answers on why they'd consider it.

**Extrapolated Pilot Results**

Poulsbo's population makes up approximately 4% of people living in Kitsap County. If the results of this pilot were extrapolated to the full county population, the numbers would be as follows:

	Actual (Poulsbo)	Extrapolated (Kitsap County)
Workshop Attendees	35	851
Workshop Registrations	68	1,653
Coupons Redeemed	18	438

	Population <sup>1</sup>	Percentage of total population
Poulsbo	11,168	4%
Kitsap County	271,473	100%

<sup>1</sup> [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Poulsbo City, Washington](#) - Population Estimates July 1, 2019.

Though Poulsbo was chosen for its representative demographics, clearly many factors would influence this extrapolation in implementation - from variations in population demographics and psychographics, to residents' proximity to a participating nursery, to any difference in how the marketing tactics and budget were applied throughout the county.

### **Recommendations for Further Evaluation and Next Steps**

Overall, the WSSOG's yard care campaign, which was adapted due to COVID restraints, was successful both in reaching the priority audience, and in eliciting participants for webinars— which are a much bigger time commitment than stopping by a booth while already at the hardware store.

As the WSSOG looks to implement the campaign throughout the Kitsap Peninsula in 2022, recommendations for consideration include:

**Adapt to a Larger Audience.** Shifting from the Poulsbo pilot area to the wider Kitsap Peninsula will mean addressing an audience that is approximately twenty-five times bigger (going from a population of 10,602 in Poulsbo to 271,473 county-wide). For wider-scale implementation, the following changes may be worth considering:

- Explore targeting the mailing list to focus in on the priority audience, if needed
- Explore adding additional retailers in order to geographically cover more of the peninsula with the coupon offer

**Adapt to a Changing COVID-19 Landscape.** In terms of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the world, it is currently impossible to tell what winter 2021 and spring 2022 will bring. The WSSOG will need to continue to be flexible and adapt tactics to what is feasible and likely to be most successful as the environment changes. Trusted messengers like the Master Gardeners may be back to in-person events in 2022, and could be leveraged for either webinars or in-person events at that time. In-person events at retailers offer the advantage of reaching the public when lawn care is top-of-mind, and they are about to make a product purchase decision (and can immediately use a coupon). On the other hand, online events typically offer a much longer engagement time than the average in-store encounter. Each approach has its benefits.

**Continue to Utilize the Research Findings.** The pilot campaign was designed to reflect findings from WSSOG research with the priority audience in Kitsap County. The program utilized trusted messengers (the Master Gardeners), addressed stated barriers like price (with the coupon), and the selection of imagery and messaging was also vetted by the priority audience. While outreach tactics may need to adjust due to the changing pandemic landscape, these findings should continue to be reflected in the large scale program.

**Leverage Master Gardener Insights** to inform event topics and the best pathway for accessing events in 2022, such virtual vs. in-person. The virtual events received strong reception, and Master Gardeners are in the best position to inform the interest of events for 2022. Potential outreach methods could include either an online survey or focus group with Master Gardeners. Potential questions to assess the future of webinars could include:

- What topics would be of most interest?
- What are people responding to?
- Can attendees handle more than one topic at a time?
- What could we do to increase attendance?

**Consider Joining an Existing Master Gardener webinar.** In spring 2021, the Master Gardeners were not doing in-person events due to COVID-19, and instead conducted webinars on a variety of topics (outside of the WSSOG program). For 2022, if these continue, one tactic to consider is exploring opportunities to add the natural lawn care topic into other popular Master Gardener webinars as appropriate (for instance, if the Master Gardeners were doing a webinar on “low maintenance lawns” or addressing weeds). These events have a built-in audience and could offer an opportunity to reach even more Kitsap County residents with information on the targeted behavior.

**Follow-up With Webinar Attendees.** For further understanding of whether the webinars led to behavior change, the WSSOG could engage with attendees later in the 2021 yard-care season to see if behavior has changed, or if they ran into any challenges that could be addressed by the program in the future. These attendees could also be invited to join a Facebook group to share their journey with others; the group could be moderated by Master Gardeners or other experts.

**Consider Additional Facebook Creative.** Creative fatigue was a challenge on Facebook. This was largely due to the pilot area comprising a small audience, so the issue may be resolved by addressing a much larger audience in the larger campaign. As the campaign expands to the rest of Kitsap County, the WSSOG could also consider:

- Introducing new ad images and copy partway through the campaign to grab the attention of users who have begun to scroll past the posts.
- A/B testing with additional ad creatives to see which images/copy perform better.

## **Appendices**

- Social Marketing Session Final Document
- Research Reports:
  - Initial Audience Research
  - Creative Testing
  - Audience Research - Tactics and Messaging