

Dear Volunteer Organization,

We at DOC partner with the nonprofit Lettuce Grow Garden Foundation, which helps develop and enhance vegetable gardens within our facilities statewide. This four year old nonprofit (www.lettucegrow.org) began working at Coffee Creek in Wilsonville in 2008, grew to four more Salem and Portland facilities in 2010 and this year is helping out in 9 facilities statewide.

Lettuce Grow is looking for new volunteers, and thought to ask DOC's existing volunteer base, particularly the prison ministry provided by so many churches and religious organizations. The volunteers garden with the inmates an hour or two a week, generally share gardening knowledge.

It is a great job for someone with lots of knowledge and experience in their hands and minds, but diminished strength. The inmates do the hard work! Lettuce Grow would greatly value anyone who already has a volunteer card, having been through the Department of Corrections training, but will also work with anyone interested in going thru the training. Retired teachers would also be very useful as managing the information flow is becoming a challenge.

Lettuce Grow started providing the Master Gardener curriculum in just two facilities and graduated 17 inmates in their pilot year in 2010. This class is on a disk, and volunteers just facilitate discussion and monitor the classes. In one facility volunteers also teach a simpler horticulture class curriculum, provided by the Oregon Food Bank. The inmates are the most enthused students you would ever hope to meet, they are starving for more knowledge once they get hooked on horticulture. They are gaining job credentials and garden experience that will always allow them to grow their own food, and are becoming interested in sustainability concepts as they go along.

Volunteers are particularly needed to work in facilities in Madras, Lakeview, Pendleton and Umatilla. A few more could be used in Salem. People can request more info at <http://lettucegrow.org/contactus.html>.