

**COLIBRÍ  
FARM**

# **PILOT PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT**

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photo by Luke Warner



## ABOUT COLIBRÍ FARM

Colibrí Farm, situated on the ancestral lands of the Puyallup and Steilacoom tribes, is part of a collaborative effort between the City of Tacoma (COT) and Harvest Pierce County (HPC) to address objectives within the City's Climate Action Plan.

In spring 2020, Erica (owner of Colibrí) was invited by HPC to become the steward of a 1/3 acre urban lot. Embracing the opportunity, they embarked on a journey to nurture the land. Erica was born and raised in Tacoma and is a queer, reconnecting indigenous farmer with five years of experience in organic farming. Beyond working in the field, they find joy in outdoor swimming, art, cycling, and spending time with their family.

## MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

Colibrí Farm is dedicated to cultivating seasonal produce and herbs, specializing in Native American crops. Our mission centers on nurturing the land, fostering community, promoting ecosystem health, and celebrating culturally enriching foods.

We do this work with the intent to uplift indigenous ways of living and knowing for generations to come.

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## KEY IMPROVEMENTS TO DATE

The farm had to take a break in 2023. These improvements took place from 2020-2022

- |           |   |           |  |
|-----------|---|-----------|--|
| <b>01</b> | <b>WATER INSTALLED</b><br>HPC funded and coordinated water installation at site | <b>04</b> | <b>POLLINATORS</b><br>Increase in bee species, insects, and hummingbirds |
| <b>02</b> | <b>HABITAT</b><br>Diversity and populations of several animals increased        | <b>05</b> | <b>SITE ENGAGEMENT</b><br>Farm presence welcomed community members       |
| <b>03</b> | <b>SOIL HEALTH</b><br>Increased with organic inputs, soil structure management  | <b>06</b> | <b>FREE TABLE</b><br>Supplied veggies for five weeks in 2021 and 2022    |

## ADDITIONAL DETAILS

**Habitat-** Salamander, snake, and frog populations can now be found throughout the farm as well as an increase of opossum, rabbit, coyote, eagle, hummingbird, red-winged blackbird, beetle, and native bees.

**Soil health-** Native weeds are becoming more prominent than invasive weeds, especially in cultivated areas. Mushrooms can be found throughout the farm.

**Pollinators-** the variety of bee species sighted increased 400% from 2020-2022.

**Free table-** supplied at least seven neighbors with fresh vegetables and herbs for five weeks in 2021 and 2022.



# COLIBRÍ IN NUMBERS

## 2020-2022 PROJECT HOURS

>483

This number takes into account some planning time, significant moments, and medium to large projects. It does not include day-to-day management such as weeding and irrigating, nor does it include time spent by HPC and COT staff. 483 hours is equivalent to more than 60 work days, or 12 work weeks.

## OBSERVED ANIMAL AND INSECT SPECIES

>61

Observed animals and insects are based on the experience of Erica and others who spend significant time at Colibrí. This number is likely very low compared to the *actual* number of species living on and regularly visiting the site.

## CULTIVATED PLANT VARIETIES

>72

All but three cultivated varieties were paid for by Harvest Pierce County. More than 72 varieties of seed were purchased, but not all of them made it into the field. This number does not include cover crops.



## 2024 GOALS



As 2023 winds down it's time to further envision future projects and create goals for 2024.

Colibrí Farm is eagerly anticipating increased programmatic growth and deeper community connections.

However, we also acknowledge that there are pressing issues that demand attention and resolution from all partners of this project. Our commitment remains steadfast in addressing challenges as we strive for a more sustainable, connected future.

## ANTICIPATED PROJECTS IN 2024

- **Electricity**- With fiscal and technical support from partners electricity can be installed. Short term, electricity will allow us to charge tools. Long-term electricity will open opportunities for enhanced security, cold storage, greenhouse improvements, and much more.
- **Storage and security**- Secure storage is vital to urban farming. We're looking into finding secure ways to store materials, tools, and produce. Colibrí Farm once had secure storage, but it was either destroyed by vandalism or stolen.
- **Wash/pack**- Implementing a wash and pack station on the farm will allow us to be more effective and efficient post-harvest. We had most of the necessary equipment to build this out in years past, but due to theft and vandalism we'll have to restart in 2024.
- **Education**- We're aiming to host at least two tours at the farm and share knowledge/insight through social media, on-farm learning, and/or event speaking.



photo by Luke Warren



## WHY DID COLIBRÍ TAKE 2023 OFF?

**Moving-** Until Erica had to relocate from their home, located just one block away from the farm, they were able to frequently visit the farm and use their home as storage for various tools and materials.

**Fiscal resources-** Colibrí Farm has primarily relied on fiscal support from HPC and crowd-sourced funding. Erica has contributed some of their own money to the project, but their financial contributions have been limited due to budget constraints.

**Theft and vandalism-** After 2021, incidents of theft and vandalism increased significantly. The City of Tacoma didn't install a fence and gate on the farm site until late 2023. Erica's own home also experienced substantial theft and vandalism, which made the neighborhood feel unsafe, especially when working alone.

**People living on site-** In winter 2022, some individuals moved into the shed and greenhouse on the farm, staying for at least a month. However, the shed and greenhouse suffered extensive damage from daily shelter use, and the elements, including rain, wind, and fire. Most of the contents of these structures were either taken or destroyed. This prompted a decision to halt further investment of time and resources into the project until the site became more secure.

## CONCLUSION

To achieve establishing urban farms on underutilized lots in Tacoma and bolster our local food system, it's crucial for Colibrí Farm, Harvest Pierce County, and The City of Tacoma to support each other and communicate effectively. Our hope is that this project will experience growth, provide a sense of comfort and trust, and serve as a model for future farm sites.