



## A TOUR WITH:

# RAY WILLIAMS

**URBAN FARMER AT YES FARM & MANAGING  
DIRECTOR OF BLACK FARMERS COLLECTIVE**

WATCH RAY'S  
VIDEO AT  
[bit.ly/STIS\\_rw](https://bit.ly/STIS_rw)

### Which habits of a systems thinker do you use?

#### #2: Consider the Wholes and Parts

Yes Farm focuses on making the individual plants healthy by giving them what they need, but also involves the community to increase the impact of Yes Farm as a whole.

#### #5: Consider Issues Appropriately

Yes Farm has to address issues related to urban farming and being near a freeway. We have to look at the farm in a broader context that takes into account all of the external factors affecting it.

#### #11: Identify Feedback Loops

Giving community members and students the experience of growing their own food and encouraging them to share their experiences with others contributes to a positive feedback loop.

#### 1. What are the goals of your organization?

Yes Farm was created as a space to keep African American presence in the Central Area and to engage the community in urban farming. Learning how to grow a little bit of your own food is one of the best things you can do for your physical and emotional health. We partner with many organizations to give students hands-on experience that will help them get a better understanding of what systems are, how they work, and how they can be affected. The students can then bring that knowledge back to their schools and communities. We wanted to turn an area of urban blight into a peaceful environmental space that the community could use and be proud of.

#### 2. What complex problems are you working to address at your organization?

Farming requires an understanding of the inputs and outputs of a natural environmental system, but an urban farm presents extra challenges. Unlike farming on natural land, we have to worry about air pollution, noise pollution, trespassing, and unknown chemicals in the soil. The site is also an area of high displacement, from the Duwamish people present originally, to the community members in the neighborhood now.

#### 3. How is Yes Farm working to address these complex problems?

Some ways we have worked to mitigate the environmental challenges include building a greenhouse with an air filter, wearing noise canceling headphones while working at the farm, working with the city to address trespassing, and mixing activated charcoal into the soil. We are working to address the issue of displacement by transforming a neglected space into a place where people come together to increase community involvement and opportunities. The farm is part of the local food system, and the community gains economic development by being able to sell produce at local farmers markets.

#### 4. Who is involved in the Yes Farm system?

We are partnering with many organizations through students. For example, we are working with iUrban Teen to create an after-school program, and with ISB to bring a summer youth employment program to students. We also work with many other farms, schools, museums, organizations, and government departments. Students, volunteers, community members, and visitors alike are all involved with the farm.



## YES FARM

YESLER WAY, SEATTLE

### A JEWEL IN THE CITY

Yes Farm is a beautiful spot in Yesler Way, Seattle that brings pride and unity to the neighborhood. Where there once was an empty littered lot, there is now a flourishing garden with many opportunities for community involvement. On any given day at Yes Farm, you may spot teens and community volunteers farming together with a backdrop of Seattle skyscrapers and bustling streets.



### GOING GREEN

Yes Farm uses its limited space in this urban setting efficiently. Between busy streets and high rise apartment complexes, this space is being used to bring calm and a sense of community to the neighborhood. This healthy food you can see growing in the picture may soon be found at community farmers markets in the area.



### IT TAKES A SYSTEM

Many partners and community members have come together to make the amazing vision of Yes Farm a reality. On this graphic, you can see the varied list of collaborators that have contributed their time, labor, creativity and resources to this project. This is a great example of how collaborative community efforts can lead to action.

### IT TAKES MANY PARTS OF A LARGE SYSTEM TO MAKE YES FARM POSSIBLE:

