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Sustainable prison uses greenhouses, recycling, gardens

John Dodge | The Olympian

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Inmates at the Stafford Creek Corrections Center in Washington state tend native plants for the restoration of prairies in south Puget Sound, while others work in garden plots that produce nearly seven tons of organic vegetables annually for inmates and staff.

The prison is one of four in the state prison system that are part of a program to conserve natural resources, provide green-collar job training and save operating costs.

While the colorless buildings surrounded by a perimeter of security guards and rows of razor-sharp coiled wire are a constant reminder that the facility is a prison, the programs suggest it's not business as usual. About 59 percent of the 1,200 tons of trash generated at what amounts to a small, isolated city is recycled, including food waste, shoes, cardboard, metal, pallets, paint, paper and clothes.

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