



2022
ANNUAL REPORT

WE'RE ALL CONNECTED IN DETROIT'S FOOD ECOSYSTEM

There are a lot of things that make Detroit's local food system so special. At the top of the list is no doubt the expansive **network of 2,029 urban gardens and farms** that are connected through the Garden Resource Program. But, gardens and farms are just one part of the dynamic ecosystem of good food enthusiasts that Detroit is known for. What sets Detroit apart are the connections between thousands of people and organizations that have invested the time and effort required to create the catalytic collaborations that are moving us toward our common goal of creating a food sovereign city. From the Detroit Food Policy Council and Make Food Not Waste, to the People's Food Co-op, Taste the Diaspora Detroit, and countless others, there is truly no place like Detroit! Together we are rebuilding a healthy, resilient, and just food ecosystem that encourages stakeholders to nourish and support each other while tending to our city's soil, water, pollinators, plants, and wildlife.

Keep Growing Detroit is proud to be a part of Detroit's food ecosystem. Through our various programs, we are collaborating with more than **500 organizations** to address the needs of our community together. As you will see in this annual report, our work not only facilitates relationships that are centered around expanding resident's access to fresh, affordable, and culturally-appropriate food. It also promotes community ownership, nurtures new and diverse leaders, and fosters strong and interdependent organizations and businesses, which we know are essential to both growing a thriving food ecosystem as well as long-term systemic change.

We begin this work internally at our organization, growing the leadership in our own staff and we are happy to report that KGD is leader-FULL! With two new amazing additions to our full-time staff and four impressive part-time staff, every day we are finding new ways to engage our team's diverse knowledge and lived experience to better serve our community.

DETROIT GARDENS & FARMS

GARDEN RESOURCE
PROGRAM, 2022





GOOD FOR OUR MINDS & BODIES

As we approach our 10th anniversary at KGD, we are reflecting on how far we've come and are motivated by how far we'll go. Research co-authored by KGD that was published this spring proves what we all feel in our bones; the labor and care that we put into cultivating our garden spaces is truly a workout for both our bodies and minds!

This research found that for many gardeners participating in KGD programs, the work of tending their garden is a great source for stress relief and can transform negative emotions into joy and happiness. Paired with the findings that gardening can help residents maintain a healthy weight, increase access to and consumption of fruits and vegetables, and in turn influence ability to prevent or manage chronic illnesses, we've got a recipe for health and wellbeing that we are ready to double down on!

On a grander scale, we know that helping others makes us feel better, too. Our research found that sowing seeds in Detroit creates opportunities for gardeners to share wisdom and the literal fruits of our labor with neighbors. All of these findings greatly influenced KGD's efforts to reach and engage new audiences this year. In the pages to follow, you'll learn about some of the ways that we strived to meet people where they're at, introduce them to Detroit's good food ecosystem, and welcome them into this beautiful community.

OUR MISSION

KGD exists to cultivate a food sovereign city where the majority of fruits and vegetables consumed by Detroiters are grown by residents, within the city's limits.

OUR VISION

KGD's vision is that there are places to grow food in every neighborhood in the city and that these places help maximize community and economic development opportunities for Detroiters.



[Read Research](#)



DEEPENING ROOTS

2022 felt like a homecoming for the KGD farm-ily. It was our first full growing season since purchasing the KGD Farm in 2021 and we are so proud of our accomplishments this year, which centered around engaging stakeholders in KGD's mission and work.

As new homeowners, we felt a renewed sense of commitment to steward the land in ways that will nurture the space for future generations. The success was in no small part due to the leadership of the amazing farm team that beautifully cultivated the KGD Farm as a hub for KGD's key operations. Every growing season has a personality - the grumpy flood year, the anxious COVID year - each shaped by the weather, major events, and the people on your team. 2022 will be remembered as the year when everything and everyone just clicked.

This cohesion is in no small way also attributed to the incredible presence of the community, who we were able to fully welcome back into the space in 2022. The farm was bustling with activities, with volunteers growing transplants, Garden Resource Program (GRP) members picking up seeds and plants, and store customers purchasing Detroit-grown food and native plants. Some highlights included a new series that welcomed community members to the farm to cultivate nature-based healing and wellness practices, including yoga, meditation and mindfulness, painting, illustration, and photography. We also were elated to bring the return of the farm dinners with GRP members. This year, our 6-part dinner series helped tell the stories of how Detroit-based chefs, with influences from around the world, interact with our food landscape, which includes the diversity of crops in our region, the restaurants and places where we gather, and the local growers who tend to the land.

The attention and love that these individuals poured into the space helped us grow over **8,500 pounds** of healthy food for the community and together we achieved our most productive growing season to date.

Just wanted to say that this year's transplants were particularly excellent. Shout out to all who made it happen, yet again

- GRP member, 2022

SHOWING UP TO SERVE

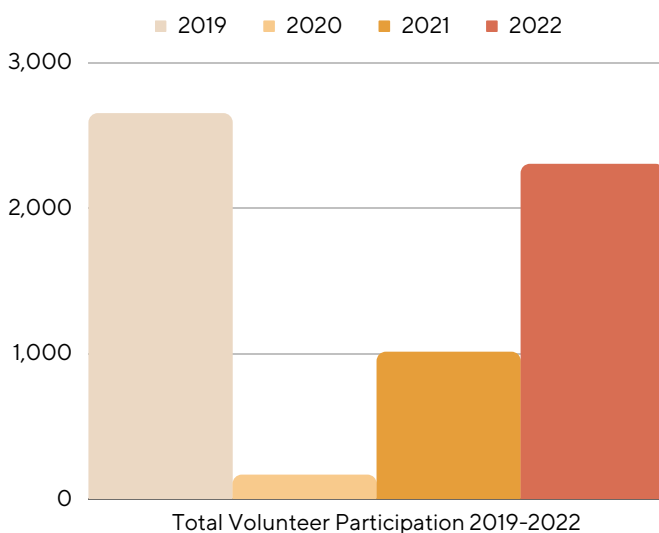
None of our accomplishments would be possible without the volunteers who assist with time sensitive tasks to help us stay on track. Preparing for the busy season ahead, 292 volunteers worked remotely to pack seeds and write 58,883 plant tags to support the GRP. As spring arrived, 705 volunteers convened during our open volunteer hours to assist with farm tasks ranging from bed preparation and planting to transplant production for the GRP. We also welcomed 64 volunteer groups to the farm with the opportunity to get hands-on exposure to farming and learn about Detroit's local food system. Volunteers reported these experiences were a great opportunity to meet new people, connect with fellow growers, spend some time outside, and relieve stress. In gratitude to the **2,302 total volunteers**, who contributed a whopping **5,165 hours of service**, we hosted a celebration in their honor at the farm. While cracking garlic for planting or enjoying refreshments at the celebration, 35 volunteer regulars enjoyed reminiscing over their favorite moments from this growing season and hopes for the next!

MAKING INEW CONNECTIONS

As our event calendar filled up for the year, we wanted to make sure the community knew all about it! We kicked off the year with a complete revamp of the KGD website to ensure that it was easy to navigate and access information. The new and improved website makes it easy to sign up for classes and volunteer opportunities, to navigate resources and find ways to get involved, and connect with our mission.

We also used a wide range of engagement tools, from social media to our bi-monthly e-newsletter and YouTube channel, to invigorate the network of growers and meet new folks where they are at in the community. A new feature this season was the "GRP Shout Out," where we highlighted the work and stories of GRP community gardens. We were also excited to share our story and expertise in local media outlets including Hour Detroit, WDET, and Live in the D. Finally, we were elated to return to in-person community events, where we connected with many new and aspiring gardeners through summer gatherings, Back-to-School celebrations, community workdays, and Harvest Festivals throughout the city. We connected with the community through 62 events in the city, and **hosted 143 events** at the KGD Farm!

2022: A YEAR OF REBUILDING





STARTING EARLY

Working toward generational change, KGD is invested in engaging and supporting Detroit's community of parents, daycare providers, and early childhood organizations as they work tirelessly to care for and prepare young children for a healthy future. This year, KGD supported **41 early childcare programs** to utilize garden-based activities to encourage children to cultivate a love for fruit, vegetables, and nature during critical early childhood years. Complementing the resources provided through the GRP, KGD assisted 10 centers to build or expand their gardens. Additionally, we provided training for early childcare professionals, including a new three-part series offered through Michigan Registry which 25 providers attended. We also informally shared tips and age-appropriate gardening activities through our new monthly newsletter "Grow with Me," a new Facebook group for garden based learning with early childcare providers, and the facilitation of 5 "Meet me in the Garden" sessions. The culmination of the season was the excitement of resuming farm field trips for 4 programs to the KGD Farm, and a farm appreciation dinner for our early childhood partners where 19 guests enjoyed farm fresh cuisine prepared by Relish.

GRP NETWORK

At our core, KGD is striving to support the growth of a thriving network of gardens and farms. The Garden Resource Program (GRP) continues to shine as a powerful connector of both people and gardens in Detroit's ecosystem. 2,029 gardens joined the program this season including **1,433 family, 383 community, 120 school, and 93 market gardens!** Serving over 20,000 Detroit residents, the GRP bridges the gap between the desire to grow fresh food and the resources essential for tending a garden. This year, the GRP distributed **59,624 seed packs**, and with the help of our amazing partners Earthworks Urban Farm and the University of Michigan Campus Farm, we sustainably grew and distributed **233,813 transplants**. Continuing to adapt to meet the needs of the community, we returned to in-person distributions while continuing to provide curbside options for a total of 4,091 pickups, and with the assistance of volunteers, 100 home deliveries. We also welcomed GRP members to the farm for the fall garlic event, distributing Motown Music garlic and inviting members to mingle and learn on the farm with garlic planting demonstrations, farm tours, and a yoga workshop with Root to Bloom.

"As always, your love for what you are doing and your building of community is a blessing to all Detroit's gardeners. Thanks!"

- GRP member, 2022





LEARNING FROM ONE ANOTHER

We are fortunate to be surrounded by so much communal knowledge and wisdom and it all becomes accessible through the Detroit Urban Garden Education Series. The series featured **66 classes** this year, covering the fundamentals to encourage beginner success and diving into exciting topics for continuous learning. Highlights included Mushroom Cultivation, where participants inoculated their own logs, and Weed ID and Harvesting Best Practices, hands-on demonstrations of techniques.

Back by popular demand, the four-part series, Growing a Medicine Garden, offered in partnership with Lottie Spady, engaged a cohort of **35 gardeners** to learn about and plant patches of native and medicinal plants across the city. This work is a deep part of the decolonizing work that we must do to reverse the harms in our current system. We want people to have the skills to utilize powerful medicinal plants as they seek alternatives to the industrial food system and return to alternative and indigenous ways of treating ailments.



STRENGTHENING GARDENS

Welcoming GRP members this spring, we hosted three online Grower Gatherings, featuring seasoned GRP veterans sharing their stories to help navigate available resources and support. Our staff also conducted **158 site visits** and numerous consultations, providing recommendations for new project development and expansions of existing spaces. This included site assessments, design support, help to generate project budgets, and completing **244 soil tests** to ensure safe growing conditions. We also distributed **107 raised garden beds** for community gardens and facilitated the distribution of essential garden resources, including **240 yards of compost** and over **800 tomato stakes**, in partnership with community resource hubs. Finally, our staff facilitated 10 community garden workdays and assisted 5 gardens to engage their neighbors and fellow GRP members by hosting wellness practices sessions at their garden, inspired by the wellness series at the KGD Farm.

URBAN ROOTS

With over 500 graduates since it began in 2005, the Urban Roots Community Garden Training Program has a reputation for supporting community leaders to turn their vision for starting a community garden into a reality! This year, the beloved six-week program returned to an in-person format at Georgia Street Community Collective. **17 participants** were engaged in learning about how to navigate land ownership, engage their community, design and mobilize the resources needed to launch and expand garden projects.



CULTIVATING OUR CAPACITY

If you compost, you know that you can simply build a pile and wait for the organic matter to break down passively or you can speed up the process by adding a little air and water to fuel the millions of microorganisms working together to turn food scraps into black gold. We're fueling the development of Detroit's food ecosystem by designing and strategically investing in programs that build the capacity of leaders and initiatives.

For years, KGD has helped construct farm infrastructure ranging from rainwater catchment systems to hoop houses that help gardens and farms become more efficient and impactful. With growing demand, we saw an opportunity to work ourselves out of a job by using our experience to train GRP members to capitalize on this economic opportunity. Launched this year, **8 GRP members** were selected to be a part of our inaugural Build Crew. These individuals were paid a stipend to learn how to construct infrastructure for Detroit's farming community. Crew members received an orientation of the types and styles of structures and then assisted with construction of at least three of the **12 projects completed** this season. Already, graduates of the program have begun to hear the phones ringing for their services!

Additionally, through our continued partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), KGD helped **10 sites secure grants** for hoophouses. We were also excited to support 3 sites in securing NRCS funding for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), which compensates growers for implementing many of conservation practices commonly used like composting, mulching, and micro (drip) irrigation.

"Since I joined KGD, I have learned SO much! I SO appreciate fresh grown produce. Thank you for all that you are doing to educate us and keep us healthy! Please never stop!!"

- GRP member,
2022

ROOTING FOR THE FUTURE

This year, KGD's Youth Program served **35 individual youth**, of whom 14 participated in more than one season, and 5 returned for all three seasons. The youth spent 12 weeks this spring learning the basics of plant biology, soil, planting and farm planning. They also worked alongside staff and volunteers at KGD Farm to prepare thousands of transplants for GRP distributions. These activities were paired with conversations on abolition, Indigenous history, and the importance of storytelling. The peak of the growing season had youth busy supporting essential farm tasks. They also spent time serving local community gardens. And, with all of the bountiful harvest coming in, they learned how to cook with fresh produce. They also had first-hand experience with Grown in Detroit operations by visiting the farmstand and creating their own farm product, which was sold in the Online Farm Store. In the fall, we discussed how to care for ourselves and our communities during the winter, covering topics on seed saving, nutrition, and how to grow plants indoors. In total, this year's Youth Leaders spent a total of **2,160 hours** on farm work and education.

INVESTING IN BLACK FARMERS

Along with many partners in the urban agriculture community, KGD has been advocating for over a decade for farmers to have a clear and consistent pathway to purchase land in the city for their operations. In 2018, KGD set out to collect data on how many GRP members owned the land they were farming on. We found two disturbing trends: 1) Roughly half of community and market gardens did not own the land they were growing on, and 2) of those gardens the majority were Black and brown growers. In analyzing the potential barriers these growers faced, we saw that the process was often so arduous it required a lawyer or consultant, and that access to capital was a major hurdle. With the racial uprisings of 2020, KGD began to think again about how we could direct our resources to break down these barriers. In partnership with long-standing, Black-led farms - Oakland Ave Urban Farm and Detroit Black Community Food Security Network - together we launched the Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund. This crowdfunding effort provides capital for land and infrastructure for Black farmers growing in the city. Now in its third year, a total of 120 awards have been given to Black farmers! We're happy to share that this year, 25 of these farmers have received the support they need to officially become new land owners! Also, in solidarity with Latinx and Indigenous farmers, the Fund decided to allocate monies specifically for these farmers, and awarded the first Latinx farmer this year.

DETROIT BLACK FARMER LAND FUND 2020-2022 OVERVIEW

120

AWARDS DISTRIBUTED

37

AWARDEES ARE NOW LAND OWNERS

16.9

ACRES OF LAND PURCHASED BY AWARDEES

10

AWARDEES COMPLETED INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS





ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

Over the years this urban agriculture community has advocated with one voice for the city policies to reflect its support for urban gardens and farms, including developing a transparent land purchasing process. We have seen progress, including adoption of the 2013 Urban Agriculture Ordinance, and we have experienced set backs like the stalled livestock policies and the increased ticketing on urban farms. The formation of the city's Land Based Project Team, made up of several city departments has been one of the wins and in 2022, the team has been reignited with a goal of collaborating on city services and engaging the community. Realizing the permitting process that puts gardens in compliance with the ordinance is new for gardeners, the team worked together to secure funding to pay for change of use permits, and with KGD as a partner, we were able to assist **15 gardens** to secure their permits.

TAKING THE LONG VIEW

The KGD Farm now has the capacity to be a reliable source for the native plants that are becoming more important for the resilience of our local landscapes. This year, we produced a total of **3,821 plants** for the Online Farm Store, KGD programs, and our community partners. We also strengthened connections by hosting the first-ever Fall Native Plant Market at KGD Farm with Friends of the Rouge.

Local farms and gardens also invested in adding fruit to their spaces. We hosted a perennial fruit sale and 50 gardens purchased 700 plants. Another 21 community Gardens were recipients of Little Orchards, planting 281 fruit trees and brambles in their spaces.





LOCAL FOOD LOVERS

We're so grateful to the hundreds of customers we had the pleasure of serving this season. During our interactions, we traded recipes, gardening tips, and a deep love for the beautiful produce cultivated by local farmers! We also learned that the vast majority of GID customers call Detroit home, are already part of the KGD community, and are faithful shoppers. As a result, they overwhelmingly report trying new produce, gaining a better understanding of the food system, and that their family's meals have been healthier since supporting GID!

DEVELOPING MARKETS

After winter must come spring! Following two years of uncertainty, we've begun to see growth and renewal within the Detroit food ecosystem in 2022. Our mission with the Grown In Detroit (GID) program is to create a space for that renewal to happen – by supporting new farmers during the earliest & most pivotal stages of their development, and by fostering strong connections between these growers and the community of food-workers and markets that rely on their produce to feed our community.

We're happy to report that the number of growers in the GID collective jumped from 30 to 43 in 2022. Over 60 GRP members attended one of our 4 GID Grower Orientations held throughout the spring - a sign that there is a growing pipeline of potential market gardeners in our community. Perhaps the clearest and most heartening sign of spring: of the 43 GID collective members, **16 were selling for the first time!**

Together, we sold over \$25,000 in produce, herbs, and honey to our Eastern Market Farm Stand customers - a \$6,000 increase from 2021. We also had the great pleasure of marketing alongside 3 seasoned growers who out-grew the GID stand and set up their own for the first time this year! KGD continued to offer goods through the Online Store, selling over \$15,000 in produce, native perennials, and transplants. Our 10-week CSA program provided over 3,700 lbs of produce to 60 members – 30 of whom are organizers and supporters of Black Lives Matter Detroit. Our Holiday CSA share provided an additional 1,200 lbs of locally-grown food to our 65 members. Between April and November, across all three of our market outlets, GID collectively made over **\$55,000 in sales** - a \$15,000 increase from 2021!

"This is one of the most beneficial programs in the Detroit area, and I hope that it keeps growing and educating the community about healthy and local dietary choices."

-GID customer, 2022




2022 CONTRIBUTIONS TO DETROIT'S LOCAL FOOD ECOSYSTEM

KEEP GROWING DETROIT

GARDENS BY TYPE

- 1,433** FAMILY
- 120** SCHOOL
- 383** COMMUNITY
- 93** MARKET



GROWN IN DETROIT

- 43** GROWERS
- 580** CSA BOXES
- 483** ONLINE ORDERS
- 65** HOLIDAY SHARES
- 3,340** POUNDS OF PRODUCE DONATED




RETURN/NEW

- 62.8%** OVERALL RETURNED TO GRP
- 632** NEW GARDENS



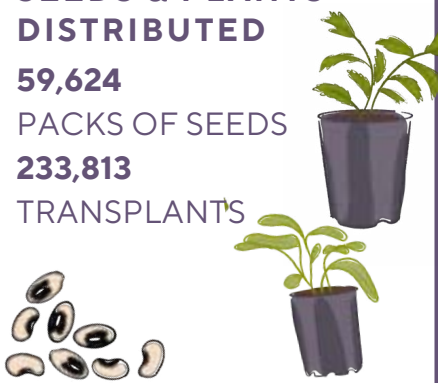
BUILDING UP GARDENS

- 158** SITE VISITS
- 6** IRRIGATION STATIONS
- 6** HIGHTUNNELS
- 244** SOIL TESTS
- 50** AWARDEES OF THE DETROIT BLACK FARMER LAND FUND



SEEDS & PLANTS DISTRIBUTED

- 59,624** PACKS OF SEEDS
- 233,813** TRANSPLANTS




ENGAGEMENT

- 62** EVENTS IN COMMUNITY
- 143** EVENTS AT KGD FARM

VOLUNTEERS

- 64** VOLUNTEER GROUPS
- 2,302** TOTAL VOLUNTEERS
- 5,165** TOTAL HOURS SERVED





OUR LEADER-FULL TEAM

STAFF

Ashley Atkinson, Co-Director
 Sterling Bowman-Randall, GRP Activation Coordinator
 Danielle Daguio, Dev. & Engagement Coordinator
 Lola Gibson-Berg, Farm Activation Coordinator
 Molly Hubbell, Market Manager
 Akello Karamoko, Farm Manager
 Faith Parks, Youth Fellow
 Kido Pielack, Education Manager
 Lindsay Pielack, Co-Director
 Taylor Pressley, Seasonal Farmer
 Tepfirah Rushdan, Co-Director
 Rosebud Schneider, Farmer
 El Sheikh, Seasonal Youth Educator
 darien R Wendell, Seasonal Farmer
 Romondo Woods, Garden Development Coordinator

BOARD

Asenath Andrews
 Josh Budiongan, Treasurer
 Maria Jones-Foster, Secretary
 Bekah Galang, Co-Chair
 Darius Hardrick, Co-Chair
 Deon Hamilton
 Wynona Thomas, Co-chair





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