

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

KEEP GROWING DETROIT

CELEBRATING A DECADE OF COLLECTIVE WISDOM, EFFORT & IMPACT





KEEP GROWING DETROIT IS 10 YEARS OLD!

Our mission is 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.

CELEBRATING A DECADE OF PROGRESS TOWARDS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Ten years ago, Keep Growing Detroit (KGD) was created with the help of thousands of Detroiters who shared our passion for food sovereignty. From the beginning, our focus has been on building a community that values collective wisdom, leadership, and impact, all while striving to fulfill our mission. As we reflect on this milestone anniversary, we're incredibly proud of how far we've come and what we've accomplished in a relatively short time. In the pages to come, we will celebrate some of our most recent achievements and the spectacular network of growers that we are lucky to work with all over Detroit.

To start, we have some amazing news to share! We have a brand new partner in food sovereignty. On September 11, 2023, the City of Detroit created a Director of Urban Agriculture position, and we're thrilled that they appointed Tepfirah Rushdan, or Tee, as we fondly call her, as the Director. Tee has been with KGD since 2016 and served as a Co-Director since 2019. Although we'll miss her on the team, we're excited for all the opportunities that will arise from working together with the City. It's fantastic to see the local government recognize the importance of urban agriculture, and we can't wait to work together towards our shared goals.

WE'RE IN IT TOGETHER



KGD may be a small team, but our collective passion and talent bring our vision to life every day. We know that our staff is our biggest asset, and in 2023, we invested a great deal of time and resources into professional development. Our team members pursued their passions, traveled, and learned. As a result, we're more energized, our work reflects our diverse experiences, and our organization is brimming with leadership. With that, we are thrilled to announce a few key promotions that went into effect in 2023. Rosebud Schneider became our new Co-Director of Education and Engagement, Danielle Daguio is now our new Engagement Manager, and Angela Lugo-Thomas, returned to KGD as our new Garden Development Manager.

One of the many gifts that our new Co-Director Rosebud, who is Anishnaabe, brings to the organization is her passion for centering Indigenous voices and wisdom. She leads our efforts to integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge and create learning opportunities for the community that emphasize our connections to one another, nature, and the land we grow on. This year was a particularly exciting one for us, as we celebrated our new leaders and their unique contributions to KGD's mission.





524

Students have graduated from the Urban Roots program since its inception in 2005!

62

Black Growers Aquired Land

17.83

Acres of Land Acquired

SINCE 2020

CENTERING SUPPORT FOR BLACK FARMERS

At KGD, our focus is supporting Detroiters with the work of planting the seeds of change in their communities and our top priority is backing Black growers who reflect the dynamic neighborhoods they serve. From Urban Roots Community Garden Training Program, which supported 14 Black community leaders to establish thriving urban gardens and farms, to Grown in Detroit, which opened up opportunities for 18 Black growers to sell produce and generate income, KGD is invested in utilizing our assets to bolster the capacity of Black-led gardens and farms. This year, a majority of our resources for farm infrastructure projects, including 91% of Little Orchards, 83% Irrigation Stations, and 80% of hightunnel projects were directed to Black-led farms.

2023 was also a landmark year for the Detroit Black Farmer Land Fund (DBFLF), a collaboration between the Detroit Black Community Food Sovereignty Network, Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, and KGD. Together, we awarded \$140K to 50 black farmers in the city to purchase lots or complete infrastructure projects, the largest number of awards yet! Since 2020, the DBFLF has given out a total of 171 awards, with 62 new landowners who purchased a whopping 17.83 acres. Currently, 17 awardees are in the land purchase process, and 45 have already completed projects in their growing spaces.

ENHANCING ASSISTANCE FOR GROWERS

Growing vegetables is just the beginning of the garden development process. The real challenge lies in organizing neighbors, securing land, and mobilizing resources to establish thriving gardens. At KGD, we offer diverse and dynamic support to help growers navigate these challenges and realize their vision.

Over the past year, our team fielded 246 unique requests for garden development support, offering assistance ranging from community engagement and site design to planning for implementation. We also completed 128 on-site visits to collect soil samples and offer technical assistance.

This year, we continued to hone our expertise to support specific audiences too, such as the 33 early childcare programs that participated in the GRP this year. Assistance for these sites included pairing basic garden support with guidance and training to incorporate garden-based learning activities that inspire children to love vegetables and nature.

In addition to sharing our expertise, we leveraged the knowledge and experience in our community to build our collective capacity whenever possible. Numerous experienced growers helped teach our 6-week Urban Roots program, which provided intensive support for 18 budding community garden leaders. Communal knowledge was also shared at our Annual Celebration, during 3 Virtual Grower Gatherings, at the 18 community workdays hosted by KGD in 2023, and numerous other venues.





"I was thinking about my construction confidence on the last project compared to when we first started and I feel so much more confident now."
- Build Crew Trainee

CONNECTING GROWERS TO RESOURCES TO SUPPORT CONSERVATION PRACTICES

Nearly all of Detroit's urban farms utilize practices that enhance and protect the natural environment such as composting, cultivating native plants, and conserving water. This year, KGD was elated to support growers in applying for resources to expand these practices through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). We are happy to report that 23 of the 25 growers that we helped apply for CSP funding this year were awarded contracts. That means that over the next 5 years, more than \$230,000 in USDA payments will be going directly to urban growers to support their conservation efforts.

As a part of our relationship with the NRCS, KGD also continued to support growers in navigating the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which provided 20 awards this year for hightunnels to extend the growing season. With our staff's extensive knowledge of manufacturers and construction techniques, as well as basic growing advice for how to successfully plan and maintain houses for maximizing cold season production, KGD's staff provided technical assistance to over 11 growers to find vendors and plan for construction and supported 7 hightunnel builds or enhancement projects.

7

Trainees in Build Crew

20

EQIP Awards

23

CSP Awards

IN 2023

IMPROVING FARM INFRASTRUCTURE

For the many farms with growing capacity, farm infrastructure, such as hightunnels and rainwater collection systems, are essential tools that help farmers grow more crops for longer periods of time. Since the vast majority of local farms do not have access to city water, they rely solely on nature to provide the water necessary for their crops to thrive. However, local rainfall only provides approximately 50% of the water that gardens need. To address this issue, KGD has been helping install rainwater collection systems through the Water Wise program since 2016, having constructed 35 systems to date.

With so many gardens and farms eager to improve infrastructure, KGD's Build Crew, now in its second year, has been an invaluable way to build our collective capacity to meet the demand. This year, 7 Build Crew trainees dedicated 777 hours to support 10 build projects, including hightunnel and rainwater collection projects. In just two seasons, we have already seen the investment pay off. Three Build Crew grads successfully completed independent contracts in the community this season. One garden with a new irrigation station shared, "They did a phenomenal job. I know this was one of the first they have built, if not their first one alone, but we are so thrilled with the work that they did."





“The garden is to help my father have a better diet. His health is not good but he enjoys watching the birds, bees and plants as they grow. He will eat things right out of the garden even though he is reluctant to eat produce from the store. The whole experience of nature and nourishment has been good for our relationship too. I am so glad to have this program in Detroit!”

-GRP member

GROWING OUR NETWORK

The Garden Resource Program (GRP) successfully served more than 26,000 residents, supporting 2,283 gardens across Detroit this year. We credit this success to our strategic partnerships with incredible organizations in the area. This year, some of our partnerships included connecting with organizations involved in the Hope Starts Here Collaborative to reach families with young children and numerous neighborhood organizations in Southwest Detroit including DHDC, CHASS Clinic, Congress of Communities and UNI who partnered with KGD to connect with community.

Our approach included a wide-reaching outreach campaign, leveraging digital channels to connect with every corner of the city. Our KGD Ambassadors, a team of five veteran GRP members, were instrumental in spreading the word, attending over 66 events and engaging with audiences from farmers markets to block club meetings. We also collaborated with community partners, providing them with postcards, digital resources, and presentation materials to share with their networks.

In addition to these efforts, our social media presence was larger than ever before, helping us connect with a record-breaking 19,686 followers and landing us guest spots on several radio shows to provide gardening tips. We owe our success to the support of the community, and we're thrilled to continue planting and growing together!

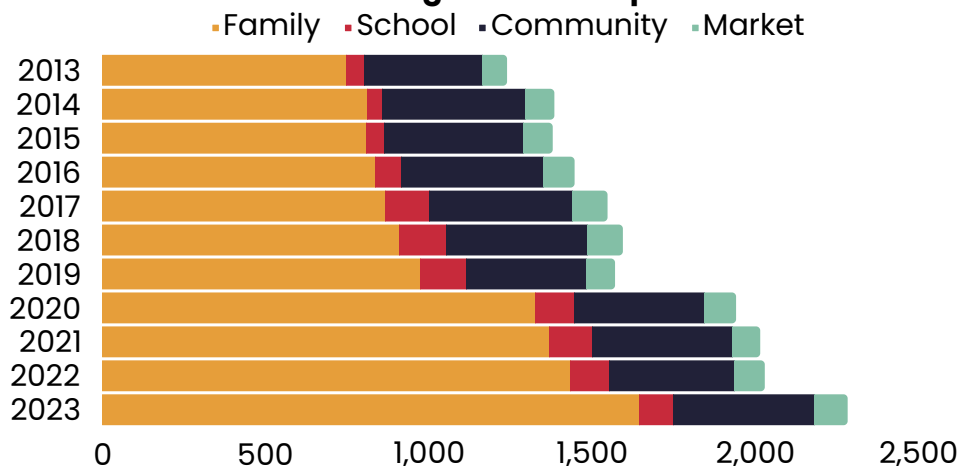
ENSURING ACCESS TO GARDEN RESOURCES



KGD's outreach efforts produced fantastic results this year. With the addition of 718 new gardens to the GRP, along with our intention-based initiatives that led to a 59% return rate, we were able to provide seeds and plants to 1,645 families, 433 community gardens, 101 markets, and 104 schools. During our three seasonal distribution events at the farm, we supplied 68,901 seed packs and 365,225 transplants. Additionally, we provided home drops to over 100 families with transportation and/or health concerns, ensuring that everyone had access to the program's resources. Despite slightly longer lines during in-person distribution days, members were patient and appreciated the opportunity to build relationships with other gardeners and farmers.

But it doesn't stop there! KGD is committed to providing growers with the resources and support needed to achieve success. We partnered with three local resource hubs, community partners strategically located across the city, to allocate over 300 yards of compost to enhance soil fertility. We also distributed 1,125 tomato stakes to maximize crop yields and provided additional resources such as woodchips, tool sharing, trellis netting, and row cover. We paired these resources with guidance for how to use them effectively. To further support infrastructure needs in community gardens, we distributed 100 raised garden beds.

Garden Resource Program Participation 2013–2023





15
Medicine garden part 2
Purple Prairie clover 1 -
Rose Milkweed 2 -
Yarrow 2 -
Thyme 2 -
Wild Bergamot 4 -
~~Orange coneflower 2 -~~
Purple coneflower 4 -

"I loved being a part of KGD this year. It was a delight to have a place to go and learn with like minded people. I love KGD for what it stands for. Keep Growing Detroit, keep being a light in Detroit you are appreciated."
- GRP member

128

Volunteer Events Hosted

1,785

Individual Volunteers

63

Volunteer Groups

IN 2023

MANY HANDS MAKE IT HAPPEN!

This year, we launched the growing season with the return of in-person seed packing and tag writing parties at community sites throughout the city. These events provided an opportunity for gardeners to connect during the winter and talk about garden plans ahead of the growing season.

Beginning in March, we welcomed volunteers to KGD Farm through weekly volunteer hours and group volunteer opportunities. Our weekly volunteer hours were a great way for individuals and small groups to spend time outdoors after work, introduce their families to KGD Farm, and learn new skills to practice in their gardens at home. Volunteers who visited us regularly reported that despite their familiarity with the farm, they discovered something new each visit, finding comfort in the awe of the expansive beauty of nature. We wrapped up our weekly volunteer hours in October with prepping garlic for planting, pressing KGD Farm apples for cider, and a round of gratitude for our time together this growing season.

Our group volunteers lent a hand with a variety of projects including planting garlic. Many volunteers expressed surprise that a lush oasis like the KGD Farm could exist in the heart of the city. Others appreciated the chance to learn about unique crops such as cucamelons, ground cherries, and Grown in Detroit ginger. Community involvement is essential to us at KGD. We are grateful for the many volunteers who got their hands dirty and contributed sweat equity towards a food sovereign Detroit.

CULTURE, CREATIVITY, AND COMMUNITY AT THE KGD FARM

We celebrated our 10th anniversary with a wide range of exciting events aimed at growing relationships at and with the KGD Farm. We kicked it off with a 3-part dinner series titled Detroit to Douala: A Cameroon Inspired Dinner Series, wherein Chefs Jermond Booze, Josmine Evans, Ederique Goudia, and Kenyatta Ashford shared their experiences of their participation in a culinary history tour of Cameroon. Guests were treated to stories of their travels and dishes inspired by their journey with culinary historian Michael Twitty and Roots to Glory Tours.

Additionally, we hosted a 4-part community quilt making series where creativity, collaboration, and good vibes brought together 70 people to co-create three quilts made with plant-based dyes led by Detroit-based artist Cyrah Dardas.

To kick off the summer, we welcomed local musician and educator, Joe Reilly, for the launch of his new album, "Seeds." More than 130 kids of all ages danced to lyrics with important messages about the symbiotic relationship between ourselves, each other, and the earth.

We kept the good times rolling with a lively Summerfest, where 130 green thumbs enjoyed summer delights, and Bubble Therapy lifted spirits to new heights. We also had a blast at the Annual Garden Tour, where 100 participants explored a dozen gardens across the city, with food by Tacos Hernandez and music by DJ Tammy Lakkis to savor at the end.

KGD Farm hosted two unforgettable events to close out the season. Firstly, Wiikondiwag: An Indigenous Peoples' Day Feast, was a night of festivity that celebrated Indigenous culture, leadership, resiliency, food sovereignty, and cultural revitalization. Secondly, the Annual Garlic Fest was a hit, where 200 GRP members picked up Motown Music garlic for planting, enjoyed cider and donuts, and picked apples. It was a fitting end to another abundant season at the KGD Farm.





"As always, my year was made richer, brighter, tastier, and more rewarding because of the absolute gem of a resource that is Keep Growing Detroit. I can't say enough good things about my experiences, every time I interact with KGD in any way."

-GRP member

CULTIVATING COMMUNITY LEARNING

This year, KGD welcomed Najah Naimah to KGD's team to coordinate our education programming. As a passionate family gardener herself, she brought new energy and perspective to the Urban Garden Education Series while continuing the traditions of fostering community learning and collaboration between growers and uplifting shared wisdom. With a focus on featuring local educators, together we curated 34 diverse classes, seamlessly weaving together foundational topics for both novices and deeply passionate, seasoned gardeners. Standout favorites included "Grafting fruit trees," which explained the delicate technique of fusing plants together and "Cameroonian Inspired Creole Cooking" with local chef Ederique Goudia. One heartwarming trend was the fervor of repeat learners, a testament to the series' resonance and value for growers. With a continuing trend towards returning to more in person sessions with interactive discussion and hands-on activities, the classes amplified the depth of opportunities to learn together and strengthen community bonds.

80

Classes Hosted

711

Total Class Attendees

IN 2023

Capturing the spirit of each class, we crafted educational short videos that highlighted the key lessons and fun facts shared by GRP members and staff. These snippets, recorded after class, serve as both a recap for participants and an invitation for the community to delve deeper into the world of gardening. We also created a series of brief educational videos designed to reinforce Education Series topics. Accessible via social media and YouTube, these videos offered insights on topics like "What's a Weed?", "Seed Saving," and "Tomato Harvesting."

LEARNING & UNLEARNING TOGETHER

For many, what begins as a journey to grow food quickly turns into a passion, and not just for the fruits of our labor. With more connections to where our food comes from, comes questioning and challenging the many detrimental impacts of the dominant industrialized food system. KGD's comprehensive series taps into these passions, facilitating learning opportunities that support growers to explore themes that decolonize modern practices and embrace indigenous and alternative methods of healing.

This year's Growing a Medicine Garden, a 4-part series presented in collaboration with herbalist Lottie Spady, brought together a dedicated group of 32 gardeners, all eager to immerse themselves in the world of medicinal plants and traditional remedies. A mix of online and in-person sessions, the series explored the intricate world of herb-based formulations, crafting tinctures and making herbal brews. Sessions sparked engaging discussions around benefits and traditions and participants received incentives, including a tincture making kit and native plants to establish a medicine garden, to continue their learning journey.

KGD's Sweet On Detroit (SOD) program and Beekeeping Club supported growers to dive into the skill of caring for pollinators, which are so essential to food security and sovereignty. This year's beginner program trained 18 participants over the course of 6 workshops and the SOD Bee Club met monthly to mentor one another in the art of beekeeping. Some topics the group explored this year included queen rearing share tips on setting up swarm traps and natural pest control.





EXPANDING MARKETS & MARKET READINESS

“KGD helped me try new vegetables this year.”
-GRP member

Recent years have shown the importance of maintaining a strong local food supply and a fresh market ecosystem, particularly during times of uncertainty. The pandemic greatly impacted our food system, the health of our community members, and KGD’s strategies for supporting small-scale growers. However, this past year, customers have returned to in-person shopping, and opportunities have arisen to rebuild relationships between GID growers and customers. In response, KGD has introduced several initiatives to support growers and strengthen our community.

44

Grown in Detroit Growers

877

CSA Boxes Distributed

\$64,380

Total Produce Sales

IN 2023

To expand our market reach, we returned to Eastern Market Saturdays a month earlier, added three extra market days, and earned an additional \$4,500 in revenue for our growers. We also increased the number of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares offered from 60 to 70 boxes, providing growers with additional opportunities to scale up their planting plans. Additionally, we added a small but mighty CSA program for Early Childhood Centers, delivering twice-monthly boxes of fresh local food to promote healthy eating habits among the youngest in our community.

Our market expansion efforts this year yielded positive results. Supporting new growers is an integral part of our mission and we are delighted to report that out of the 44 growers who sold with us this year, 9 were first time sellers. At the other end of the spectrum, 7 established GID growers were independent vendors at the Saturday Market in 2023 – a significant achievement for them and a sign of resilience within our thriving community of growers.

INVESTING IN FUTURE FARMERS

As climate change continues to impact the global food system, it is more important than ever to focus on cultivating and stabilizing local food systems. At KGD, we recognize this need and are dedicated to encouraging and supporting the next generation of urban growers.

KGD was thrilled to partner with Michigan State University to offer the MSU Organic Farmers Training Program (OFTP) to 12 aspiring Detroit-based farmers this year. This program, which blends hands-on farm work, online learning, and field trips, allowed students to learn and grow at KGD Farm or the MSU Student Organic Farm in Lansing. KGD staff, many of whom are OFTP alumni or graduates of similar programs, led on-farm days in Detroit to reduce barriers for local residents.

Additionally, KGD helped grow the pipeline of future farmers through our youth programs, including a school-year Youth Leadership Program and summer Apprenticeship. These interactive programs taught 37 unique young people essential gardening skills while also educating them about the local food system. Participants contributed to seasonal work at the KGD Farm, and engaged in field trips to local urban farms, such as Georgia Street, where they learned about the basics of composting from local farmer Mark Covington.



LOOK WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED TOGETHER!

KEEP GROWING DETROIT, 2023



SUPPORTED
26,086
DETROITERS

ENGAGED IN
2,283 GARDENS
& FARMS



GARDENS BY TYPE

1,645 FAMILY
104 SCHOOL
433 COMMUNITY
101 MARKET



**RESOURCES & SERVICES
DISTRIBUTED**

68,901 SEED PACKS
365,225 TRANSPLANTS
246 SUPPORT REQUESTS
100 RAISED BEDS
217 SOIL SAMPLES
128 SITE VISITS



COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

1,785 VOLUNTEERS
63 GROUPS
4,048 TOTAL HOURS
2,415 POUNDS
PRODUCE DONATED



COMMUNITY BUILDS

7 RAINWATER
COLLECTION SYSTEMS
5 HIGH TUNNELS
11 LITTLE ORCHARDS

GROWN IN DETROIT

44 GROWERS
\$64,380 TOTAL SALES
877 CSA BOXES &
16,550 POUNDS OF
PRODUCE DISTRIBUTED



SUPPORT FOR BLACK FARMERS

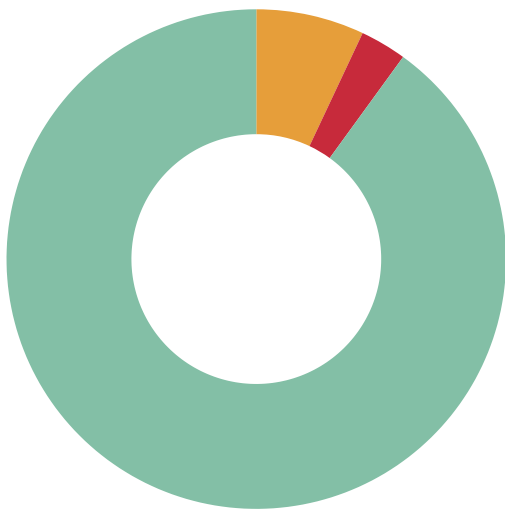
50 NEW BLACK FARMER
LAND FUND AWARDEES
87% OF COMMUNITY BUILDS
COMPLETED AT BLACK-LED
SITES

EDUCATION

80 CLASSES
711 ATTENDEES
2,747 HOURS
OF TRAINING



2023 FINANCIAL REPORT



2023 Expenses
\$1,453,002

- 90% Direct Programming
- 7% Management
- 3% Fundraising



2023 Revenue
\$1,671,539

- 59% Grants
- 10% Mission Related Earned Income
- 14% Contributions
- 10% Corporate Gifts
- 7% Government Contracts

Financial data is based on an accrual basis and unaudited financial statements.

STAFF & BOARD

STAFF

Ashley Atkinson, Co-Director
Sterling Bowman-Randall, Garden Dev. Coordinator
Danielle Daguio, Engagement Manager
Lola Gibson-Berg, Farm Activation Coordinator
Molly Hubbell, Market Manager
Akello Karamoko, Farm Manager
Angela Lugo-Thomas, Garden Development Manager
Najah Naimah, Education Coordinator
Kido Pielack, Infrastructure Manager
Lindsay Pielack, Co-Director
Tepfirah Rushdan, Co-Director, out-going
Rosebud Bear Schneider, Co-Director
Romondo Woods III, Garden Development Coordinator

BOARD

Azri Afework
Josh Budiongan, Treasurer
Rukiya Colvin
Marilyn Griffin
Deon Hamilton
Darius Hardrick, Co-Chair
Maria Jones-Foster, Secretary

Special Thank You to
out-going Board members:
Asenath Andrews
Bekah Galang
Wynona Thomas



Thank you for all of the ways that you have enriched our lives
and our organization over the last decade!



LET'S KEEP GROWING TOGETHER!