

GRASSROOTS GARDENS OF
WESTERN NEW YORK

2022 COMMUNITY GARDEN REPORT



GRASSROOTS
GARDENS WNY

2022 IN REVIEW

An office move in 2019. A global pandemic in 2020. The culmination of years of work to achieve land trust accreditation in 2021. After multiple years of changes and growth, it wouldn't be off base to describe 2022 as the year we anticipated to focus on simply gardening. Yet as we entered 2023, we found ourselves having more than doubled our staff size in the past year, and also saying goodbye to our fearless leader, Jeanette, who had guided us through the last five years with a steady hand and tireless resolve.

All of these organizational transitions coincided with some of the toughest events our region could have weathered: two exceptionally damaging blizzards and a devastating, racially-motivated mass shooting on May 14th. Today, with our communities still recovering from these events, as well as the continued impacts of COVID and the systemic issues affecting food equity and urban green spaces, there is more work for us to do beyond the day-to-day tasks of gardening.

Of course, that act of gardening in and of itself is a radical one, and its fruits (and veggies) loudly declare the community's hope and imagination to everyone who walks by each and every garden in our network. In 2023, we're excited to continue collaborating with our community partners, new and seasoned. With our increased capacity, we can't wait to dive deeper into our advocacy for better use of public land and support engagement with mental well-being through our Therapeutic Gardening Program. Stepping into a new role at this organization is a humbling and exciting challenge, and I am thrilled to be moving this work forward. I hope that in this report, you will see the impact of your support, which ripples far beyond the physical boundaries of our gardens, and into the fabric of each community in which the gardens are situated.

TIMOTHY CHEN

Executive Director

2022 Staff

Jeanette Koncikowski
Executive Director

Sylvin Ashbrook
Land Stewardship Coordinator

Greg Wilder
Garden Education Coordinator

Justin Baumgardner
Development Director

Adamaah Grayse
Food Justice & Policy Fellow

Loc Tran
Community Garden Coordinator

Timothy Chen
Program Manager

Nicole Capozziello
*Therapeutic Gardening
Coordinator*

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CELTIC PLACE COMMUNITY GARDEN

Words and photos provided by Celtic Place gardeners Kate Gorman and Kate Weidner

Celtic Place Community Garden planted its first crops in the soil in May 2022. Just four blocks from Tops, it quickly became a refuge of beauty and comfort to the immediate neighbors after the tragic events of 5/14/22. With the local supermarket closed for several months, the summer harvest helped feed the neighborhood, and provided fresh veggies to the Free Food Fridge on Jefferson and East Ferry Street.

Despite only being in existence for one growing season, the gardeners have kept busy! Celtic Place has served as a stop on the Urban Farms Bike Tour and has participated in the East Side Garden Walk. Celtic Place has hosted the East Side Bike Club for farm tours and organized regular trash clean-ups spanning the whole block.

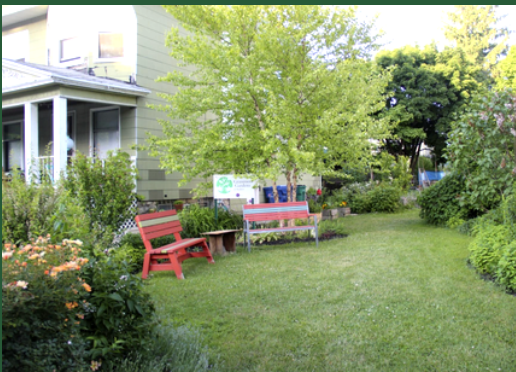


In 2023, an Earth Day Trash Clean-up and a 4H group workshop on how Community Gardens transform neighborhoods are already on the calendar. We can't wait to see what else Celtic Place Community Garden pulls off this coming season!



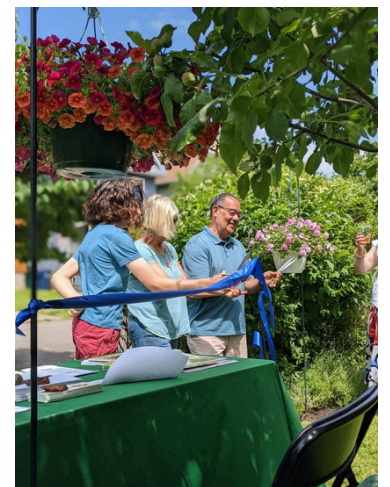
FOREVER PROTECTED!

PUTNAM STREET COMMUNITY GARDEN



On June 11, 2022, community members, gardeners, GGWNY staff, board members, and Niagara District Councilmember David Rivera gathered at the Putnam Street Community Garden to celebrate the permanent conservation of the garden, as it entered the Grassroots Gardens WNY Land Trust. Significantly, this represents the first sale of a previously city-owned vacant lot to GGWNY, protecting this garden in perpetuity while keeping site control and management in residents' hands, and was only made possible by continued and dedicated advocacy efforts from the neighborhood in partnership with GGWNY staff and Councilmember Rivera's office.

Our organization is more committed than ever to identifying opportunities to protect community staples such as Putnam Community Garden. As lead gardener Kate Willoughby says, places like Putnam are “...a sign that everyday people like us, neighbors, can come together for the common good and solve a problem—we turned an ugly, trash-ridden vacant lot into a green and growing space we are proud of; a community garden that improves the quality of life in our neighborhood for us all.”



HEALING COMMUNITIES: Our Therapeutic Gardening Initiative

Words and images by Nicole Capozziello

“Gardening is about setting life in motion, and seeds, like dead fragments, help us re-create the world anew,” says psychiatrist Sue Stuart-Smith in her book *The Well-Gardened Mind: The Healing Power of Plants, Earth, and the Outdoors*. For our many gardeners, their gardens have long been restorative spaces, where the act of gardening has been nourishing, healing, and even lifesaving. In recognition of the therapeutic value and potential of our gardens, Grassroots Gardens WNY launched the Therapeutic Gardening Initiative in 2019, with support from the Wilson Support Center and several of our gardeners.



Since then, Grassroots has convened monthly task force meetings, comprised of committed gardeners and service providers from organizations such as Jewish Family Services, Food for All, the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities, Endeavor Health Services, and Niagara Street Pediatrics.

After the creation of three therapeutic garden sites through the generous support of the Garman Foundation, the initiative has continued to grow thanks to a two-year grant through the NY State Public Health Fellowship, which allowed GGWNY to bring on social worker Nicole Capozziello as the full-time Therapeutic Gardening Coordinator. She now supports eight therapeutic gardens in the network, such as Niagara Falls' Gardens of Compassion at Community Missions and the Lotus Pad Garden at Homespace, a home for foster care youth. Nicole also helps GGWNY offer year-round therapeutic gardening programming to interested parties, with an eye towards equity. Program sites have included the YWCA and a Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority site, where people benefit from social connection and contact with nature in guided activities like making potpourri jars, stepping stones, and wreaths.

“When we started the initiative, we knew that gardening was meeting needs for people far beyond growing food,” says Nicole. “But little did we know what was around the corner. With the hardship of the pandemic, and the unique challenges that Buffalo has faced – from the TOPS mass shooting to two blizzards – it’s become very apparent just how needed healing, justice, and connection are for communities in Buffalo. It’s inspiring to see all the ways that Grassroots Gardens WNY can be a part of that.”



GROWING FARTHER: WNY School Gardens Lab

In 2021, as our communities struggled to navigate unknowns brought about by a global pandemic, our schools also experienced constant shifts. Remote learning and attendance challenges were only a few challenges they had to navigate. Additionally, we have long known that outside of our Buffalo and Niagara Falls service area, many schools are interested in implementing gardens for youth activity and engagement. With these factors in mind and with the support of a USDA Farm to School grant, we launched the WNY School Gardens Lab website. Our goal was to maintain our support to existing school gardens in our network, while also broadening our reach to schools across Western New York previously outside of our programming region.



Throughout the last two years, with help from Caesandra Seawell at Pelion Outdoor Classroom (City Honors School), Garden Education Coordinator Greg Wilder has created over a dozen video lessons and a digital curriculum for use by teachers and school staff. Through the site, he's also provided individual consulting and mentoring for schools outside of Buffalo and Niagara Falls, helping teachers plan garden spaces and design lessons.

As this grant comes to a close this coming year, we're excited that this online resource is available for anyone in our region - and beyond - to utilize for building school gardens, mentoring youth, and finding new ideas and inspiration. Check out the culmination of this work at WNYSchoolGardens.org, and keep an eye out for the new videos we'll be releasing this spring!



YOUR IMPACT IN 2022

Every year, our gardens across Buffalo and Niagara Falls rely on supporters like you. Whether it's getting our gardens set up in the spring or hosting a workshop on fall harvesting and preservation, your generosity makes it possible for us to continue our work across Western New York.

In 2022, you helped **109 gardens** in Buffalo and Niagara Falls continue their environmental stewardship, feed their neighbors, and create resilient places of respite while strengthening community ties. We're so grateful for your continued partnership and support!



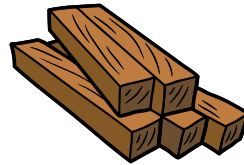
178 programs and consultations with GGWNY staff



4300+ veggie & herb seedlings distributed



178 yards of soil, mulch, and compost delivered



107 raised beds built or repaired



16 public workshops on gardening, harvesting, and preservation



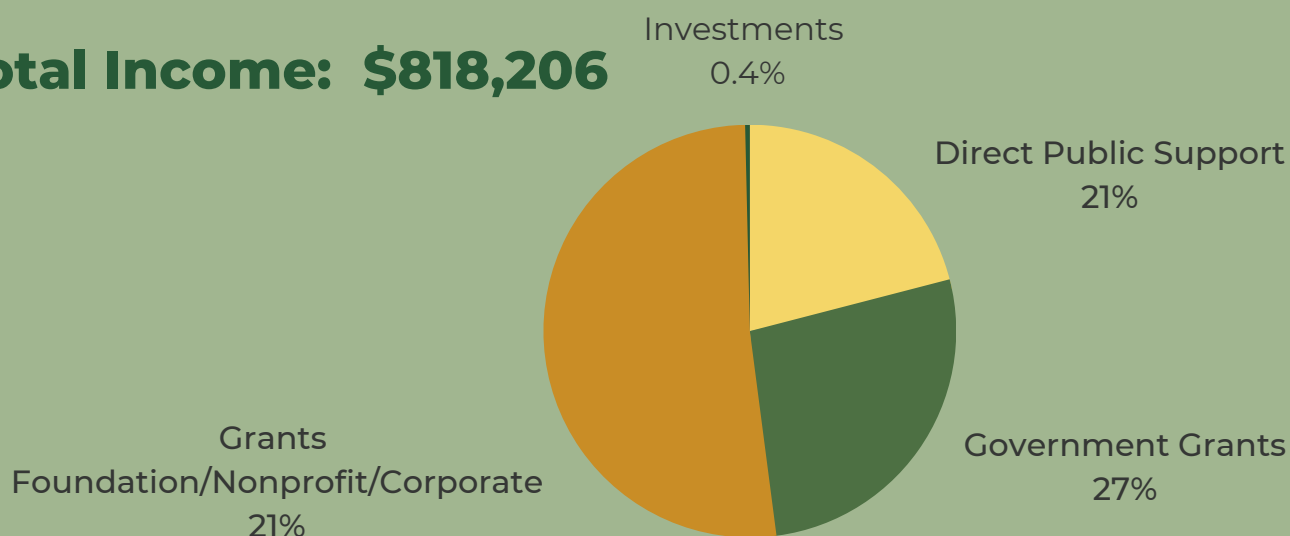
150 native perennials provided



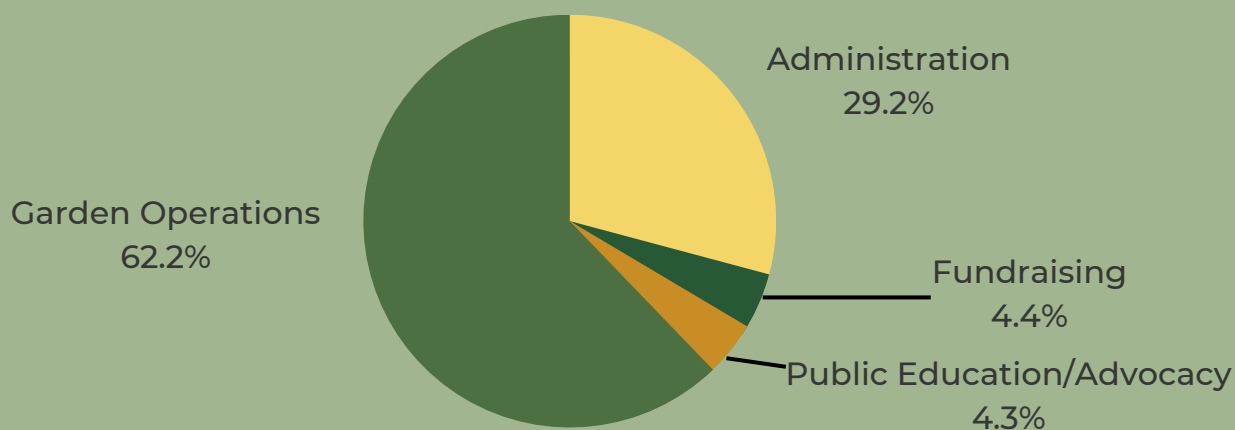
FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Our reach and impact continued to grow over the last year as we prepared for our leadership transition and leveraged our capacity to reach more communities. We are excited to continue supporting our gardens while developing and adapting our approaches, with an eye on sustainability and the protection of our gardens in perpetuity.

Total Income: \$818,206



Total Expenses: \$632,272



A note to our partners: We ended the year with a significant surplus, though this is indicative primarily of year-end grant revenue and donations meant for 2023 support in addition to continued support for the future independent incorporation of Buffalo Freedom Gardens, whom for we serve as fiscal sponsor. Updated accounting practices in the future will categorize deferred revenue differently. Our 2022 financial review is still in process, and these numbers are still considered draft until the review is complete. Visit the NYS Charities Bureau website for previous returns and filings: charitiesnys.com

2022 CULTIVATORS & PARTNERS

As we continue our work through organizational transitions and growth, the generous support and collaboration of partners in our communities is essential to the work of Grassroots Gardens WNY. Thank you for your support through another incredible year of growing!

Briana Popek Grants, LLC
Buffalo Chamber Players
Buffalo Freedom Gardens
Buffalo Main Streets Initiative
Buffalo Rotary Foundation
Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
Congressman Brian Higgins
Council President Darius Pridgen
Councilmember David Rivera
Councilmember Joseph Golombek
Cornell Cooperative Extension
Cullen Foundation
Dreamcatcher Foundation
Edward H. Butler Foundation
Edwards Church UCC
Fanthem Foundation
First Niagara Foundation
Fisher Family Fund*
Gardens Buffalo Niagara
Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield of WNY
iRun WNY
Just Buffalo: Civil Writes Project
Lakeshore Savings Bank
Land Trust Alliance
Legacy II Fund*
M&T Bank
Make Communities Consulting
Massachusetts Avenue Project
National Grid Foundation
NYS Department of Conservation



NYS Agriculture and Markets
Northern Chataqua Community Foundation
Partnership for the Public Good
PRP Financial Solutions
PUSH Buffalo
The Baird Foundation
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The Cornell Douglass Foundation
The John R. Oishei Foundation
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The Sabres Foundation
True Community Development Corporation
Rich Family Foundation
Rite Aid Foundation
Simple Gifts Fund
Smallwood Garden Club
Stockton Family Fund*
United States Department of Agriculture
United Way of Buffalo & Erie County
University at Buffalo: Food Systems Planning & Healthy
Communities Lab
Urban Roots Cooperative Garden Market
Univera Healthcare
Wegmans
Western New York Foundation
West Herr Auto Group
WNY Children's Environmental Health Centers
Whole Kids Foundation
Wilson Support Center
Zeron Foundation

* Administered by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo



389 Broadway Street
Buffalo, NY 14204

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