2021 was a milestone year for Grassroots Gardens WNY. We achieved our long sought-after national accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance, in August of 2021. What does accreditation mean for us? First, it demonstrates that an independent third party determined, after an 18-month organizational audit, that we are working at the "highest and best standards" in land and community conservation. More importantly, it demonstrates to our gardeners and the larger community that Grassroots Gardens WNY can be trusted to permanently protect and conserve our member-gardens. Currently we hold two gardens in trust, and we expect to close on another two properties in early 2022. We are also working with our partners at the city of Buffalo to bring some of our oldest gardens into the land trust. Once in trust, these gardens can never be sold or used for anything other than community green space.

Achieving accreditation is a huge step for our organization, and it would not have been possible without the people at the heart of Grassroots Gardens: our gardeners. In this annual report, we are sharing the impact of accreditation and highlighting a few of our gardeners’ diverse stories. We hope you will learn more about why we do what we do, and what Buffalo-Niagara’s community gardens mean to so many. And, of course, we hope you will see how far your support goes.

Thank you for your partnership!

JEANETTE KONCIKOWSKI
Executive Director
## The impact of accreditation at GGWNY

**85%** of public agencies and foundations said accreditation increases their confidence in land trusts.

**87%** of accredited land trusts said accreditation led them to make organizational improvements.

**220%** average increase in land trust’s stewardship and defense funds.

**5** local foundations invested in GGWNY’s accreditation process and establishment of our legal defense fund.

**14** new policies implemented at GGWNY prior to accreditation application.

**$50,000** raised and reserved in the 2020-2021 season for legal defense of land.

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*NATIONAL ACCREDITATION DATA SOURCE: “AN IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION PROGRAM’S FIRST TEN YEARS,” JULY 2018, VIA WWW.LANDTRUSTACCREDITATION.ORG.*

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*Staff, board, board alumni, and gardeners gathered to celebrate and share the news at a press conference in August 2021.*
The AsheeMa'at Family at the Wealth in Health Family Garden

The Wealth in Health Family garden is led by QueeNia AsheeMa'at (bottom left), her 20-year-old daughter, AAliyah Mya (shown on bottom with her hive), and 10-year-old son, Asheem Ali (top right and featured on the cover). Joining the family in the photos below is friend and supporter Juweira Dahir. The family got their start growing at the A.D. Price ComeUnity Gardens in 2015. In 2021, they started their own Grassroots community garden on a lot their family owns at 2575 Main Street. Of the Wealth in Health Family Garden, QueeNia says, "Our goal is to provide a safe and welcoming space for the entire community, but especially the youth. We would like them to be able to attend workshops that educate them about where and how their food grows, in all its various stages, without the use of harmful chemicals and pesticides. Our hope is that people will take what they learned from us and either volunteer at our garden, another garden, or venture out and begin a community or personal garden of their own."

Location: 2575 Main Street, Buffalo

@WIFAMILYGARDEN

Photos shared by QueeNia AsheeMa'at
BPS Student Gardeners at School #45 International Community Garden

The International Community Garden at Buffalo Public School #45 was founded in the spring of 2015 as a collaboration between school staff and the surrounding community.

During the school year, students observe the growth of plants by starting vegetables and flowers from seed. They also learn about the decomposition cycle by practicing composting in the garden. Throughout the summer, students and their families continue to care for and harvest the plants, until school resumes in the fall.

Lead gardener and teacher Brandon Ash says, "We have grown in many ways, thanks to a fruitful partnership with Grassroots Gardens. In the beginning, we learned how to navigate resistance to the idea of breaking ground, or figuring out how to water the garden without access to it. It took perseverance, grit and, most of all, community. One of our neighbors used to carry a hose to and fro! Our students have benefited from hands-on learning of planting, growing and harvesting, or writing poetry in the garden with local authors. Thanks to Read, Seed, Write, some of our gardeners' international recipes were featured in a cookbook. Come on by for our free little library and Griffis art sculpture—we'd love to have you!"

Location: 141 Hoyt Street, Buffalo

@INTERNATIONALCOMMUNITYGARDEN

Photos shared by Greg Wilder
Gardens of Compassion with Community Missions & St. James Church

Pastor Mark Breese never thought he'd be a gardener. When he was approached about the idea of connecting adults with mental health needs to the church garden at St. James, which was growing food for Community Missions' food pantry, he assumed he'd get the program off the ground and someone else would take it over. That was 9 years ago! The garden was originally started by the church in 2011, and they worked with Community Missions to add the therapeutic gardening program in 2013. They were also one of the first gardens affiliated with Greenprint Niagara, GGWNY's predecessor in Niagara Falls.

Today the garden teaches program participants how to grow healthy food, healthy coping mechanisms, and a healthy planet. It also provides gardeners an opportunity to learn about good nutrition while getting their hands in the soil.

Pastor Mark says, "The garden is like holding up a mirror; it's a reflection of what we do to treat mental illness. It provides mental, emotional, and physical benefits. It gets you outside of your own head, when you think about caring for something else. It helps encourage connections with other human beings, whether you are at the gardens or you are sharing your zucchini with someone."
Did you know that a celebrity is hiding out in the community gardens? A few years ago, the Black Rock Riverside Alliance obtained a KABOOOM Play Everywhere grant, and they placed a few passive play elements in the community gardens they steward. One of our favorites was a pig named Brockie—short for Black Rock Rocky. Sculpted by Lawrence Kinney, Brockie represents the pig path that existed when Black Rock was a stop on the Erie Canal, where pigs were driven to market. This pig has his own story, his own hashtag, #Brockiethepig, and is Instagram famous.

Lead gardener Mary Ann Kedron says, "We have learned long ago that our community gardens are so much more than food sources for our communities. Sometimes they are quiet, safe places, and sometimes they are places of play. We could not have guessed how much fun the children would have with him and how much the community works to have him celebrate every holiday—and, most notably, football season! " This time of year, you can find Brockie sporting a St. Patrick’s Day bandana or bunny ears and a basket.

Show your love for Brockie by grabbing a selfie with him. Share it using #Brockiethepig on social media, and celebrate our community gardens for all they can be!
Your support makes all the difference!

Did you know that 90% of our donations are $100 or less? We depend on small donations to sustain us. **Thanks to individual donors, during the 2021 season we distributed:**

- 297 yards of soil & compost
- Lumber for 140 raised beds
- 145 native perennials
- 1164 veggie & herb seedlings
- 240 lbs. of fall bulbs
- 713 gardening tools
- 71 earth box gardens

**We worked and learned in solidarity with:**

- 1685 people in our educational & outreach programs
- 1500+ community gardeners of all ages

in 114 community gardens in Buffalo and Niagara Falls, NY

Photos shared by Buffalo Freedom Gardens, Bennett Park Montessori School, Buffalo Sprouts, and Niagara Street Pediatrics.
2021 Cultivators

We also rely on the generous support of philanthropic partners to keep all of our programs growing strong. Thank you to all who helped us garden communities in 2021!

Baird Foundation

Buffalo Rotary Foundation

Briana Popek Grants, LLC

Buffalo Main Streets Initiative

Council Member
Mitch Nowakowski

Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo

Congressman Brian Higgins

Edward Butler Foundation

FRUIT BELT COMMUNITY LAND TRUST
Development Without Displacement

Land Trust Alliance
Together, conserving the places you love

M&T Bank

nationalgrid Foundation

New York State Agriculture and Markets

Open Buffalo

Mother Cabrini Health Foundation

PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

PUSH Buffalo
People United for Sustainable Housing

RICH's
RICH FAMILY FOUNDATION

Urban Roots
Cooperative Garden Market

USDA

Financial Solutions, LLC

United Way

univera HEALTHCARE

Wilson Support Center
Grief & Loss

Whole Kids Foundation

WNY COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE FUND

Wegmans

New York State Children’s Environmental Health Centers

NYSCHEKCheck.org
We've been on a roll with fundraising since 2019! After a brief slowdown during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we've continued to grow our income and operating budget. In return, we've blossomed from 85 gardens to 105+ during the last three seasons.

**Total income: $437,991.34**

- Foundation and nonprofit grants 50%
- Government grants 30%
- Direct public support 14%
- Investments 6%

A note to our partners: The garden season doesn’t follow our fiscal/calendar year. Additionally, we work on an accrual basis. This means that our deficit is only on the balance sheet for year-end. Rest assured, we also had $111,616 in deferred revenue. Please also note that our 2021 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

**Total expense: $468,761**

- Garden operations 65%
- Fundraising 6%
- Public education 10%
- Administration 19%
SPROUTING IN 2022

**SPRING**

**SPRING SEMINARS**
Our free annual educational workshops with MAP and Urban Roots return January–April 2022. Follow us on Facebook for more information.

**FARM TO SCHOOL**
Thanks to the USDA, we’re launching a digital learning lab for school gardens, in April, at www.wnyschoolgardens.org

**NIAGARA FALLS OUTREACH**
Building on a new community engagement plan for Niagara Falls, we’ll be distributing home-gardening materials and letting folx know all about our member-gardens in the Falls.

**SUMMER**

**PUBLIC LAND POLICY**
Our Public Land for Public Benefit work is set to take off this summer. After presenting recommendations from community members on the people’s plan for vacant land reuse, we’re taking our message to City Hall.

**EAST SIDE GARDEN WALK**
We’re pleased to again be a major sponsor for East Side Garden Walk in Buffalo. The event is expanding this year to a full weekend: July 23rd & 24th. Visit gardensbuffaloniagara.com/esgw for more information.

**ACCESSIBILITY+**
Our Gardening for All initiative is working to make improvements at 7 gardens this year for gardeners with disabilities, including adding hundreds of yards of wheelchair-accessible grass mat.

**FALL**

**URBAN FARM DAY**
We’re also a tour stop for Urban Farm Day, another great free event, open to the public, thanks to Gardens Buffalo Niagara. Visit us on August 27th, from 10 AM–3 PM, to tour our Community Garden Resource Center and Broadway Community Garden.

**THERAPEUTIC GARDEN AT HLS**
Thanks to generous funders, what started as a small idea for a therapeutic gardening space at Heart, Love & Soul in Niagara Falls has blossomed into our largest community garden expansion to date. Groundbreaking for the new therapeutic community garden is expected in September.

**PIE RAFFLE**
The delta COVID variant cancelled our 2021 Pie Raffle, but fear not, pie lovers! We’re planning to move our annual Pie Raffle to mid-September, with a new outdoor location. As always, there will be beer and pie—and your support for all the plants!
389 Broadway Street
Buffalo, NY 14204