



Franklin Park Conservatory  
and Botanical Gardens

# 2024 GROWING TO GREEN IMPACT REPORT





**Franklin Park Conservatory  
and Botanical Gardens**

Growing to Green

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**A WORD FROM THE  
PRESIDENT & CEO.....2**

**ABOUT GROWING  
TO GREEN.....3**

**GROWING TO  
GREEN IMPACT.....4**

**COMMUNITY GARDEN  
MAPPING INITIATIVE.....5**

**FRANKLIN PARK  
CONSERVATORY  
COMMUNITY GARDEN.....6**

**VOLUNTEERISM.....8**

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE  
AND ADVOCACY.....10**

**EDUCATIONAL  
PROGRAMMING.....11**

**FINANCIAL RESOURCES.....15**

**HARVEST AWARDS.....17**

# A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

It has been a tremendous year for the Conservatory's Growing to Green (G2G) program and community gardening in Central Ohio. Engaging in this initiative has allowed us to witness the power of collective effort in fostering sustainable urban agricultural practices, building connections, and nurturing a sense of belonging within the community.

Moreover, the vibrant tapestry of Columbus's community gardens reflects the diversity of its residents. These gardens are more than just spaces to grow fruits and vegetables; they are hubs of learning, collaboration, and empowerment. Through the G2G program, the Conservatory has played a pivotal role in providing resources, education, and support to individuals and groups eager to cultivate green spaces.

Working side by side, we exchange knowledge, ideas, and stories, transcending barriers and fostering a deeper understanding of one another. It is a privilege for us to be a part of this community and to serve so many.

Your significant accomplishments in 2024 are a testament to your unwavering dedication. Through your work, you've strengthened our community's connection to nature and expanded access to vital fresh food resources. Thank you for making such a meaningful impact!

Keep on gardening,  
Bruce A. Harkey, President & CEO  
Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens





## ABOUT GROWING TO GREEN

*Two new team members were hired in 2024!*

Growing to Green (G2G) is the largest organized effort in Columbus dedicated to supporting and sustaining urban agriculture. For almost 25 years, we have helped establish and revitalize hundreds of urban agriculture projects across Central Ohio, transforming available urban land into thriving hubs for food production, education, and community connection.

At its core, Growing to Green is committed to making urban agriculture accessible to all. We provide free tools, resources, and support to organizations, neighborhoods, and schools looking to start or expand gardens and educational growing spaces within the city. By increasing access to fresh, healthy food and fostering opportunities for environmental education and community engagement, we support the development of a resilient and connected local food system.



**Muluken Kebede**  
Growing to Green Manager



**Liv White**  
Growing to Green Educator



## GROWING TO GREEN IMPACT

**1,500+**

People directly impacted by the Growing to Green program through advocacy, education, technical assistance, volunteerism, financial resources, recognition, leadership development, and networking.

**81**

Garden visits

**39**

Educational presentations, workshops and hands-on learning experiences

**7**

School gardens directly supported by G2G

**263**

Gardens impacted

On July 24, 2024, Growing to Green officially launched the Community Garden Interactive Map at the Conservatory's annual Growing to Green Garden Mixer, created in partnership with Ohio State University's Knowledge Exchange and the City of Columbus.

Designed as both a public resource and a data collection tool, the map strengthens connections between residents and gardens while also generating quantifiable metrics—such as the amount of food produced and donated—that are essential for securing sustaining funding and building community support.

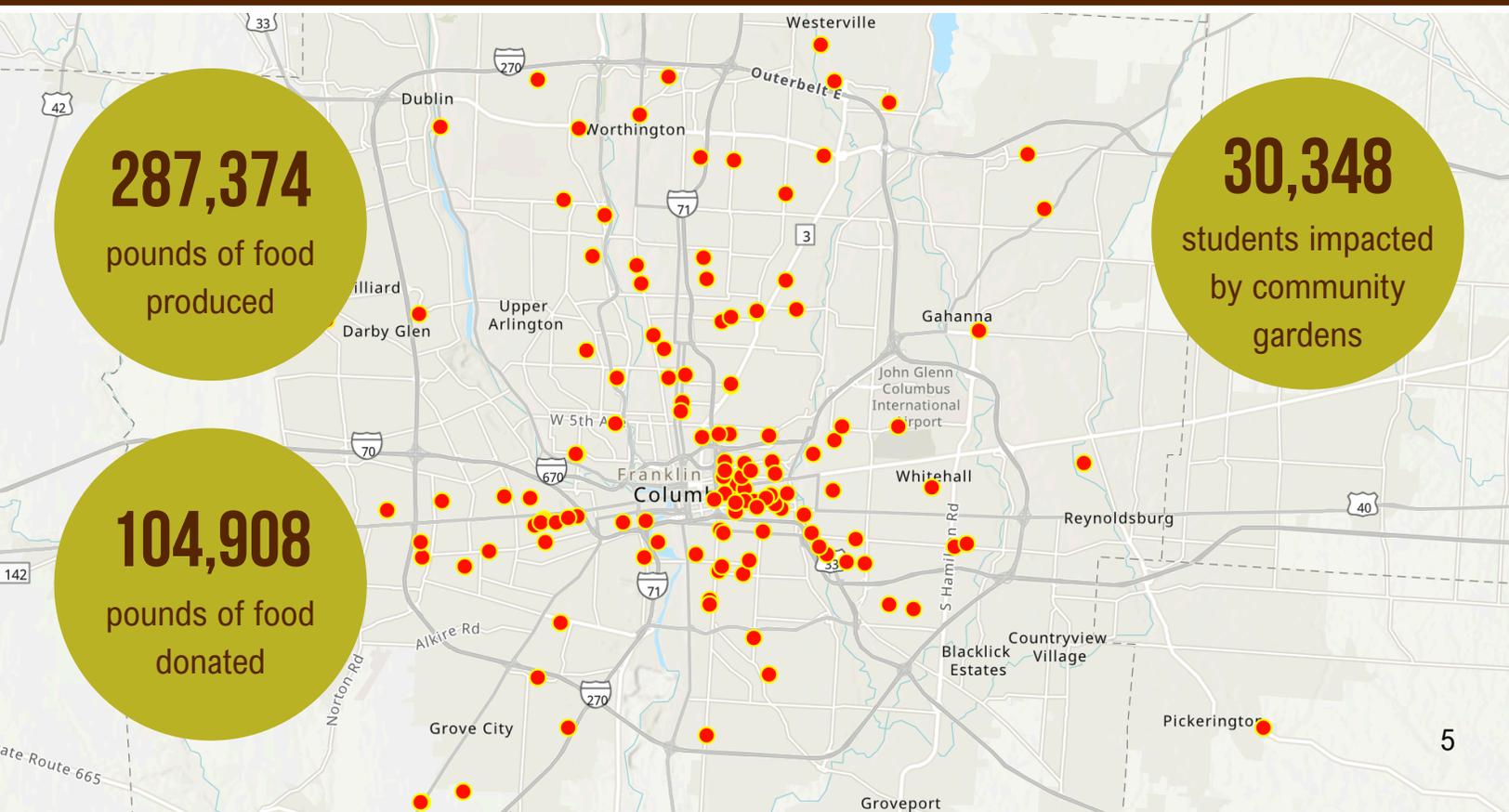
This initiative was developed with the collaboration of several key partners, including OSU Extension, the Franklin County Commissioners, Columbus City Schools' Farm to School program, Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio.

The map currently features

# 225 COMMUNITY GARDENS

across the region, providing key details such as garden names, addresses, missions, public or private access, and volunteer opportunities.

## COMMUNITY GARDEN MAPPING INITIATIVE



The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company Community Garden Campus (SMGCGC) serves as a model for allotment-style community gardens with 44 annually leased plots.

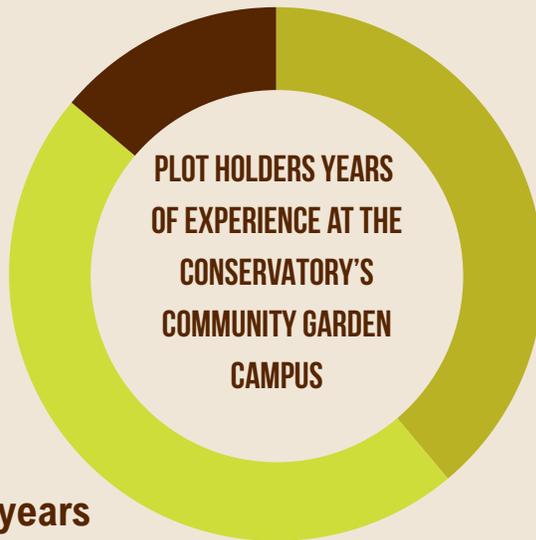
**36**

Active plot holders utilize the community garden campus

**15**

Zip codes represented in the community garden campus

**5+ years**  
**13.9%**



**1-3 years**  
**38.9%**

**3-5 years**  
**47.2%**

## SCOTT'S MIRACLE-GRO COMPANY COMMUNITY GARDEN CAMPUS





## TIME IN THE GARDEN

# 1,338

Engagement hours recorded by our plot holders. Engagement hours include maintaining their personal plot, maintaining public space in the SMGCGC, volunteering on the main Community Garden Campus, and engaging with other gardeners in educational/social/work events at the Conservatory.



# COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

Growing to Green's Community Volunteering program offers opportunities for community members to roll up their sleeves and support local community gardens across Central Ohio. Volunteers assist with essential garden tasks like planting, weeding, watering, harvesting, cleanups, and general upkeep.

Part of this initiative is to further educate ourselves about our communities and the neighborhood leaders who take on these projects. Some time in the garden is set aside to just listen and learn about particular issues affecting neighborhoods and those that are addressing them.

# 214

volunteers contributed a total of 428 hours

# 24

community gardens hosted volunteer work sessions

# VOLUNTEERISM





# COMMUNITY GARDEN BUS TOUR

Is an opportunity for Franklin Park Conservatory Women's Board to experience the amazing community gardens that G2G impacts. Members visited 4 different types of gardens across Columbus.

*“What an amazing,inspiring day! Thank you! It is so powerful to see the Growing to Green partners in action and to know that our work as Women's Board helps make it possible.”*

. Women's Board Member



## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND ADVOCACY



# COMMUNAL GARDENING SERIES

This free class series is open to all in the community and is part of larger Conservatory initiatives that build capacity, knowledge and enthusiasm for the joys of gardening.



# 11

Free educational classes were offered to the public



# 324

Individuals participated

Topics included seed starting, regenerative farming, composting, cut flower gardening, tomato growing, Indigenous African botanicals, and more.

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING





## SCHOOL GARDENS

This year, Growing to Green expanded its reach by delivering educational programming at Salem Elementary, Berwick Elementary, and Bishop Hartley High School. These programs provided students with hands-on learning opportunities that connected classroom concepts to real-world applications in gardening, sustainability, and community engagement.

# 234 STUDENTS

were reached through lessons  
and garden activities







# FAIRWOOD AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM

Every Friday, the Growing to Green team visits Fairwood Elementary's after-school program to teach students about plants, food, nature, and gardening. Since November 2024, the team has conducted 18 engaging lessons covering topics like plant anatomy, photosynthesis, and composting. These sessions have sparked curiosity and hands-on learning among the students, fostering a deeper connection with the environment.

Discussions focused on the importance of producers, consumers, and decomposers in maintaining ecological balance, and students learned the benefits of composting and how to create their own compost bins.

The team assisted students in planting lettuces, strawberries, snap peas, carrots, celery, and pansies, and creating personalized garden signs. Students proudly harvested lettuce and spinach, experiencing the fruits of their labor.

We are immensely proud to be part of this grant-funded program, coordinated by Pastor Norman Brown and his dedicated team.

**134**  
**STUDENTS**

Engaged in 2024

# URBAN GARDEN GRANT

The Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation, The City of Columbus, and Franklin County utilize a single application hosted by The Columbus Foundation to maximize funding and material resources to gardens and to provide financial and material resources to re-purpose underused land and to create, continue, or expand community gardens and greenspaces to:

- Increase healthy, affordable, and local food access and education, particularly for people in under-resourced neighborhoods;
- Connect individuals to the life-enhancing benefits of community gardens and greenspaces, including health and wellness, environmental, community building, and beautification.

Due to increased support from the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, Growing to Green awarded **25 Garden Grants** this year, totaling **\$40,000** that directly benefitted local community gardens. Of these, 19 site visits were made to the awarded gardens.

Nonprofit gardening efforts may apply for funding of up to \$1,500 and in-kind product donations of up to \$300 from the Scotts Miracle-Gro Company each year.

## FINANCIAL RESOURCES





## IMPACT METRICS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

### URBAN GARDEN GRANT FINANCIAL IMPACT

The average grant award in 2024 was **\$1,162** and funded raised bed and garden supplies.

Typically, 75 gardens apply for the grant each year, with a 57% increase following the COVID-19 pandemic.

### TOTAL GRANT RECIPIENT PRODUCTION OUTCOMES

Total produce harvested: **41,375 pounds**

Community donations: **32,012 pounds** (77.4% of total)

Number of meals provided: **34,153**

Families fed: **2,050 for 205 days**

Net number of volunteer hours/growing season = **25,151**



## HARVEST AWARDS

The Harvest Awards honored and celebrated the dedication and hard work of Central Ohio communities, organizations, and individuals, with **eight awards** presented in 2024.

Community members played a key role in evaluating the application process, helping to redesign it to reduce barriers and ensure broader representation.

This year's cycle featured a diverse group of judges, award presenters, and recipients, reflecting the inclusive spirit of Growing to Green.

# \$3,500

**Was distributed to awardees  
to continue supporting their exceptional  
gardening, leadership, sustainability  
and collaboration efforts**



