

The Columbus Green Patch

Growing Stronger Together: Rooted in Leadership | [VIEW IN BROWSER](#)

Welcome!

As we move toward the end of the year, we are reflecting on a busy and successful season. While some areas of our work are slowing down, other parts are picking up momentum, and we are grateful for our team's continued commitment and dedication.

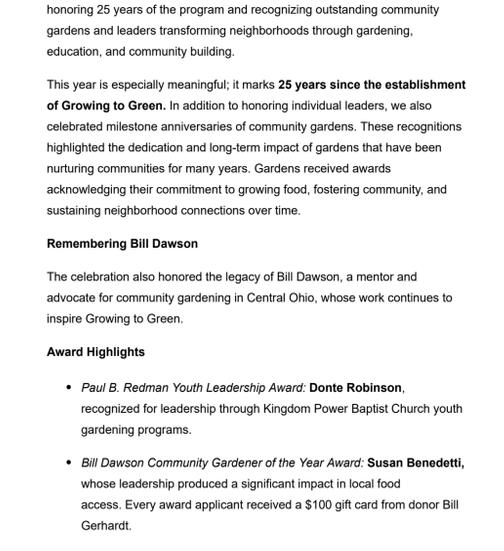
This year, we wrapped up our **community volunteering** for the season, completed **2025 grant recipient garden visits**, and celebrated a successful **Harvest Awards**. We also had an amazing **Near East Side Community Chili Cook-Off Night**, with a record number of chefs and incredible community engagement. Meanwhile, our **community garden plot holders** finished their growing season and tidied their beds in preparation for winter.

Even as these events conclude, new opportunities are underway. We just launched the **Franklin Community Garden Grant**, and our **UGLA sessions** continue strong through November. Our **monthly communal garden series** is happening in November and December, keeping our community connected and engaged.

Looking ahead, we are excited to build on the successes of this year and plan for an even stronger year ahead—thanks to the hard work and passion of all of you who make this work possible.

Growing to Green Team

Looking Back



2025 GROWING TO GREEN HARVEST AWARDS CELEBRATION

On Thursday, October 9, 2025, Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens hosted the 2025 Growing to Green Harvest Awards Celebration, honoring 25 years of the program and recognizing outstanding community gardens and leaders transforming neighborhoods through gardening, education, and community building.

This year is especially meaningful; it marks **25 years since the establishment of Growing to Green**. In addition to honoring individual leaders, we also celebrated milestone anniversaries of community gardens. These recognitions highlighted the dedication and long-term impact of gardens that have been nurturing communities for many years. Gardens received awards acknowledging their commitment to growing food, fostering community, and sustaining neighborhood connections over time.

Remembering Bill Dawson

The celebration also honored the legacy of Bill Dawson, a mentor and advocate for community gardening in Central Ohio, whose work continues to inspire Growing to Green.

Award Highlights

- **Paul B. Redman Youth Leadership Award: Donte Robinson**, recognized for leadership through Kingdom Power Baptist Church youth gardening programs.
- **Bill Dawson Community Gardener of the Year Award: Susan Benedetti**, whose leadership produced a significant impact in local food access. Every award applicant received a \$100 gift card from donor Bill Gerhardt.

Garden Anniversary Recognitions

- Gardens celebrating 5-year, 10-year, 15-year, 20-year, 25-year, and 35-year milestones were recognized for their years of service and contributions to the community. Select milestone gardens received commemorative awards and cash prizes to honor their long-term dedication.

The program's success is supported by partners and sponsors, including Greenscapes Landscape Company, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company, The Hinson Family Trust, The Osteopathic Heritage Foundation (with the Bowden Family), and the Franklin Park Conservatory Women's Board.

We want to say thank you to everyone involved for a successful Harvest Awards Celebration 2025!



TASTE OF THE NEAR EAST AREA CHILI COOK-OFF SOCIAL

The **Near East Area Chili Cook-Off Planning Team** want to thank everyone who supported and participated in this year's event!

This year, the planning team rebranded our gathering as the "**Taste of the Near East Area Chili Cook-Off Social**" to reflect the breadth of the vision—not only to celebrate the camaraderie that community gardening inspires, but also to strengthen the connections between the organizations and businesses that help the Near East Area grow and thrive.

With the generous support of the **Franklin Park Conservatory Women's Board volunteers** and the **Growing to Green Team**, we welcomed over **100 guests** and **11 talented chefs** for our **fourth annual cook-off**. The event brought together community members, partners, and garden leaders who staffed information tables, shared resources, and helped judge a truly impressive lineup of chili dishes.

The night was full of fun, collaboration, and delicious food! The dishes we so well received that we're planning to create an **online Chili Cook-Off Cookbook** to share the recipes and inspire even more chefs to join us next year.

The planning team said, "We are deeply grateful for everyone's continued support and partnership in helping us build a stronger sense of community in the Near East Area—and in highlighting the programs and services offered through **Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens**."

The Conservatory Growing to Green team is honored to partner and support this event, which is inspired and led by the community and our neighbors.

Current Projects

2026 FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMUNITY GARDEN GRANT

Applications open from October 24 - November 24!

- Community Gardens may apply for up to **\$1,500** to support their projects in 2026.
- Awardees will be notified in January 2026.

LEARN MORE & APPLY HERE!

FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMUNITY GARDEN GRANT

The 2026 Franklin County Community Garden Grant is made possible through the support of Franklin County and administered by Franklin Park Conservatory. Central Ohio continues to thrive as a hub for community gardening and urban agriculture. This grant program provides funding to help local groups re-purpose underused land and to create, continue, or expand community gardens and greenspaces.

The goal of the grant program is to increase access to healthy, affordable, and local food particularly for people in under-resourced neighborhoods and to connect individuals to the many life-enhancing benefits of community gardening, including health and wellness, environmental stewardship, community building, and neighborhood beautification.

Nonprofit with community-based gardening efforts are invited to apply for funding of up to \$1,500 to support their projects in 2026.

Learn more [here](#)

[SUBMIT APPLICATION](#)

Additional funding opportunity:

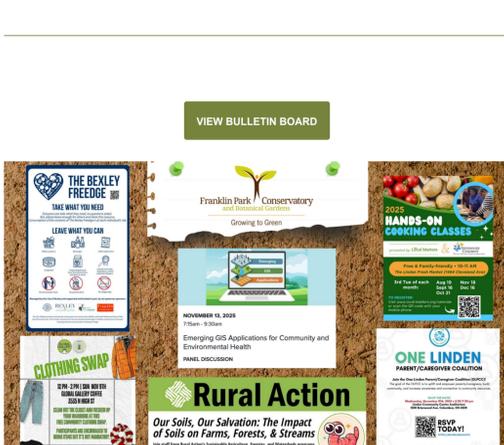
The Columbus Foundation is happy to announce the 2026 Community Garden Grant! This year our funding partners will include the City of Columbus Health Department and Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation.

The 2026 application will launch **January 15, 2026**, and the deadline is **February 15, 2026**, with decisions and payments by **March 4, 2026**.

NOTE: Scotts products will not be part of this year's program. Instead, there will be a separate application to request a \$300 mini grant to help with product purchases.

This mini grant is in addition to the Community Garden Grant, and **gardens may apply for both or just one of two grants**.

Applying for or receiving funding from the [Franklin County Community Garden Grant](#) (due November 24) will not disqualify you from applying for or receiving The Columbus Foundation Community Garden Grant. **Excellent applying for all opportunities**



URBAN GARDEN LEADERSHIP ACADEMY UPDATE

The **Urban Garden Leadership Academy (UGLA)** will be wrapping up its first successful year by the end of this month! Over the past several months, participants have explored topics from garden operations and policy to storytelling, leadership, fundraising, and community collaboration. As we approach the program's final sessions in November, we're celebrating the dedication of our inaugural cohort, garden leaders who continue to grow their impact across Columbus.

Thank You to Our Instructors and Partners

As we near the conclusion of this year's **Urban Garden Leadership Academy**, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks to all the **instructors, partners, and community collaborators** who made this program possible from teaching sessions and facilitating discussions to mentoring our leaders and sharing resources, your contributions have been invaluable. Your time, expertise, and commitment have helped equip our participants with the tools and confidence to lead thriving, resilient community gardens across Columbus.

Stay tuned for highlights from our **graduation celebration** later this month and for details on how to apply for the **next UGLA cohort in 2026!**

Please check out our partners bio in our website [here](#)

FREE COMMUNAL GARDEN CLASS

COMPOST AND HEALTHY SOIL

As the season winds down, it's the perfect time to focus on soil health. This class will cover soil amendment techniques, including composting, mulching, and adding nutrients to prepare your soil for next year's growing season. More experiential learning using our own composting site.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18
6:00 - 7:30 PM | WELLS BARN
1851 E BROAD ST, COLUMBUS, OH 43205

[REGISTER HERE](#)

INSTRUCTOR: DARIEN BLACKWELL, THE COMPOST EXCHANGE

Darien Blackwell graduated from Ohio State University in 2022 and has been living in Columbus for most of her life. With over a year of experience at The Compost Exchange, she is a strong advocate for the efficiency and effectiveness of composting in promoting a healthier environment in Columbus. She is also passionate about engaging and educating all communities about the benefits of composting.

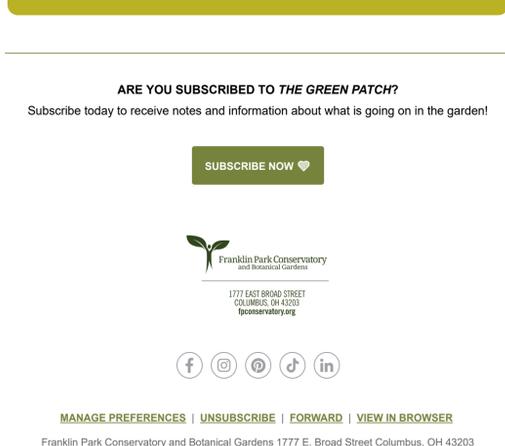
The Communal Garden Class Series is generously supported by a grateful gardener.

COMMUNAL GARDEN CLASS SERIES - COMPOST & HEALTHY SOIL

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[Register Here](#)

VIEW BULLETIN BOARD



Stay Connected With Growing to Green!

Growing to Green is the largest organized effort in Columbus dedicated to supporting and sustaining urban agriculture. For over 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.

[Community Volunteering](#)

[Upcoming Classes](#)

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ARE YOU SUBSCRIBED TO THE GREEN PATCH?

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