Franklin Park Conservatory
and Botanical Gardens

2025
GROWING TO GREEN IMPACT REPORT





Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens

Growing to Green

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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens

Growing to Green



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 2025 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

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.

OUR MISSION

To empower communities through collaboration, education, and leadership —supporting sustainable urban agriculture, strengthening its long-term impact, and amplifying a collective voice for food equity and environmental stewardship.

OUR VISION

We envision a thriving network of urban farms and gardens that promote resilience, learning, and belonging —growing not just plants, but stronger, healthier neighborhoods.



GROWING TO GREEN IMPACT

6,500+

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

44

Garden visits

47

Educational presentations, workshops and hands-on learning experiences



110

Gardens impacted



URBAN GARDEN LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens is proud to announce the launch of the Urban Garden Leadership Academy (UGLA), a new initiative designed to empower, connect, and equip current and emerging leaders in Central Ohio's community gardening and urban agriculture space. Led through the Conservatory's Growing to Green program and developed with contributions from experts across Columbus, OSU Extension, Columbus Public Health, community organizations, and experienced garden leaders, UGLA provides participants with hands-on training, peer learning, and practical tools to strengthen their gardens and deepen their community impact.

The 12-week academy combines interactive workshops, mentorship, and site visits that cover essential topics including garden planning, advanced growing techniques, food systems and policy, community outreach, storytelling and visibility, budgeting, fundraising, and organizational leadership. The academy's inaugural cohort reflects the region's vibrant gardening community: 19 participants representing 15 gardens across Central Ohio, ranging in age from 21 to 78 and bringing a wide range of lived experiences, roles, and leadership aspirations.

With a strong focus on inclusivity, community building, and long-term sustainability, the Urban Garden Leadership Academy is equipping both current and new generation of leaders to strengthen food access, support neighborhood resilience, and create thriving green spaces across Central Ohio.

"What's been most rewarding about my UGLA experience is getting to be in a room of people with such different backgrounds and having the space to bring my own unique experience and abilities to the table."

\- UGLA Graduate





Following its launch in July 2024, the Community Garden Interactive Map became an increasingly valuable tool throughout 2025 for both community engagement and program evaluation. Growing to Green continued to expand and refine the map in partnership with The Ohio State University's Knowledge Exchange and the City of Columbus, increasing participation from community gardens across Central Ohio.

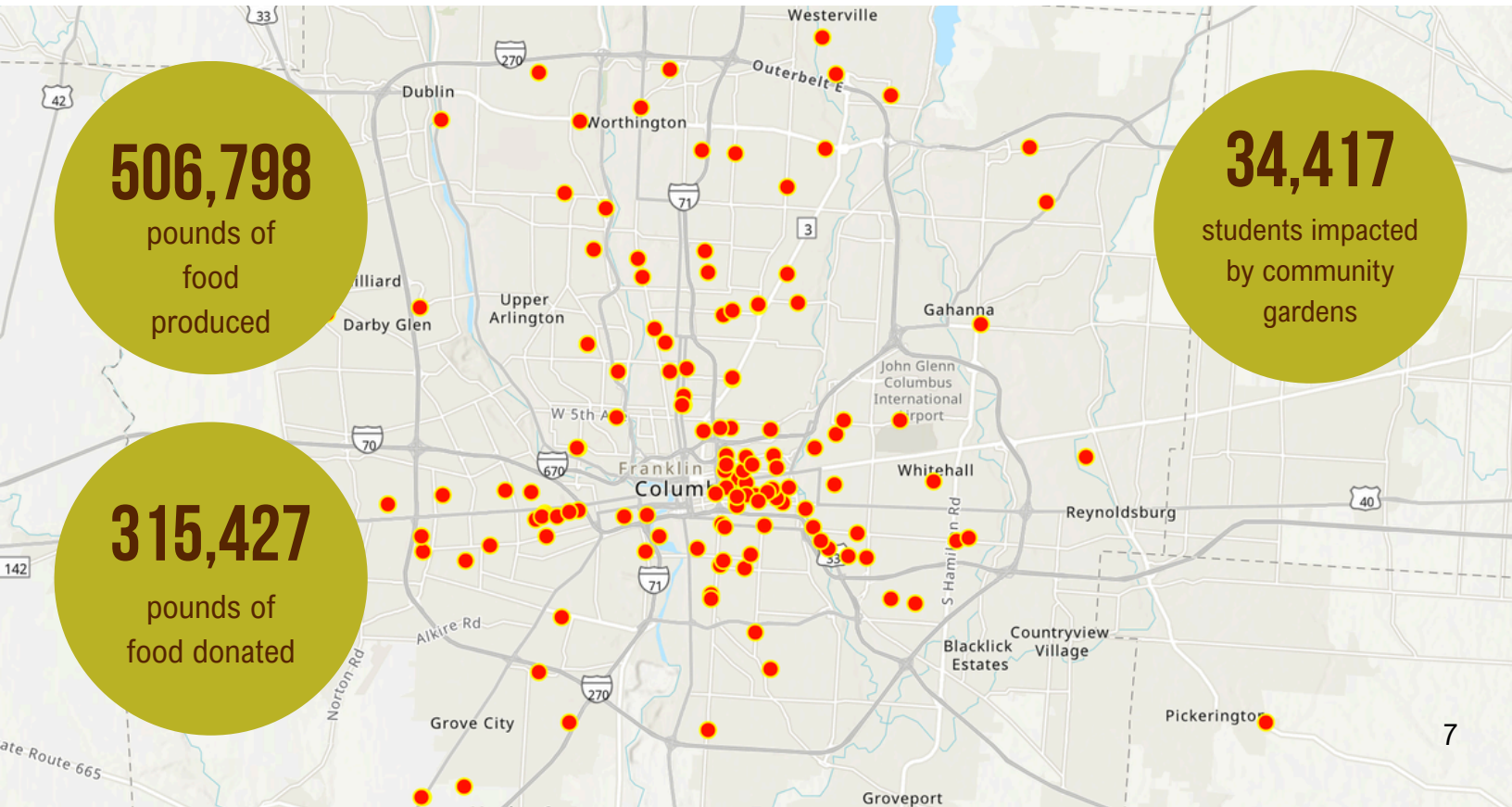
In 2025, the map supported stronger connections between residents, garden leaders, and local food systems while generating actionable data on garden activity, including food production and donation trends. These metrics are already informing program planning, funding conversations, and cross-agency collaboration.

The map currently features

274 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



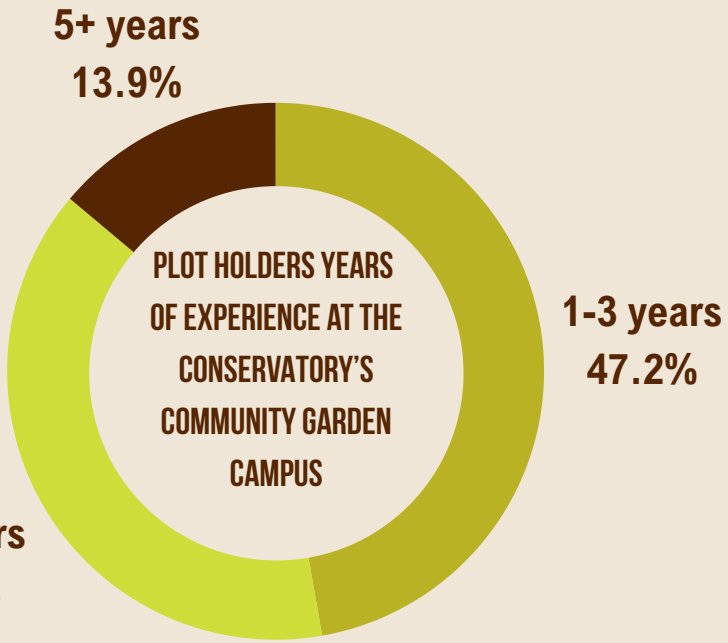
The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company Community Garden Campus (SMGCGC) serves as a model for allotment-style community gardens with 44 annually leased plots.

46

Active plot holders utilize the communtiy garden campus

15

Zip codes represented in the community garden campus



SCOTTS MIRACLE-GRO COMPANY
COMMUNITY GARDEN CAMPUS











TIME IN THE GARDEN

1,150+

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.

141

Volunteers contributed a total of 282+ hours

17

Community gardens hosted volunteer work sessions

VOLUNTEERISM








VOLUNTEER

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.

12

Free educational classes were offered to the public

351

Individuals participated

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

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING



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 **33 Garden Grants** this year, totaling **$40,000** that directly benefitted local community gardens. Of these, 13 site visits were made to the awarded gardens.



FINANCIAL RESOURCES





IMPACT METRICS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

TOTAL GRANT RECIPIENT PRODUCTION OUTCOMES

41,375

Pounds of produce harvested

32,012

Pounds of produce donated (77% of total)

25,151

Net volunteer hours per growing season

2,050

Families fed for 205 days

34,153

Meals provided



HARVEST AWARDS

In celebration of **Growing to Green's 25th anniversary**, the 2025 Harvest Celebration on October 9th was a vibrant tribute to the power of community gardening. The evening spotlighted milestone anniversaries of gardens across the city and honored individuals making a profound difference. **Donte Robinson** received the Paul B. Redman Youth Leadership Award and a $500 award for his inspiring work with Kingdom Power Baptist Church, where he has led efforts to distribute hot meals and fresh produce to families in need. **Susan Benedetti** was named the Bill Dawson Community Gardener of the Year, also receiving $500, in recognition of her leadership at The Garden for All, which produced over 30,000 pounds of fresh food this year alone.

Keynote speaker and esteemed former Councilwoman Priscilla Tyson delivered a powerful address on the City-County Food Plan—one of the nation's first—and the vital role community gardens play in advancing food security. The celebration also recognized newly established gardens and those reaching 5, 10, 15, and 20-year milestones. OSU's Horticultural Therapy Garden at Chadwick Arboretum and St. Dominic Garden each received $500 awards, while Schumacher Gardens, celebrating 25 years of service, was honored with an engraved shovel and a $1,000 award, thanks to the Osteopathic Heritage Foundation and the Bowden family.



