

GARDENING THE COMMUNITY

ANNUAL REPORT
2020



LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Dear friends, I am pleased to be able to announce the release of Gardening the Community's 2020 Annual Report.

We apologize for its late timing. No matter how late though, we thought it important to share with you how we used the investments that you make to GTC.

We take our responsibilities to be accountable to our community very seriously. In addition to the families we serve, that means each of you. We strive to be very good stewards of the resources made available to us. Our accomplishments are your accomplishments.

Without you, we wouldn't be able to feed as many people, support our youth and their families, and pay fair, sustainable wages to our team members.

Please be in touch, if you have any questions?

As always, thank you for making our work possible!!

Looking forward,

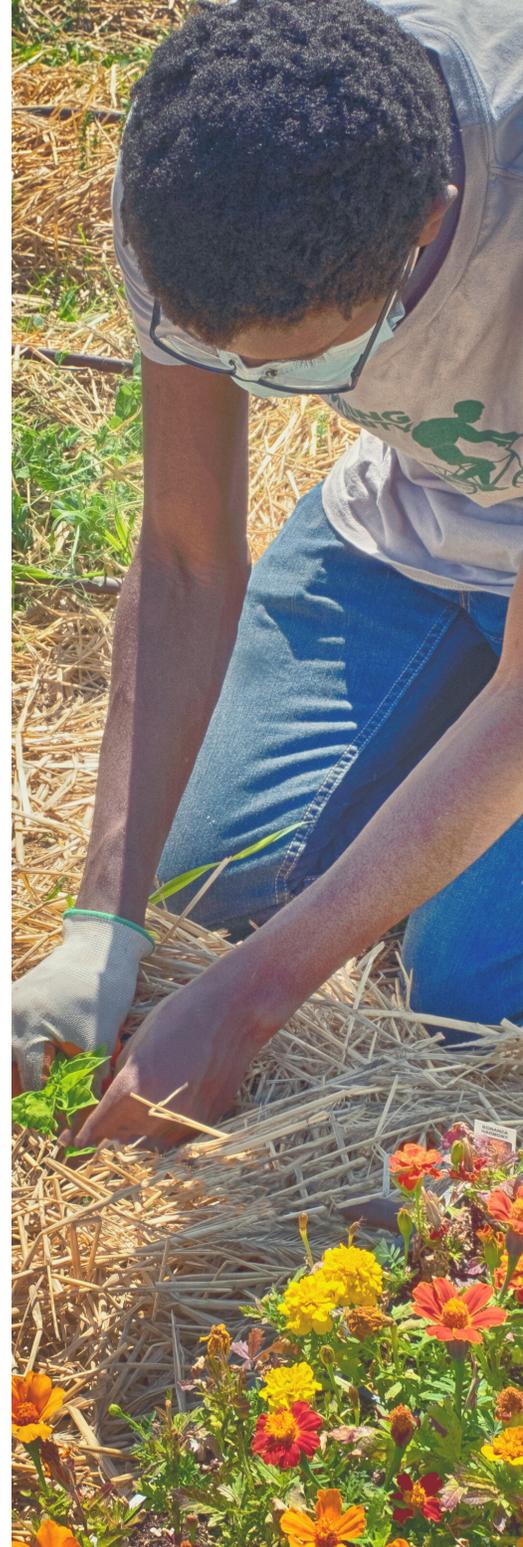


LIZ WILLS-O'GILVIE

Board Chair, Acting Director (pro bono)

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020

In so many ways, 2020 was not what any of us had imagined, but GTC remained resilient. In our 18th year, we continued to lead as one of a handful of Black-led youth farming organizations in New England, and surprisingly, we thrived as we worked through organizational transitions and adapted to the challenges of the year. We saw the need for our programs magnified and we pivoted our programs to continue to support our youth and community. This unprecedented time required changes and shifts to ensure we were keeping safe and meeting some of the most basic needs of our community while navigating conversations with our youth and community members about the ongoing impacts of systemic racism nationally and locally.



Building a just food system that works for all is the overarching framework under which we work. The impact of our work goes far beyond growing vegetables. GTC is contributing to the conversations that seek to change the food-related, preventable root causes of poor health and unjust food systems facing communities (especially low-income communities and communities of color). We are creating locally controlled food resources that build community and offer sustainable, affordable alternatives to Springfield families.

WALNUT STREET FARM STORE

2020 marks the third year of GTC's Walnut Street Farm Store operations, selling both GTC-grown and other locally sourced, pesticide-free produce. Our Farm Store closed its physical space to the public for several months in 2020 out of an abundance of care for the safety of our community during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, we opened a new online storefront (gtcspringfield.square.site), enabling all GTC produce and farm shares to be purchased online for contactless curbside pickup. Our online store allowed us to highlight GTC-grown produce in new ways and engage new customers while keeping our staff, youth, and community safe. Even when in-person shopping was paused, our Farm Store remained open year-round, 3-4 days per week.

47,800

pounds of produce distributed through the Farm Store, GTC EATS! Share program, and free produce bags in response to COVID-19 - that's 162,450 servings of food!

3,243

individual sales transactions

10%

growth in overall sales

70%

growth in SNAP sales (impacted by distribution and use of PEBT cards), serving over 400 families

61%

of total sales to families using SNAP or Farmer's Market Coupons (WIC or Senior)



IMPACT STORY: WWB FREE PRODUCE PROGRAM



2020 saw many Springfield residents losing their jobs and finding bare grocery shelves as our local and national food system felt the impacts of COVID-19. GTC secured one-time emergency funding from the Vervane Foundation and Community Foundation of Western Mass for our Walnut Walk-Up Bag (WWB) program to be able to offer free produce to residents who could no longer afford to shop in our Farm Store as well as to those residents who found themselves without additional means. Over nine weeks, we distributed over 2,000 lbs of produce to an average of 50 families per week, and partnered with other local organizations to reach more families across the greater Springfield area.

100% of respondents reported eating more fruits & vegetables as a result of the WWB program

**9 weeks
450 bags
2,000 lbs of produce**

WALNUT & HANCOCK STREET FARMS

In 2020 we grew over 2,000 pounds of beautiful, pesticide-free fruits and vegetables (including our first ever apple crop, and first mulberries sold in our store!). By practicing soil regeneration, rainwater harvesting (whenever possible), no-till growing, crop rotation, and cover cropping, we integrated traditional, sustainable practices more deeply in our growing. We also upgraded our compost systems, led a large-scale cleanup and overhaul of our two farm sites at Walnut and Hancock Streets, and expanded the amount of usable farm land.



573

pounds of red tomatoes



56

pounds of asparagus



123

pounds of bell peppers



275

pounds of kale



40

pints of mulberries



189

pounds of collard greens



GTC EATS! FARM SHARE PROGRAM

Our GTC EATS! CSA/Farm Share program received a lot of interest, and transitioned to a contactless model to continue to operate market-style pickups on Wednesdays and bagged-to-go pickups on Thursdays. Our bike team also delivered shares to local homebound elders during the summer months. We ran two weekly seasons: a 20-week season for 75 families over the summer and fall, and a 16-week winter season for 25 families from November through March. Thanks to generous sponsorships from Baystate Health and CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture), we were able to offer 54% of our summer members and 72% of our winter members a subsidized price, making it affordable and accessible for local seniors and families with low incomes.

75%

of participants who took or end-of-season survey told us that participating in GTC EATS! increases their knowledge of the health benefits of eating locally grown fruits and vegetables

86%

said that GTC EATS! helped their family eat more fresh fruits and vegetables

100%

said they ate a greater variety and tried more new fresh fruits and vegetables as a result of participating in the farm share program



IMPACT STORY : YOUTH FARM SHARES



COVID-19 made us dig in deeper to ensure GTC's Farm Store is a safe and just space for food access and that our programs truly support youth and their families during the incredible challenges of this time. In 2020, we established a weekly CSA share to support our youth and their families, which offered dignified access to fresh produce as part of their engagement in the program; we plan to continue this program in the years to come. We foresee that our community will continue to be deeply impacted by the pandemic and its ripple effects and are working to ensure we are building a strong team and assets for the community so that we are able to continue to respond to our community's strongest need.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

We engaged 28 Springfield youth on a regular basis in all aspects of GTC's work, including farming, community engagement, running the Farm Store and the Farm Share program, bike delivery to families and markets, and fundraising. Many of our youth in 2020 were in middle school and new to GTC. Senior youth took on major responsibilities at our farms and led other youth during the summer. After a temporary closure to ensure we could operate safely, youth were able to work together in small groups over the summer with mandated face masks and tool sanitation. Unlike in previous years, youth were not able to travel or interact with customers or volunteers the same way, but they still were able to participate in all core program work and activities led by individual outside guests.



YOUTH IN THE COMMUNITY



Several GTC youth shared their experiences and learning at our February in-person event at a local library, “**Through Our Eyes: GTC Youth Speak Out.**” Within the presentation, the youth spoke about what each GTC program does for their communities.



Youth participated all summer in a **weekly woodworking workshop** through a partnership with Make-It Springfield, a community art and tech space. With wood salvaged from trees felled on the GTC sites during storms, youth learned how to use the tools of the trade to craft their own kitchen utensils and more.



Youth transformed the borders and community spaces on our Walnut Street site into incredible native perennial flower beds with the help of the volunteer “Pollinator Team” from the Western Mass Master Gardeners. These beds not only improve the appearance of the site, but provide important green space for beneficial native insects.

SUSTAINABILITY



We love our bikes! Our dedicated youth bike team members delivered farm shares to their neighbors all summer long with contactless porch pickup. That's enough bike miles to go to Boston and back TWICE!

We **doubled our solar capacity** with the addition of our **new pavilion**, bringing our Walnut Street site one step closer to our goal of being entirely self-sufficient. The pavilion is a great space for our youth to relax in the shade and will serve as a community gathering space when it is safe to do so. Thanks to the teams at Northeast Solar and Kent Hicks Construction for making this possible!

BUILDING COMMUNITY

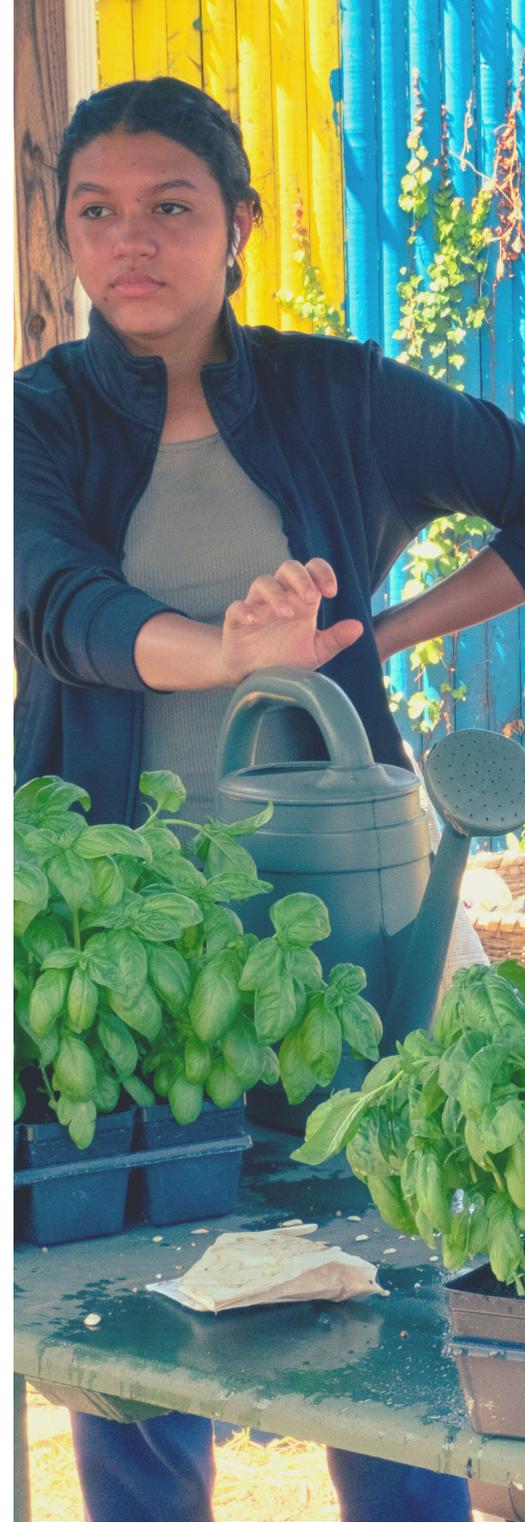


We were unable to offer as many community building activities at the Farm Store due to the Covid-19 pandemic -- our usual tastings, cooking demonstrations and workshops could not be held. However, **we came together in new ways online and through organized, distanced events to continue to build relationships across our community and the wider region whenever we could.** We also offered virtual educational resources around plant care, growing, and harvesting to increase residents' knowledge of how to grow in their own backyards or windowsills. Our expanded social media team also brought additional awareness to our programs and the seasonal offerings at our Farm Store.

PLANT SALE

We held our annual Plant Sale in May with online pre-orders and scheduled pickup times, and saw record sales and customer numbers. Thanks to the generosity of community members and partner farms, we received more donated plants than ever before and were able to sell a greater diversity of items. Our goal of empowering our community members to grow their own food and see the value of healthy produce seemed to have resonated in 2020 perhaps more than other years, and we hope those same community members were able to reap the benefits of their home-grown food, and come back to celebrate with us in years to come.

We also were unable to host our in-person Gardeners' Gathering, but offered virtual educational resources around plant care, growing, and harvesting. We hope to resume hosting a gathering again when it is safe to do so.



FALL HARVEST CELEBRATION

While we missed gathering in person to share food and community, we were still able to celebrate our harvest, congratulate our youth on another year, and highlight fresh fall produce through our farm share pickup-style Fall Harvest Celebration. Our community came together virtually to share their favorite fall recipes, and many generously purchased extra produce which we then donated to local families.

Thanks to Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare and River Valley Co-op for their generous sponsorship of this event - thanks to their partnership, we were able to better publicize our event and donate even more produce to local families!



VOLUNTEERS



Usually during the summer and school months, GTC sees large groups of students (generally 30 or more) or other organizations coming weekly for our **Volunteer Impact Days**. COVID-19 meant the cancellation or reduction of such days, and limited volunteers to small groups on Tuesdays under supervision from our Terra Corps member, Carly. In 2020, we had around 1,800 volunteer hours, and look forward to returning to normal numbers when it is safe to do so.

1,800
volunteer hours in
2020, mostly from
individuals and small
groups

GRATITUDE FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT

While 2020 was a challenging year for us all, we are so honored that this community stepped up to support Gardening the Community. We saw an outpouring of support like never before, as our community came together from near and far in response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the spotlight shone on long-standing racial inequalities in this country. We experienced our largest fundraising campaign in GTC's history, which helped to build the capacity of the organization and leadership as we continued operating all our programs. Thank you for your generosity and belief in the power of food justice and systems change here in Springfield. As always, we have big dreams for the future, and cannot thank you enough for being a part of them!



SPECIAL THANKS

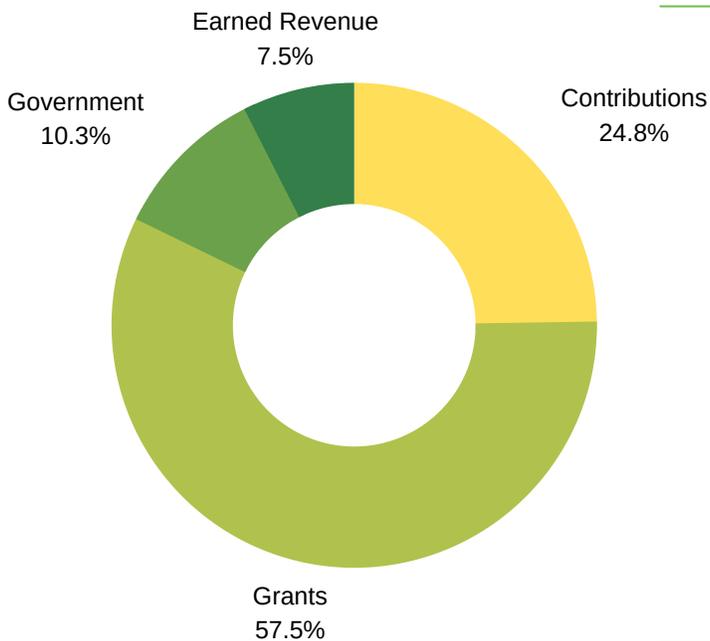
We'd like to extend a special thank-you to the following groups, companies, and individuals:

- **Next Barn Over Farm**, our wonderful growing partner in Hadley that provided produce for our summer farm shares and our free produce bag distribution program
- **Mitchell Machine** and the **City of Springfield** who allow us to farm on their land
- Our **80+ sustainers** who contribute monthly or quarterly to GTC
- Our **amazing donor community** totaling 646 strong who are generous and consistent in their support of our work
- Our **partners, grantors** and **sponsors** in 2020. Your financial support and faith in our work, our youth, and our community have meant so much to us and have helped us grow and thrive. For a full list, visit www.gardeningthecommunity.org/our-partners



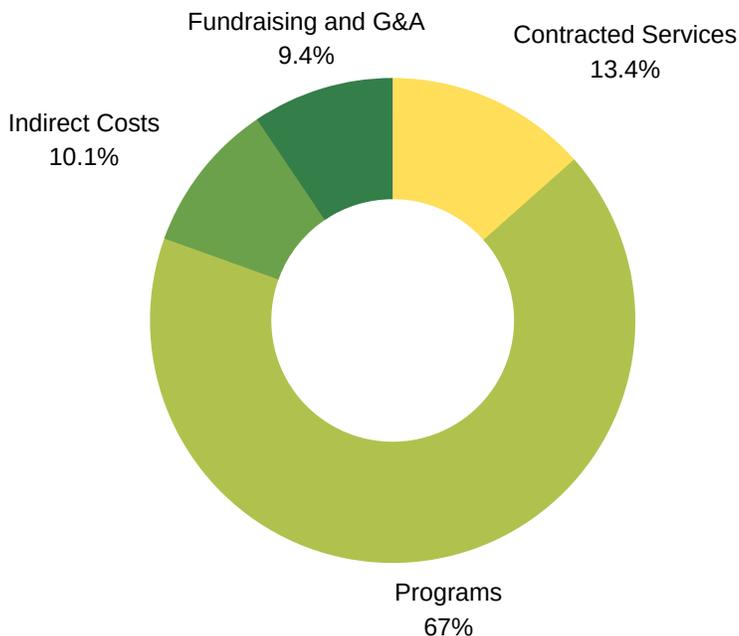
FINANCIALS

GTC experienced another strong year with revenue totaling \$810,246.70. In addition, our contributions grew by 13%! **We ended the fiscal year in a healthy position, with a positive balance of \$209,787.65.**



Total Revenue:
\$810,246.70

- **Contributions:**
\$200,569.26
- **Grants:** \$465,569.80
- **Government:** \$83,456.41
- **Earned Revenue:**
\$60,651.23



Total Expenses: \$

- **Programs:** \$402,592.58
- **Fundraising and G&A:**
\$56,724.88
- **Contracted Services:**
\$80,703.65
- **Indirect Costs:** \$60,437.94



GROWING FOOD, LEADERSHIP, AND COMMUNITY

Contact

Gardening the Community
PO Box 90774
Springfield, MA 01139

www.gtcspringfield.org 
info@gardeningthecommunity.org 
[@gtcspringfield](#) 

GARDENING THE COMMUNITY
ANNUAL REPORT 2020