

# URBAN FOOD INITIATIVES

## 2018 SEASON REPORT



DENVER BOTANIC  
**GARDENS**  
Urban Food Initiatives





## OUR MISSION

Denver Botanic Gardens is committed to increasing access to fresh, healthy food across the metro Denver area and beyond. Over the past few years, the Gardens has built partnerships and expanded capacity to positively impact more and more people through food-based initiatives. This 2018 Season Report offers an overview of the Gardens' Urban Food Initiatives and highlights some recent accomplishments.



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## COMMUNITY SUPPORTING AGRICULTURE PROGRAM (CSA)

The Community Supporting Agriculture (CSA) is a subscription program in which people purchase a share of the farm in winter and pick up the produce harvested each week throughout the growing season.

The CSA grew produce for 330 shares, three of which were donated to Cooking Matters. In 2018 the CSA grew 67,772 pounds of produce on 5.5 acres, including over 100 varieties of 40 different crops. The CSA was able to produce more vegetables and fruits on less acreage in 2018 though an emphasis on soil health, utilizing sustainable practices such as cover cropping with a diverse mix of beneficial plants.

The CSA's impact was expanded this year with one of our 2018 seasonal growers graduating from the Veteran's Program to become our full-time Education Coordinator, and three former seasonal growers establishing the Lakewood Homestead Collective, a cooperative of small-scale female growers.



**13 new  
FARMER GRADUATES**



**IMPACT**







# COMMUNITY

## Mariposa Urban Farm

- This was the fifth season the Gardens managed a community farm and education programs at Mariposa, a Denver Housing Authority (DHA) community just south of downtown.
- 1,825 pounds of produce were grown on .25 acres (mostly raised beds) with a market value of \$8,088.
- New crops included orach (mountain spinach—which was a huge hit ), garlic, Thai basil and multiple seasons of mustard greens.
- Participation increased in Thursday morning food distributions (seeing between 45-60 individuals a week, who in turn share the food with families for an average of about 100 individuals a week).
- Cooking Matters provided cooking demonstrations, and a Gardens volunteer provided information on herb health and culinary tips and benefits.
- A partnership with the Emily Griffith Technical College enabled the HVAC systems in the greenhouse to be fixed, which has allowed more residents to rent one of the mini plots in the greenhouse for year-round growing.
- Next year, in collaboration with Denver Housing Authority, the Gardens will open a new urban farm in the Sun Valley neighborhood.

## Community Garden (near York Street location)

- In 2018, the community garden had 155 individual gardeners growing on 90 plots.
- Nearly two-thirds of the 90 plots are maintained by community members from the Congress Park and Cheesman Park neighborhoods.

## SNAP AND DOUBLE BUCKS

The Gardens’ farm stands have for several years accepted SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits by processing EBT (electronic benefits transfer) card payments onsite.

The total SNAP revenue for this year was **\$887**, down from **\$ 1,110.50** in 2017.

## COOKING DEMOS AND NUTRITION

Cooking Matters continued to be a partner this year in the nutritional and food prep education for the farm stands. They created an incentive program for farm stand customers, who received farm stand gift cards for watching a cooking demo or completing a nutrition class. Almost all gift cards (20) were redeemed, with a total value of **\$190**.

**100 individuals SERVED WEEKLY**



**IMPACT**



## COMMUNITY (CONT.)

### YOUTH AND SHUTTLE PARTNERSHIPS: ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING FOR KIDS (ELK)

The Clinton Family Fund Go2Gardens free shuttle program at Denver Botanic Gardens provided free rides to the Gardens (York Street and Chatfield Farms) from each farm stand location this year. Once a month, farm stand customers had the opportunity to ride to either location and take a free tour or simply visit. A highlight of this inaugural offering was ELK kids and other Montbello neighborhood residents visiting Chatfield Farms and learning how to cook, harvest and eat fresh veggies! The program will run again next season, hopefully attracting more participants now that it is familiar.

### PREPARED SNACKS PILOT WITH WORK OPTIONS FOR WOMEN (WOW)

This year the Gardens piloted a program with the WOW program that teaches at-risk women professional chef skills. The Gardens provided weekly fresh produce, and the WOW program prepped, washed and chopped hundreds of snacks for DHS clients—mostly children waiting in line at DHS to be seen by a case worker. This program was incredibly successful and will run again next year with more snacks distributed to DHS clients. The favorite snack was kohlrabi, because most had never had it before; it was delicious chopped up raw with dip made by WOW.

### DONATED PRODUCE

Overall, the Gardens donated 3,607 pounds of food to local hunger partners, including Mo' Betta Green MarketPlace, Metro Caring, the Sun Valley Kitchen and SAME Café, among others.

### WHOLESALE PRODUCE

The Market Garden grew and sold larger orders for a program run by Boulder County as a part of their outreach dinner series. The Gardens also sold wholesale produce to the Acres at Warren Tech farm and local producer Five Points Fermentation.

#### SUPPORTING PARTNERS



**IMPACT**

**3,607 lbs.**  
**DONATED FOOD**  
To Local Partners







## EDUCATION

### The Veterans Farm Program at Chatfield Farms

This program provides an educational training experience that will redirect as many veterans as possible into healthier lifestyles and, in the long term, meaningful careers.

Now in its fifth year, this partnership with Veterans to Farmers utilizes both Denver Botanic Gardens staff as well as other agriculture professionals to provide participants hands-on training. Participants work not only in the fields at Chatfield Farms but also at other local farms. A variety of topics – from small business management to therapeutic horticulture – are covered to give a holistic approach to farming.

### 2018 DETAILS

- 13 graduates, with 200 training/educational hours for each participant – a total of 2,600 hours for the season.
- Chatfield Farms developed two more partnerships with graduates onsite to help incubate their small business: Forever West Farms and Hampden Farms.
- The Front Range Power Association and Veterans Farm Program graduate Taylor Drew started an ancient grain trial onsite at Chatfield Farms. Grains being produced include emmer, white Sonora wheat, winter wheat, cereal grains and others.
- Family volunteer days, bee-keeping, cooking and canning are among the favorite topics each year.

- The most popular class voted on by participants was grant writing, where participants were able to access extensive resources for potential funding for their farm business.
- Each participant worked at least one busy Union Station Farmer's Market in downtown Denver and was able to get hands-on experience merchandising produce and cut flowers.

### Beginning Market Farming Certificate

- The program completed its third year; its first year in collaboration with Colorado State University (CSU) Extension Denver County.
- The program ran from February - October, and included 18 students from metro Denver, Byers, Castlerock, Windsor and Summit County.
- Students attended a series of lectures and hands-on workshops throughout the season taught by Denver Botanic Gardens and CSU staff as well as area farmers. Workshops are held on farms to expose participants to as many different farming models as possible.
- 2018-2019 cohort started at the end of October and will run through August of 2019; there are currently 14 students, some of whom are participating in an incubator farm project with GoFarm and Sprout City Farms.
- A new initiative seeks to include aspects of the class online to reach a wider audience.







# FARM STANDS & MARKETS

The farm stand provides fresh fruit, vegetables and other farm products to various audiences throughout Denver. To ensure distribution in diverse communities, the Gardens partnered with Denver Human Services and the City of Denver. The program has evolved from a strict food-desert model to more of a healthy-food access program that serves a much wider audience.

## 2018 Farm Stands:

The Gardens operated four weekly markets throughout Denver selling produce grown at a 1.5-acre Market Garden at Chatfield Farms. Two markets were hosted by Denver Human Services in Montbello and the Sun Valley neighborhoods. The City of Denver hosted a market downtown at the Wellington Webb Building. And a fourth market was part of the Union Station Farmer’s Market every Saturday, managed by Boulder County Farmer’s Market. The first farm stand started at the end of May and ran until the end of October, for a total of **21 weeks**.

## The Market Garden

The Market Garden at Chatfield Farms grew more than **28 types of vegetables, eight types of fruit and several varieties of each crop**. The highest producing crop this year were potatoes, with the red Norland potato having the highest yield of the four varieties grown. The addition of a walk-behind tractor/tiller in 2018 helped increase overall production from 2017. Total volume harvested this year was **18,856 pounds**. **The 2017 total was 12,000 pounds.**

## Variety of produce grown for markets

Beets	Kohlrabi
Bok choi	Melons
Broccoli	Onion
Broccoli (baby)	Okra
Cabbage	Peas
Carrots	Pepper (hot)
Collard	Pepper (sweet)
Corn	Potato
Cucumber	Radish
Eggplant	Strawberry
Garlic	Tomato
Green beans	Tomato (cherry)
Green onion	Turnip
Greens (arugula)	Winter squash
Greens (salad mix)	Zucchini
Greens (spinach)	





## PARTNERS

- City of Denver
- Colorado Farmers Market Association
- Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund
- Colorado State University Extension, Denver
- Cooking Matters – Share our Strength
- Denver Extension
- Denver Housing Authority
- Denver Human Services
- Environmental Learning for Kids
- Individual Donors
- Livewell Colorado – Double Up Food Bucks Colorado
- Mile High Farmers
- Mo’ Beta Green Marketplace
- Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
- SAME Café
- The Denver Foundation
- United Healthcare Services
- Veterans to Farmers







For more information about our programs, contact [urbanfood@botanicgardens.org](mailto:urbanfood@botanicgardens.org)

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[botanicgardens.org/food](http://botanicgardens.org/food)