



2017 YEAR IN REVIEW



MOBILE CLASSROOM

16 SITES & 987 STUDENTS

"Every community, no matter what size, location, race or socio-economic level, has the ability to encourage mental and physical well being through growing and eating delicious food together."

-Maaike Baker, M.C. Coordinator



COMMUNITY MARKET

\$2,500+ IN SALES

In 2017, the Community Market served the Madison Community by providing farm-fresh organic produce for sale to neighbors. 45% of the year's sales were from the 49507 neighborhood.



GROUP SERVICE LEARNING

31 GROUPS / 1,094 HOURS

"Seeing food grown with your own eyes and working with your hands connects people to something they don't even know they're missing. Food is such a fundamentally important thing and an amazing platform to build community and connect people."

-Jenny Bongiorno, Program Director



WORKSHOPS

8 WORKSHOPS / 127 PEOPLE

Workshops inspire people to live out our mission through comprehensive, place-based education on our farm. These donation-based classes are accessible and equitable for all of our neighbors.



COMMUNITY FARM

2 YEARS OF PRODUCTION

The Community Farm and Education Center expanded this year to include the community market, a learning garden, a conference room, a greenhouse, compost bays, and a shed for storage. Additionally, over 2,500 pounds of food was grown in 2017 on our site.



YOUTH CORPS

4 STUDENTS / 1,080 HOURS

4 immigrant/refugee youth were hired to work on the farm for 12 weeks this summer in partnership with the Center for Community Transformation. While working on farm operations, they gained valuable work experience and practical life skills in a supportive environment.



YOUR COMPOST

37 MEMBERS / 10,000+ LBS.

Launched in April 2017, YOUR Compost is a bike-powered, residential compost collection service. The program has expanded significantly since its start, and even serves some commercial clients like Ferris Coffee.



VOLUNTEERS

10 PEOPLE / 881 HOURS

Our weekly volunteers invest very valuable time into farm operations and capacity building at Urban Roots. Additionally, 32 drop-in volunteers worked for 111 hours.



URBAN ROOTS



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Planted in the late fall, garlic is actually my favorite crop to grow. Though we enjoy its flavor all season long, many people do not realize that it is actually the amazing root growth in the fall and winter that allows the aromatic allium to bloom in the early summer months. At the end of a growing season at Urban Roots, we take the opportunity to put down our roots for the new year. We breathe deeply, reflect on the bounty of the year, and diligently begin digging in for our next year.

One of the intentional growing methods we use at Urban Roots is a method called "double digging." It is a physically difficult method of soil preparation used for many generations to prepare growing beds down deep in the soil below. I remember the first time I ever double dug a bed by hand; the task felt insurmountable. It was one of those absolutely daunting endeavors that I barely finished. Later in the season, following that long and intensive process, I was absolutely astounded by the yield. Since then, I have prepared many more beds by hand, each time holding fast to the fact that despite the laborious deep soil preparation, the reward of honest and authentic yield is so much greater on the other side of that work.

At Urban Roots, the past three years have been about deep soil preparation - both literal and metaphorical. Our investment in and intentional cultivation of relationships, ideas, places and community has sometimes been seen and sometimes not, but recently it has begun to bring forth a beautiful harvest. As I reflect on 2017, I am humbled and astounded at the way the roots of plants and people alike have dug in:

We launched the YOUR Compost program; capturing more than 5 tons of food waste from homes and businesses all over Grand Rapids and returning them to productive organic compost.

We partnered with 16 different organizational gardens, beginning to develop a sharing garden model for growing food together that builds on the beauty of traditional community gardens and augments it with tools, methods, and strategies to address common problems.

We launched the Community Market, selling fruits and vegetables from our community farm directly to our Madison Neighbors at discounted prices to increase food access in a food insecure neighborhood.

In partnership with Grove Restaurant, we hosted our first ever Supper Club event - an absolutely lovely evening of people, food, music, and drinks at the community farm. To say it was magical is an understatement; it was the reason we exist at all.

While still a young organization, the past season has been an incredible year of harvest for Urban Roots. In produce, relationships, and ideas; the intention, creativity, and dedication of a wonderful group of beings has begun to yield 10 times its original investment.

During this fall season, may you find yourself cultivating the soil of your own lives and putting down deep and strong roots. Please continue to join us at Urban Roots in digging deep, developing strong roots, and cultivating our mission in the Grand Rapids Community in the seasons to come.

Warmly,

Levi Gardner

GROW. EAT. LEARN.

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