Backyard Garden Program

Founded in 2010 and our flagship program, the Backyard Garden Program provides low-to moderate-income families in Gloucester with a 4'x8' raised bed garden, training, seeds and seedlings, and mentor support for two years to empower them to become lifelong gardeners. In 2018, we focused on serving low-to moderate-income older adults through this program.

Standout feedback from 2018 annual gardener survey:

As a direct result of their gardens:

➔ 86% agree they spend less money on food
➔ 79% agree they spend more time outside
➔ 79% agree they feel more strongly that it is important to eat healthy food

Some of the awesome things our gardeners are learning:

● “I've been trying to garden earlier in the spring and later in the fall because I love it so much!”
● “Family and friends- grand kids [through] great grandmother are delighted by the garden. Often ask to pick herbs and veggies to take home.”
● “I've learned what we grow better and I will increase my production next year.”

“Thank you so much for building a growing bin for my Dad after my Mom passed away; he has enjoyed many, many moments out there and we even had his 91st birthday around his Backyard Growers garden!”

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Community Garden Program

The Community Garden Program consists of two types of community gardens: 1) a garden in which community members are given individual plots to grow their own food and 2) a garden in which a partner organization distributes the produce to its members either directly or through meals and. In both cases, BYG provides the beds, technical support and different levels of programming. In some cases, BYG additionally maintains the planting and harvesting schedule.

9 community gardens
100 garden beds
serving over 300 people

Standout feedback from the 2018 annual gardener survey:

As a direct result of their gardens:
→ 92% agree they eat more fresh vegetables
→ 83% agree they spend less money on food
→ 69% agree they feel more strongly that it’s important to eat healthy food

How did participants eating habits change?

• “I enjoyed walking to Burnham’s Field and creating a menu based on what was ripe and available to harvest. It was a pleasure and a culinary experience to enjoy vegetables less than a couple of hours from the soil.”
• “I have had to explore different recipes for eggplant and kale which I have a lot of!”
• “We eat more fresh vegetables during our harvest season and more of a variety, too”

“My family loves fresh [veggies.] [They are] expensive so we don’t eat [them] as much as we like. But with the garden we had plenty. I even froze some for the winter for soups.”
Community Outreach Programs

Our community programs reach far beyond the gardeners in our Backyard and Community Garden programs. Each year we engage our community members across the North Shore through workshops, trainings, seasonal recipe demonstrations and participating in local events. Our volunteers, interns and Mentors help us expand our reach, and are our BYG ambassadors to the community.

In 2018, we held 67 workshops, trainings, recipe demonstrations or seasonal events that engaged 820* community members, 235* of whom were older adults

*duplicated number

Feedback from our gardeners:

● “I loved learning how to grow different vegetables, when [they’re] ripe, how much space they require. I’m still fairly new to growing but enjoy getting better at it each year. Sarah was our gardens volunteer for most of the season and she was kind, informative, and always helpful.”

● “Moving here near two years [ago] BYG has given us a very gentle entre into the community with the classes and other groups associated with.”

● “My mentor called me after doing garden checks. I found that the square foot gardening was effective.”

From a baking workshop participant:

“Amazing recipes, my kids eating veggies with joy is the best!!”

In 2018, we had
3 COOKING WORKSHOPS
and 2 BAKING WORKSHOPS
engaging 68 older adults, adults, and children in seasonal, veggie-forward recipes

Volunteers by the numbers:

100 volunteers total
11 year-round Mentors
10 seasonal interns
1,300 hours of volunteer help (& counting!)

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School Garden Program

BYG manages gardens at every public school in Gloucester and the local Pathways for Children, totaling 9 locations. BYG uses these gardens for our signature Salad Days and Fall Harvest Day programs; 100% of Gloucester Public Schools’ Pre-K through 7th grade students participate in planting, harvesting and eating two vegetable or grain crops each year. At O’Maley Innovation Middle School and Gloucester High School, BYG facilitates in-class curriculum focused on food systems and growing your own food.

**During the 2017-2018 school year:**

- **9 school garden locations** in Gloucester, totaling **74 raised beds**
- Harvested over **1200 lbs of vegetables and grains** from school gardens!
- Led programming with over **2000 students**!

**School Programs:**

- Salad Days Picnic & Stone Soup at the Gloucester Preschool and Pathways for Children
- Salad Days and Fall Harvest Days programs at all five of Gloucester’s public elementary schools
- Food systems and plant science lessons with the 1st graders at all five of Gloucester’s public elementary schools
- 6th grade popcorn science project
- 7th grade wheat & civilization social studies project
- Gloucester High School (GHS) Ecology garden extension visits
- GHS Culinary Farm to Table Project
- Gloucester Farm to School: Collaborated with The Open Door and GPSD to increase fresh and local produce in schools through regular monthly Harvest of the Month taste tests

*What the kids are saying:*

"I don't even like carrots but these are delicious!"

"My son came home and told me to grow kale and gave me a recipe for kale chips"

"Mom, instead of pizza tonight can we have lettuce?"

"I tried it today in school and I changed my mind about hating lettuce!"

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Get-a-Garden, Give-a-Garden Program

The Get-a-Garden, Give-a-Garden Program provides garden beds for families in Cape Ann who do not qualify for our Backyard Garden Program. The funds from this program provide a garden for the family participating in the Get-a-Garden, Give-a-Garden program as well as a participant in the Backyard Garden Program.

10 families participated in the Get-a-Garden, Give-a-Garden program in 2018 raising $3,630 for gardens for low-to moderate-income families in Gloucester.

School Consulting

In 2016 we began consulting with other nonprofits and school districts so teach them our Salad Days and Fall Harvest Day school garden model. This model allows students to plant, harvest and taste seasonal vegetables in the spring and fall, and makes growing your own food part of the culture of each school community.

As of December 2018, this program is now replicated at:

- Essex Elementary School
- Manchester Memorial Elementary School
- Rockport Elementary School
- Chicopee Public Schools
- Coffin and Gerry Schools in Marblehead
- Lynn Public Schools
- Glen Urquhart School

In 2017-2018, this program gave nearly 4,000 students the opportunity to grow and eat their own food!