



THE GARDEN DISTRICT
ESTABLISHED 2020



2023

IMPACT REPORT



CONTENTS

03

A WORD FROM THE
PRESIDENT & FOUNDER

04

ABOUT THE GARDEN DISTRICT

08

MAIN RESIDENTIAL GARDEN

09

BEXLEY COMMUNITY GARDEN

11

WEXNER HERITAGE
ROOFTOP GARDEN

13

BERWICK ALTERNATIVE
COMMUNITY GARDEN

16

LSS CHAMPION COMMUNITY GARDEN

17

STODDART AVENUE COMMUNITY
GARDEN & KIMBALL URBAN FARMS

18

FINANCIALS

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT & FOUNDER

This year the Garden District has blossomed into a transformative initiative within our community of Central Ohio. Our focus is on producing healthy and hyperlocal food, establishing significant interdependent communities, and connecting this food to the community through sustainable urban agriculture. Though we are a grassroots volunteer organization of a small dedicated team, the impact has exceeded beyond the ripple of our drop of water in the complex food system.

We have cultivated underutilized space, reimagined existing gardens, and provided support to our partner community gardens. Although each garden is uniquely different, all of them foster our love, our joyous laughter, and compassion.

I look forward to each weekday morning with a practice of fostering the earth, sharing stories, and spending time with who I have dubbed “The A-Team”.

-Take care of yourself and someone else if you can.

SEAN MCKAY
PRESIDENT & FOUNDER





SUSAN, A-TEAM VOLUNTEER, HARVESTING SUNCHOKES

ABOUT GARDEN DISTRICT

BY SEAN M MCKAY

The Garden District first began as a Berwick backyard garden producing too much food for a two-person household. **700** pounds were donated the first year and now has flourished into a volunteer community garden program that is a collection of **7** residential giving gardens and community gardens, supplementing food pantries and local communities with sustainably grown and harvested fresh produce. We strive to nourish our community, strengthen our bond with nature, and decrease food insecurity. The Garden District is a LGBTQAI+ led 501(c)3 organization and prides itself as a safe space for all.

Research shows that “The benefits of community-based gardening projects likely extend beyond food security, as gardens provide fresh vegetables, and the process of gardening involves physical exercise. Community gardens contribute to community wellbeing by influencing the nutritional and social environment.” (Carney & Hamada, 2011; Egli, Oliver & Tautolo, 2016).

“Garden District makes local fresh food accessible to the community. They encourage participants to try new things. Whether its a food demonstration and sampling or a basket full of fresh herbs donated to the pantry, Garden District makes connections.”

-Jennifer Fralic, LSS Director of Operations



OUR FREE FARMSTAND WITH STAFF AND STUDENTS TAKING HOME SOME GOODIES

6,407

people directly impacted by food pantry clients, community garden members, programs, plant swaps, organizational partners, volunteers, garden advocacy, and students.

3,659

lbs of produce

580

seedlings donated

842

youth directly impacted

128

varieties of produce grown



"Partnering with the Garden District was an amazing experience. They saw a need in their Berwick community and helped develop a plan to cultivate back to life. From the working with the students to offering fresh produce at a weekly farmstand, so many people have benefited from this garden."

- Katie Young, Columbus City School Farm to School Coordinator

1,017

volunteer hours recorded by our A-Team with a value of the volunteer time of **\$32,340.06**

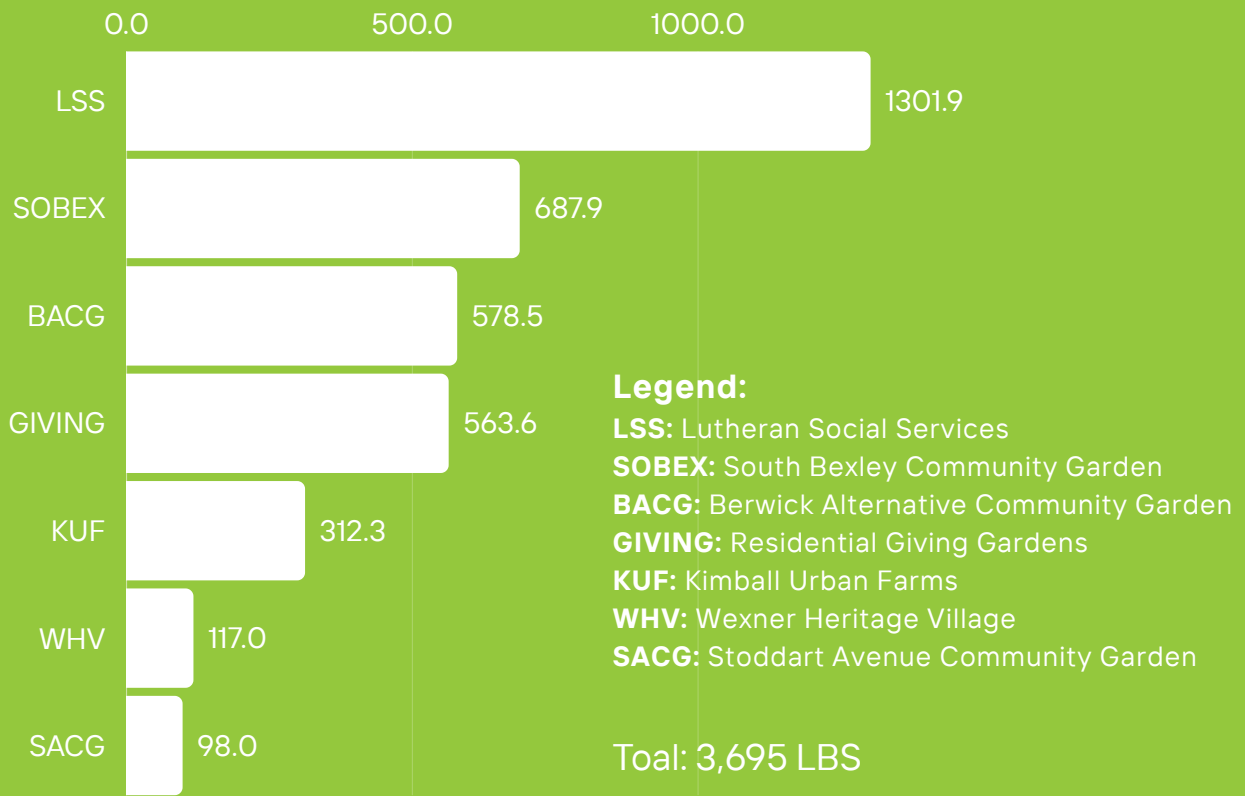
77

volunteers helped make this possible

102

visits to the food pantry

Garden Production



MAIN RESIDENTIAL GARDEN



15.4%

Of the produce was grown in residential giving gardens

Located in the backyard of 1311 College Avenue, an educational food forest of **83** varieties of perennial edible crops are grown producing over **495** lbs of produce donated to Lutheran Social Services Food Pantry. This is a noticeably lower amount than previous years, because the garden was transformed into an educational demonstration space. Much of the what was harvested was lightweight produce such as herbs and greens.

On site is our administrative office and a germination station with **32** grow lights, starting more than **75%** of our plants in the spring. Attached to the food forest is a perennial cut flower garden with over **1400** spring bulbs, summer, and fall perennials. Over **1000** of the cut flowers were donated to residents at Wexner Heritage Village, a partner organization for the past **3** years.



ENTRANCE INTO THE EDUCATIONAL DEMONSTRATION PERMACULTURE FOOD FOREST

SOUTH BEXLEY COMMUNITY GARDEN

”The Garden District is an integral part of the Bexley Community Garden Giving Gardens. The passion and dedication, found in the gardens is inspiring to so many others. We are so grateful for the partnership.” -Mary McMunn, Bexley Community Garden Leadership Team

Giving Gardens

Every Monday morning, the team planted, weeded, watered, harvested, and processed the produce grown in the garden. **687.9** pounds of produce were donated.

Although, South Bexley Community Gardens (SOBEX) are an annually-leased style garden, they provide specific beds that are allocated as ‘giving gardens’ to help supplement food pantries. The gardens are part of the City of Bexley Recreation and Parks Department and are open for anyone to join. This is the second year The Garden District has been leading the initiative since 2021.



MONDAY WORKDAYS AT SOUTH BEXLEY COMMUNITY GARDEN

CHILDREN'S GARDEN CLUB

South Bexley Community Garden

In partnership with the Bexley Community Garden leadership team, the Garden District provided a pilot Children's Garden Club at South Bexley Community Garden in the children's garden plot. Artistic and educational activities such as watercolor painting, storytimes, planting potatoes, and tastings were provided led by our Art and Education Director, Susan Couden.

"We are fortunate to have the Garden District as an educational resource for our own residential garden in Berwick and grateful for this nonprofit within the neighborhood to donate extra produce and help others in the community."

- Jenna Janda, Berwick neighbor



CHILDREN GARDEN CLUB PARTICIPANTS LOOKING AT THE EYES OF A POTATO

WEXNER HERITAGE VILLAGE

Rooftop Garden

In the spring of 2023, a unique partnership was forged with the Garden District Corporation and Wexner Heritage Village (WHV). On the WHV campus, there was an underutilized, spacious rooftop patio with **18** empty raised beds and **42** clay pots in need of the love and attention. The Garden District stepped in by revitalizing this outdoor location. With a combination of our collective volunteers, WHV and the Garden District have transformed the rooftop patio into a garden oasis.

"Our partnership with the Garden District has been transformative at Wexner Heritage Village. They skillfully helped us create a garden that has provided beauty & respite for patients, their families and our staff. Their talented, caring gardeners have brought such joy to Wexner Heritage Village and we are so grateful!"

- Tracey Ballas, WHV Volunteer Coordinator



INVITING A NEW VOLUNTEER TO HELP HARVEST AT THE WHV ROOFTOP GARDEN

WEXNER HERITAGE ROOFTOP GARDEN

The WHV rooftop garden now offers a place for outdoor respite for WHV residents, visitors, and staff. The garden yields plentiful weekly harvests of vegetables, herbs, and flowers. The bounty is shared with WHV staff and partnered with Jewish Family Services, another community agency that distributes the fresh produce to Holocaust survivors, refugees new to Columbus and other clients that are experiencing food insecurity. Together we have cultivated so much more than a garden. We created a place of beauty where nature provides healing and rejuvenation. In addition, we helped our seniors reengage with community volunteers and experience renewed purpose through the meaningful work of cultivating a garden that nourishes the mind, body, and spirit of those facing food insecurity in our own backyard.



NATIVE TREE PLANTING TO CELEBRATE THE VOLUNTEERS OF WEXNER HERITAGE VILLAGE



BERWICK STUDENTS GETTING THEIR HANDS DIRTY AND PLANTING POTATOES

BERWICK ALTERNATIVE K-8 SCHOOL

Berwick Alternative Community Garden

First installed in 2015, Berwick Alternative Community Garden (BACG) is a great space for the students to explore and observe the world of nature through gardening. Since the raised beds began to rot and fall apart. The Garden District redesigned, raised funds, and partnered with Columbus City Schools Farm to School Program to revitalize the space into a mixed use community garden with raised beds for students, communal space, and allotment plots for growing.

Weekly Free Farmstand

Produce grown in the gardens was distributed to students, community members, and school staff through a free weekly farmstand. The Garden District provided a pop-up tent with baskets of **578.5** lbs produce over **8** Wednesday evenings. Produce that was left over was taken to LSS Food Pantry.

"The Berwick Alternative Community Garden has truly been turned into a gem in our Berwick community."
- Keith Jorgensen, Berwick Teacher



STUDENTS PLANTING POTATOES REACHING UP TO THE SUN TO GROW BIGGER



PRINCIPAL MITCHELL VISITING THE FREE FARMSTAND

2023 GROWING TO GREEN HARVEST AWARDS NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Growing to Green Harvest Awards honor and celebrate the dedication and hard work of many Central Ohio communities, organizations, and individuals. Thank you Franklin Park Conservatory & Botanical Gardens for this opportunity. Berwick Alternative Community Garden received the Neighborhood Improvement Award nominated by Keith Jorgensen. The school was also awarded **\$250** to help sustain a new garden club.



CCS TEACHER, MRS. LYLE, ACCEPTING THE AWARD AT THE CEREMONY

LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES FOOD PANTRY

LSS Champion Community Garden

The Champion Community Garden broke ground in 2023 and exists to provide fresh, locally-grown and healthy produce to its community on the South Side of Columbus and through the LSS Champion Food Pantry. It also serves as a space to empower families with knowledge, skills, and capacity to grow, prepare, and provide healthy, nutritious food in their own back yards and homes. The Garden District weekly harvested **1301.9** lbs produce from the 12 raised beds, which is then donated directly to supplement the LSS Champion Food Pantry.

"The Garden District makes our neighborhoods healthier! Seeing our participants' faces light up when they see fresh, locally-grown food available at our pantry means the world!"

- Joel Call, Director of LSS Food Pantries



SUSAN HARVESTING COLLARDS AT THE LSS CHAMPION GARDEN



STODDART AVENUE COMMUNITY GARDEN

This community garden is established on a City of Columbus Landbank property in 2009. It is an in-ground allotment-style garden. The Garden District maintained a rather large communal herb garden. It produced **98** lbs of produce. This garden grows the bulk of one of our favorite herbs, lemon balm.

KIMBALL URBAN FARMS

On the other side of Stoddart Avenue Community Garden sits an urban farm started in 2014, called Kimball Urban Farms. They share a fence and gate. The Garden District obtained one long raised bed and harvested **312** lbs of produce from it.

"Here we see a dream of multigenerational involvement and community impact. People are reveling in the fruits of their labor. It's happening!"
- Susan Couden, A-Team



SPRING WORKDAY WITH SOME NEW VOLUNTEERS

Financials:

\$6,273.32

funds raised in 2023

\$5,414.69

funds spent in 2023

\$2,292.58

funds for 2024



THANK YOU FOR ALL OF THE SUPPORT

The Garden District is funded through multiple avenues:

The Urban Garden Grant through the Columbus Foundation and City of Columbus

Seedmoney, a crowdfunding platform in the month of November.

Mini-Grant from Greater Columbus Growing Coalition.

The Beck Foundation gave a donation to help install Berwick Community Garden.

Club Diversity, hosts piano fundraisers and contributes in-kind donations.

In-kind donations from friends, family, and community members. Thank you for supporting our organization.

BLOWING BUBBLES AT THE GARDEN DISTRICT OUTREACH DURING THE BEXLEY LOVE YOUR ALLEY FESTIVAL