



2023 Annual Report

Our Mission:

To cultivate environmental stewardship through hands-on garden and food education for urban children & their communities.



www.greenthumbsto.org



Monarch butterfly on Tithonia at Sprucecourt School Garden

From Our Board Chair

As board chair since 2022 I have gained an immense appreciation for Green Thumbs Growing Kids. In 2024, GTGK celebrates 25 years! I am grateful to everyone who has been a part of Green Thumbs Growing Kids to make it the success it is today. To the staff, volunteers, students, teachers, coordinators, donors, funders, sponsors, collaborators, and community.

Thank you. Without your support this would not be possible. I can truly see a future with a “Garden in Every School”.

With utmost gratitude,
Charlene Lord, Board Chair



From Our Executive Director



I am always grateful for the opportunity to plant with children, even though most of my time goes to creating the conditions for others to do this, especially Indigenous, Black and educators of colour. The magic of the garden moves the children like it moved me, and I remember the first time I collected seed from marigolds and fragrant mint from a little shade garden. Connecting to that part of ourselves, that some call biophilia, is the greatest gift. After all, life itself is a time-limited opportunity, for humans and all our relations. May we use our days well, and cultivate an ethic of care.

Thanks to an amazing team at the staff level and all of the wonderful board members who gave not just their time but their passion and commitment to a better world.

Sunday Harrison, Founder and Executive Director

Year in Review

We had 3,611 participant opportunities for children, 69 for youth and 417 for adults, in over 227 program hours.

We were joined by 17 placement students who contributed over 250 hours of program delivery and development.

We planted 1,145 native tree seeds with 434 students.

63 teachers and program leaders booked our programs.



Thanks Sophie Mihevc
for the graphic design!

Green Thumbs UP

We expanded our green roof garden on top of Daniels Spectrum to **1,600 sq ft** of growing space, including four vegetable beds, two native flower patches, one sunflower patch (which grew over 12 ft tall!), a Three Sisters garden, and a medicine garden.

We grew over **400lbs** of produce, which was over **1,200 units** of produce brought to the Cabbagetown market or donated to local organization Mothers of Peace. The development of the green roof garden was generously funded by the Investment Readiness Program of the Toronto Community Foundation.



Tomatoes (L), Scarlett Runner Beans and Mammoth Sunflowers (R) from the rooftop

Program Highlights

We returned to the Allan Gardens Children's Conservatory this spring after a Covid hiatus, where classes got to start their own seeds in the greenhouse and learn all about how plants grow.

We introduced new programming for Indigenous Peoples Day in June, including storytelling, braiding Sweetgrass, and planting a Three Sisters garden.

We continued our Trees From Seed program, with new or expanded tree nursery locations at all of our school garden sites. We even got to try Pawpaw popsicles while planting our own Pawpaw seeds! Thanks to the City of Toronto's Urban Forestry Department!

Our Urban Roots Youth after-school program's spring and fall cohorts helped with seed starting, garden prep, planting, harvesting, seed saving, cooking, garden crafts and more.

To sum it all up with a quote from one of our participants:
"I can't wait to be back next year!"

School Gardens Land Back

This year, we increased our offerings to include a daytime training program, enabling parents and community members to start or meaningfully contribute to school gardens in their own neighbourhoods. Thanks to a grant from the Community Recovery Fund of Canadian Red Cross, this program is offered free of charge!

Here's what one of our participants had to say:

"This program offers a deep dive into how to design, cultivate, sustain, and support a school garden. Through workshop sessions, hands-on learning, and mentorship, the program brings together Indigenous-led discussions and stories on caretaking the land, technical information and insight into the material resources needed to get a school garden up and running, as well as curricular activities on nature and environment that centre the school garden as a welcoming and essential learning space for children. I come away from each session newly inspired."



Potting up tomatoes at Allan Gardens with Urban Roots Youth



Braiding Sweetgrass program at Winchester PS

Thanks to our community and supporters!

Individual Donors

\$5000+

Anonymous
Robert & Kerin Spence

\$2,000+

Anonymous
Manuel & Cheryl Buchwald

Up to \$2,000

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Patricia Dobec
Sarah Dobec
Joseph Durand
Anne Fisher-Allison
Katie Fullerton
Martha Girvin
Richard Gotlib
Elissa Green
Martha Harrison-Vickers
Thorn (Rox) Hayward
Viet-Lien (Alice) Hoang
Stefan Hostetter
Abbey Huggan
Todd Irvine
Susan Jagger

Charlene Lord
Elin Marley
Margie Marmor
Angela Matich's Grade 8
Class at Equinox Holistic
Alternative School
Michele Martin
Megan McGinnis-Dunphy
Erin McGinnis-Dunphy
Stephen McIntyre
Ellen Michelson
Anne Milne
David Milne
Sara Mrosovsky
Lara Mrosovsky
Bernice M Neal
Lenny Olin
Tara Pearson
Kathleen Quan
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Kristin Schwartz
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Maureen Shewchuck
Risa Stone
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Tsering Tashi
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Stu Vickars
Heather Wilberforce
Suzanne Wilcox
Lily Yee
Rusa Jeremic
Bryce Kanbara
Iris Karuna

Board Members

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Iris (Ike) Karuna
Tara Pearson
Megan McGinnis-Dunn
Kayleigh Fisher
Sailavasan Vettivelu
Alorani Hahn
Christy Sebastian
Heather Wilberforce
Robin Irwin

Placement Students

Liana Gallwey
Emily Castillo
Katie Gauthier
Gabriel Fajardo
Samantha Goncalves
Addison Kilfoyle
Sophia Karaiskakis
Sean Jensen
Rivers D'Amore
Julia Barbe
Lianna Pham
Chloe Simms
Toni Garcia
Stefani Fabian
Aleksandra Sus
Erin Webb
Nishtha Sharma

Contractors

Jim Adams
Christine Hayhurst

Staff

Tristan Andrews, Youth Program Co-ordinator
Megan Bennett, Volunteer Program Co-ordinator
Avalon Carthew, Indigenous Program Co-ordinator
Rivers D'Amore, Summer Staff
Rebecca Davis, Lead Horticulturist
Aamoo Haley Horton, Indigenous Program Leader
Sunday Harrison, Executive Director
Ella Laforme, Indigenous Program Co-ordinator
Sophie Mihevc, Youth Program Co-ordinator
Shallen Murray, Garden and Food Educator
Tsering Tashi, Administrative Co-ordinator

Foundations, Grants, Sponsorships & Partners

Balsam Foundation
Canada Helps
Canada Helps- from CauseFund The Land and Food
Justice Fund by Unite for Change
Canadian Red Cross – Community Services
Recovery Fund
City of Toronto Investing in Neighbourhoods
City of Toronto Urban Forestry
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Lloyd Carr-Harris Foundation
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Peter Gilgan Foundation
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