

2023 URBAN FOOD INITIATIVES REPORT

Denver Botanic Gardens is grateful for individual and community support that contributed to making the 2023 season of our Urban Food Initiatives a success. We are pleased to report on the programs and partnerships that compose our Urban Food Initiatives: the **Veterans Farm Program**, the **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)** program, our partnership with **Denver Housing Authority** and other distribution and education partnerships make an impact across the metro Denver area.

S.A.M.E.

For over 10 years, we have been growing a significant amount of produce at both locations for S.A.M.E. The acronym stands for "So All May Eat," and the Denver café serves individuals in need with a pay-what-you-can restaurant and food truck. All meals are healthy, locally sourced and delicious.

Spirit of the Sun

Indigenous women-led nonprofit empowering Native communities through farming and education.

Mo'Betta Greens

A Black, woman-led farm, community center and educational organization founded by Beverly Grant with farm sites at Five Points, Park Hill and the Dahlia Campus for Health and Well-Being.

We Don't Waste

Works to reduce hunger and food waste in the Denver area by recovering quality, unused food from the food industry and delivering it to food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and schools.

In 2023, more than **70,000** pounds of produce were grown, with more than 15% of this distributed at low or no cost in partnership with:

Metro Caring

A leading frontline anti-hunger organization in Colorado.

GraceFull Café

A community and café located in Littleton offering a place where people of all backgrounds can gather, eat well (for free/reduced price) and be inspired to give back.

Denver Housing Authority

We grow more than 70 varieties of culturally relevant crops, herbs and flowers using organic and regenerative practices on a half-acre of urban land in DHA's Sun Valley and Mariposa neighborhoods. Produce is distributed through 40 pay-what-you-can farmstands May – October (directly serving 827 individuals). DHA residents also gain hands-on experience through workshops on how to grow their own food and how to develop food sovereignty for their communities.

UpRoot Colorado

Helps farmers and ranchers glean their fields to donate to food pantries.

Veterans Farm Program

Since 2014, Denver Botanic Gardens has partnered with Veterans to Farmers to offer paid farmer training for veterans. This year's program had 10 graduates with 3,500 contact hours. Outcomes from the 2023 program include a proposal to develop a bee yard at Chatfield Farms for public education and inclusion of veteran-grown hops in Chatfield Farms' first beer festival.

- The Chatfield CSA donated an additional 10,000 pounds of produce to our weekly Veteran's/Beginning Farmer CSA pickups.



COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA) AT CHATFIELD FARMS

Regenerative Farming

Denver Botanic Gardens' Urban Food Initiatives serve a two-pronged mission: to expand access to fresh, healthy produce and to refine and share best practices in sustainable production. Chatfield Farms is a living laboratory for regenerative farming. In growing food for CSA subscribers as well as for donation through partners, the CSA staff is constantly perfecting soil management for improved water retention and increased organic content; expanding composting programs; and incorporating cover cropping and pollinator zones. Some highlights from 2023:

- In 2023, Chatfield CSA continued the second year of its soil mapping project with interns from University of Colorado Denver. In this project, we conducted a series of physical soil tests, testing our soil's ability to absorb and retain water and mapping the results to compare the effects of regenerative and traditional soil management. Our annual project culminated in a 2023 worm count (an indicator of healthy soil). The results: 392 worms, nearly three times 2022's result of 135 worms over the same 20 datapoints.
- In 2023, Chatfield Farms' compost program diverted more than 100 tons of organic matter from the landfill. That's 25% more than 2022.
- We began conducting microscopy assessments of soil and compost, quantifying and recording populations beneficial bacteria, fungi, nematodes and protozoa.
- We've doubled our fall leaf collecting program, collecting roughly 80 cubic yards of fall leaves from nearby neighborhoods. That's roughly two semi-trucks of fall leaves.

Community Engagement

In addition to bringing fresh food to our partners from many different neighborhoods of Denver and surrounding areas, we also have several ways of supporting these organizations with in-kind support. Some 2023 examples:

Frontline Farms – Donated fresh lavender, ran educational farm tours and offered free admission and use of facilities for special events for this local food justice and farmer advocacy group.

Spirit of the Sun – Organized tours, outreach events and youth engagement, cold storage support for fresh food, the produce delivery program for this Indigenous-led nonprofit.

Mile High Producers Summit – Donated an event space for the annual conference that educates and supports Denver farmers and producers for this BIPOC-sponsored farmer advocacy organization.

