



2025 **Impact Report**

DENVER BOTANIC
GARDENS



Our Impact

Denver Botanic Gardens' mission of connecting people with plants takes many forms. Sometimes the connection is found through something universal, like food. Sometimes it's through something particular, like art. Other times it's a connection through the elements that sustain plants – water and soil.

Through establishing and expanding connections with varied audiences – be it at our York Street or Chatfield Farms locations or elsewhere – the Gardens seeks to educate, entertain and even transform the way people think about and engage with the environment.

This report highlights a selection of programs and initiatives through which Denver Botanic Gardens impacted **people** and **planet** in 2025.

People

A Community Impact Ecosystem

Denver Botanic Gardens builds relationships between people and communities, connecting them with nature. Every year, more than a million people enter our gardens seeking beauty, rest, learning and connection. But for too many families, barriers such as cost, transportation, language and unfamiliarity with cultural institutions make that experience out of reach.

By establishing partnerships with individuals and organizations representing the diversity of our region, we provide culturally rooted programming to engage, entertain and enlighten audiences onsite and off. Whether through a bilingual cooking class, a shuttle visit or a community market, every engagement is part of a larger promise: **that nature, culture and learning should be accessible to all.**



Free Shuttle Program 2025 Impact:

 +20%
New community partner members

 36
Workshops and special events

1,500+
Individuals received free transportation and admission

4,800
Free community tickets distributed


42
Free shuttle visits (14 with facilitated programming)




System Improvements:

+2
Full-time community engagement staff positions expanded program capacity

 17
New volunteers
30 total volunteers

 Waitlists for a free shuttle were eliminated for the first time

 Community Connection listening sessions launched

 Expanded offering of Spanish-language materials
Professional interpretation at select programs

 Piloted free childcare at select programs

Access as the Foundation

Access is the starting point for all community impact. Denver Botanic Gardens' community engagement efforts focus on building trust to remove barriers (real or perceived) to access.

The [Clinton Family Fund Go2Gardens Free Shuttle Program](#) continues to be a cornerstone of access. Since its inception in 2016 as a program to provide free transportation and admission to the Gardens for communities across the metro Denver area, this program has evolved to create tailored experiences aimed at fostering connections with underserved communities. It has driven the growth of our community partnership network, now 250-plus members strong. Partners receive ongoing access to free and reduced-price tickets for everything from educational offerings to public events. Each specially ticketed event – from Blossoms of Light® to Glow at the Gardens™ – reserves a portion of tickets to ensure inclusive, community-wide access.



Creation by, for and with the Community

Our programs are designed *with* the communities we serve. Some highlights of co-created programs:

- **Living Roots:** In conjunction with the Yo Soy community exhibit and in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, this experience connected cultural celebration with hands-on learning. In partnership with Community Hub, a Latina-led organization, Living Roots offered a multisensory experience through food, music and hands-on creation of Guatemalan worry dolls and woven mandalas.
- **Culinary Experiences:** This series explores cultural traditions through food, community connection, learning and wellness. In partnership with Young People in Recovery, Mochi Meditation offered a wellness-focused culinary experience where participants explored the therapeutic process of kneading mochi, with Spanish interpretation and onsite childcare supporting full participation.



Relationship-based Learning

At the Gardens, learning is not transactional, it is relational. Knowledge is built through shared experiences and cultural exchange. Some highlights:

- **Tribal Engagement:** The community engagement team hosted two cultural awareness seminars for staff in October to deepen understanding of the histories, perspectives and sovereignty of Tribal Nations. The sessions, held at both the York Street and Chatfield Farms locations, were facilitated by Steven LaPointe from 1st Tribal Consulting.
- **Rooted in Reading:** This cross-department collaboration created a free, family-centered event where young readers engaged with local authors and participated in hands-on art and storytelling activities reaching over 60 participants.

Connecting Through Art, Culture and Science

Denver Botanic Gardens continued to deepen community connections by celebrating the intersection of culture, creativity and the natural world through exhibitions, markets and hands-on cultural programming.

Yo Soy: Mariposas Sin Fronteras

- Exhibition exploring migration, identity and environmental stewardship
- Included free Sunday admission, workshops and family activities
- **Reach:** 13 artists, 5 partner organizations, 4 young, emerging artist (ages 13-17) scholarships awarded, 2 onsite workshops

Mercado Monarca (in partnership with Ana Marina Studio)

- Pop-up market provided platform for immigrant and first-generation entrepreneurs
- Activated the Gardens as a gathering place for cultural exchange
- **Reach:** Over 20 vendors and more than 1,500 visitors across 4 markets

Lunar New Year Workshops (in partnership with Far East Center)

- Immersive cultural programming including Lion Dance, Tai Chi, lantern making and mooncakes
- **Reach:** 15 facilitators from the Far East Center; over 182 participants across five workshops

Insects Illuminated

- This citizen science bioblitz focused on pollinators, climate change and biodiversity. It offered a first look at the Gardens' natural history collection, showing how specimens and research support understanding ecosystems and conservation across Colorado.
- **Reach:** Nearly 90 children and adults through the Clinton Family Fund Go2Gardens Free Shuttle Program





Partnership Is Power

None of this work happens alone. Across our network of more than 250 community partners, over 100 were actively engaged this year through programming, events and collaborative initiatives.

Partner Contributions

From grassroots organizations to local businesses and city agencies, these partnerships expanded our reach, diversified our programming and created space for community-led initiatives to flourish. Our partners contributed space, expertise, volunteers, in-kind resources and deep cultural knowledge that enriched everything we delivered.



Artist/Partner Spotlight

Julio Mendoza, known as Juls, is not only a talented Denver-based artist, but he is also a trusted partner whose work and perspective have contributed to many Community Engagement initiatives. Through *Yo Soy: Mariposas Sin Fronteras* and *Calacas y Catrinas*, Juls brings art, culture and storytelling to life, helping the Gardens amplify diverse voices and foster community connections.





Planet

Food: The Most Universal Connector to Plants

Over recent years, food has become one of the most powerful vehicles for Denver Botanic Gardens to positively impact communities near and far. At Chatfield Farms and various Gardens-managed farms throughout the metro area, we are committed to addressing food security challenges as well as environmental sustainability through our regenerative agriculture programs.





Solar Powered

Since 2010, the Gardens has operated a [Community Supporting Agriculture \(CSA\)](#) program at our Chatfield Farms location. Leveraging this CSA experience, Denver Botanic Gardens Chatfield Farms opened an agrivoltaics program (solar panels over agricultural crops) in 2024 with funding from the [City and County of Denver's Climate Action, Sustainability and Resilience department \(CASR\)](#).

The 2025 growing season was the first full agricultural production year at the [Chatfield Farms Solar Garden](#). The project integrates renewable energy generation with local food production to advance Denver's climate, equity and resilience goals. Energy generated by the 4.5 acres of solar panels offsets utility expenses for low-income families in Denver, while the food grown onsite is distributed through partner organizations in those same communities.

Key outcomes of the Solar Garden in 2025:





Key outcomes of the CSA in 2025:

62,000 lbs.

of produce harvested for 360 shareholders

4,000 lbs.

of produce distributed to the Gardens' longtime partners

 **S.A.M.E. Café**

For more than 10 years, we have been growing a significant amount of produce for So All May Eat, or S.A.M.E. Café. The Denver café serves individuals in need through a pay-what-you-can restaurant and food truck. All meals are healthy, locally sourced and delicious.

 **Mo' Betta Greens**

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

Denver Housing Authority Partnership

Beyond what we grow at Chatfield Farms, a longstanding partnership with [Denver Housing Authority \(DHA\)](#) extends our food-based impact. 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.

Key outcomes from the 2025 DHA partnership:

29

Workshops on **cooking, wellness and gardening** hosted with DHA, featuring programs like seed saving, making herbal tea blends and small-space gardening, reaching **144 participants**

48

Pay-what-you-can farmstands from May to October and provided culturally relevant produce to residents living in the DHA neighborhoods that we partner with

9,892

Pounds of produce distributed to **382 unique families** and the **Sun Valley Kitchen** and **Community Center** from Mariposa and Sun Valley farms combined



We added a **SNAP/EBT** option to pay-what-you-can farmstands





Land and Water Stewardship

As climate change and resource scarcity continue to impact landscapes in Colorado and beyond, the Gardens spearheads multiple programs to help guide individuals, communities, governments and the private sector on best practices for adaptation and resilience.

In partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, our **Research and Conservation Department** is growing native plants to develop best practices and produce seed for large-scale growers to be able to provide native seed for restoration.

We continued a research study on the High Line Canal. This was our fourth year monitoring nearly 400 newly planted trees along the canal to understand which aspects of a tree's planting location most strongly shape its success.

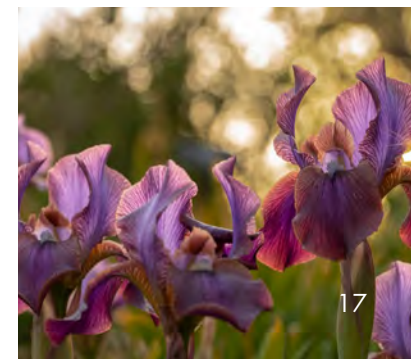
In partnership with the City and County of Denver, the Gardens consulted on Denver's Ultra Urban Green Infrastructure Guidelines 2nd Edition update, which determines best practices on incorporating green infrastructure into Denver streets. We provided design guidance on how to achieve infiltration, ecologic and aesthetic goals of Denver's stormwater facilities. We also provided guidance on how to monitor planting success going forward. This information can lead to a streamlined and standardized approach to stormwater facility design.



The Gardens' [Sustainable Landscape Services](#) program worked extensively with a local water-quality engineer on several projects, creating designs to convert and restore over 13 acres of high-water-use landscapes into resilient landscapes, which equates to millions of gallons of water saved. Each site also included carefully designed educational gardens to teach people within our community how native landscapes support our physical and environmental health. Additionally, as part of these projects, the Gardens worked with several municipalities to create seed blends for native short grass prairie restoration and created a test-plot landscape with plant material which will be fertilized with an on-site manufacturing byproduct, furthering efforts in waste reduction.



In partnership with Denver Water, the Sustainable Landscape Services program is creating eight new landscape designs for Denver Water's website that tackle a wide range of site locations and conditions. Each design promotes the use of native and adapted plant species, reduces water use and increases ecological support. Each design template is user-friendly and aims to support homeowners' efforts in transitioning higher water use landscapes to waterwise landscapes.





The [One World One Water Center](#), a jointly run program with Metropolitan State University of Denver, partnered with CSU International Agriculture to host World Food Prize Winner Dr. Geoffrey Hawtin at the Gardens to talk about his work with seed conservation in the face of water scarcity and climate change.

Working with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the One World One Water Center helped justify the establishment of a Nature-based Solutions work group within the FAO's [Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture](#). This justification was informed by the nature-based solutions work at our Chatfield Farms location.



Our Commitment

The Gardens' work with the communities we serve and the planet we share is rooted in our institutional core values – diversity, sustainability, relevance and transformation. While the first two are explicitly woven into every engagement we undertake, the last two – relevance and transformation – are what translate action into impact.

Our mission of connecting people with plants relies on people understanding the relevance of plants in their daily lives. Plants are food, medicine, culture, beauty and belonging. Their relevance is as diverse as the communities we serve, and every one of these connections has the power to transform lives. When people see the value of plants in their own lives, transformation follows—stronger communities, healthier ecosystems, deeper understanding and a more sustainable future for all.

Our commitment to further transformation flourishes with shared investment from our staff, visitors, members, volunteers and donors. For those of you who have already joined this journey of impact, thank you. And for those who are interested to learn how you can play a role, please email community@botanicgardens.org.



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