As we have reached the end of our 10th growing season, we remember long summer days, cool mornings, community meals, and harvesting hundreds of pounds of food. As we settle into winter, into a time of reflection, we feel connected through cause and calling. We work side by side, in gardens big and small, trying to make an impact on each others lives. In troubling times, our connections with others and the land bring us comfort. In times when we think the world is caving in on itself and there is little hope to find in the systems we have in place, we find comfort in the small acts and interactions of friends and strangers. We learn to cherish those small moments of sharing food, of hauling compost, of sweating in the sun, and of weeding in the rain. We want to share the food we grow and we want to share our stories.

Our 10th season has been turbulent. Full of ups and downs, including moving our entire educational farm, hiring a new staff, and learning a lot about creating a fair and just food system. We will continue to work with our friends and neighbors, our supporters, our students and our teachers, to create a food system and community that empowers people, not oppresses them. We aim to break down social barriers, economic barriers, and create a sense of place and community many of us are lacking in our commodified and objectified world.

We are listening to what this community wants and are doing our best to create resources and resilience for everyone who wants to grow their own food or who wants to be a part of a community that is connected through this act. We look forward to what we can change and create in our 11th year as an organization. Our biggest changes and the hardest work is yet to come. This report outlines some of our numbers and stories of our 10th season, to demonstrate what we are capable of. But keep in mind this is only a small piece of what we do. Our roots grow deep and so do our stories and friendships. We will continue with everything in our power to grow them deeper, to create more resilience, to create more justice, learning every step of the way. Thanks to our community of friends, volunteers, and supporters for an amazing growing season.

Peace, love, and produce,
Dana Guber
Executive Director
The Growing Project

PROGRAMS

Garden Time

Garden Time integrates gardening, cooking, environmental and nutrition education to serve at-risk and disadvantaged youth ranging in age from 4 to 16. This program partners with organizations such as The Boys and Girls Club and The Family Center/La Familia. Participants gain basic knowledge of horticulture and nutrition through teaching plant parts and their function on the plant and as food. Other activities include nature walks, plant and insect identification, integrating art in the garden, helping run free market stands for families, and pre-vocational skill training.

In 2018, The Growing Project held a total of 95 sessions with over 165 unduplicated youth in the garden through our Garden Time program.

Stories/Testimonials

"The kids got incredibly excited when I started talking about tomatoes, chiles, and tomatillos. One participant started doing an incredibly cute "tomatillo" dance while repeating tomatillo over and over again. I asked them if their parents had gardens and they all said yes. I asked what they thought we should do with these plants that we are starting and they thought it would be cool to give them away to families.” -TGP Staff

"The kids are very proud of their little plants. They remember planting these seeds weeks ago and are amazed to see their growth. Sometimes the kids want to claim ownership over these plants but it’s a good opportunity to develop their sense of sharing and mutual aid. I overheard one of the older kids explaining that we share these plants with others, that we don't own them.” -TGP Staff

Stats

2018 Stats & Stories
Urban Foods Outreach installs community garden in low-income areas and at nonprofits. The Growing Project (TGP) provides the materials, education, and volunteers to help interested residents learn to grow their own food. Some residents get paid stipends to be community leaders at their gardens. TGP partners with mobile home parks, Fort Collins Housing Catalyst and other nonprofits to identify neighbors/organizations that would be interested in receiving a garden build scholarship. Over the past 9 years, TGP has built over 20 gardens and continues to expand with 1-2 garden build each year.

In 2018, The Growing Project worked closely with 12 gardens through the Urban Foods Outreach program. Each garden had between 2-24 resident gardeners and produced between 50-300 pounds of food each.

Program Highlights

“We are very grateful to have The Growing Project managing the Murphy Center Garden. With their staff nurturing the garden so wonderfully, we have seen another productive growing season, yielding a variety of vegetables and fruits, as well as flowers that cheer up our facility. The produce has supplemented the diets of our guests, most who are currently experiencing homelessness. On one occasion, TGP prepared a special breakfast for our guests using garden produce – which was a big hit! TGP has also been great at involving our guests in the care and maintenance of the garden, which for one individual gave him more confidence in applying for a job. We deeply appreciate everything The Growing Project brings to the Murphy Center.” - Tom Austin, Murphy Center Director
“In my third year with Stonecrest community garden, the benefits of The Growing Project's work are really beginning to bear fruit. James and Michelle have been doing a great job all season planting, watering, weeding, and distributing the vegetables around their neighborhoods. Every Wednesday of the season, we go to every home and offer veggies from our wheelbarrow full of fresh organic produce. They both truly enjoy the work and have gotten to know many of their neighbors throughout the season. It was so great to see how much progress the garden, and the community made through the season. What began as awkward exchanges between strangers blossomed into friends catching up and keeping neighbors connected. One neighbor Abe is 86 years old and has lived at Stonecrest for nearly two decades. His wife recently passed away, and his two kids are often gone at work. Abe told us he really appreciates our weekly visits. His neighbors James and Michelle seem to truly enjoy hearing about his various illnesses and how he has been using our produce. Abe suffers from stomach issues, and his doctor told him to eat plenty of greens, so he always takes our chard, kale, and spinach, he tells us every time how much he appreciates the door to door veggies delivery. Sam is another neighbor whom we really got to know well this year. Sam is a veteran and lives alone, he tells us every week how he made green salsa with his tomatillos (we harvested 30+ pounds) form the SC garden or how much he loved putting the cilantro on his steak salad with our spinach. Across the road from Sam is Thomas. Thomas is in his late 60s and gets around with the help of a walker. He sits on his porch and we speak Spanish about how much he loves the serrano chilis form the Stonecrest garden. One of our favorite stops along our weekly vegetable delivery route is number 12, Ambria and her three kids. Ambria is able to be a stay at home mom, and is able to process large amounts of carrots, potatoes, kale, squash, and beets. She probably more than anyone appreciates our weekly vegetable delivery at her door. Ambria has told us multiple times how much she uses the vegetables and appreciates the money it saves her. She says the vegetables we give her are often the only veggies that her kids are eating on a consistent basis. Mike and Lee are garden champions and tell us every week how they love harvesting form the garden, and Lee even made us zucchini bread for the harvest party we had in late September. Rod is in his late 50s and suffers from severe depression and knee issues, he loves pickling beets and leaned out from his door to yell, "Hey! do you have any more spinach? I already ate half that bag, that stuff is delicious!" Rod also has tomatoes plants around his house. I reflected at that garden party while serving up tacos with our radishes, tomatoes, cilantro, and lettuce from the SC garden and thought about James in the back with his chickens, our six, 2 year old fruit trees, our four, 1 year old berry bushes, Rod in the front with his tomatoes and peppers, Michelle with her flowers and herbs, and our vibrant, abundant, lush green garden, and seeing all 20 neighbors present enjoying food and talking, and began thinking how after three years at SC The Growing Project and the residents of SC have created a living web of connections that is not only producing food, but is breaking down barriers of race, gender, and income. Our harvest party showed how our work paid off, as Mexican, black, young, old, trans, straight, and white neighbors went home carrying brimming bags of veggies and bellies full of nutritious food and sharing that a s one community.”  -TGP staff
The Growing Project
PROGRAMS

Nature Rides
Nature Rides connects youth from The Boys and Girls Club, The Family Center/La Familia, and The FoCo Cafe Breakfast program to natural areas in North West Fort Collins for activities related to the watershed and local ecology. The Growing Project works with The Fort Collins Bike Co-op to secure bikes and bicycle education for youth participants to ride from their facilities to the natural areas with Growing Project staff.

In 2018, Nature Rides hosted 17, two hour sessions with between 7-14 youth each time.

Program Highlights
- Each session began with a circle to review bike safety and traffic laws. By the end of the summer, the kids were experts at the rules of the road including hand signals and voice commands.
- 5 younger kids from The Family Center that didn’t know how to ride bikes learned how to ride a bike through the Nature Rides program!
Young Farmers Training Program provides part-time summer jobs and hands-on educational opportunities for teens ages 15-17 at The Growing Project’s educational garden.

**Program Highlights**

- Trainees helped cook a farm breakfast each morning for each other before starting work. Breakfast included farm fresh eggs and veggies as well as tea made with herbs from the field.
- Trainees got to “adopt a row” at the farm and observe and journal about the grow and changes of the plants throughout the 8 weeks.
- Trainees went on field trip to Laughing Buck Farm and Story Book Flower Farm to learn about flower production and animal husbandry.
- Trainees went on a field trip to the Workforce Center to learn about resume building.

**Stats**

In 2018, 5 youth worked 12 hours a week for 8 weeks.
The Growing Project

PROGRAMS

Educational Garden

In 2018, The Growing Project moved its educational garden to a new location called The Burrow! Not only are our youth programs hosted at this garden but 3 weekly volunteer sessions are held. Volunteers have the opportunity to learn about growing food and take home produce in exchange for their help in the garden. All produce (that is not taken by volunteers) is donated to the community through our free, market stands. The educational garden is also a space for events, workshops, field trips, service learning, and volunteer potlucks!

In 2018, over 150 volunteers gave roughly 1140 hours at The Burrow, 12 interns gave 1200 hours this season. Nearly 7,000 lbs. of vegetables were grown at the farm this season.

Stories

“When we first moved to Fort Collins, we were looking for a way to get involved with an organization that would be actively working for change and promoting social justice. We knew already that the political activism we were used to in Philadelphia would look different here and that it would be more likely linked to issues related to the environment.

We researched several organizations active in the area and met with several groups but only in the Growing Project we found a group of activists that understood political work as one in which community building is a core tenet of what they are doing.

The Growing Project has already become a central part of our life in Fort Collins and my all family is involved in different ways. We deeply believe and support their mission, as we think that food justice is a fundamental issue of our times. We also appreciate the ways the Growing Projects promotes a more integrated relationship with the environment, the land where they are growing food and the urban landscape of the entire city.

With them we tend the gardens, we help grow food, prepare it and we then eat it together. At the Growing Project we also constantly learn, about native plants and organic agriculture, about how to grow and process food in the unique environment of Colorado. In the meantime, our young son runs around barefoot and sometimes naked, playing with the other children, so that we are welcome as a family and can work as a family to make this town a better place for everybody.”  -Volunteer
The Growing Project

HIGHLIGHTS 2017

Feeding the Families
The Growing Project partner with the nonprofit The Vegetable Connection to provides weekly CSA share to low-income families. We provided food for 4 families this season!

Odell Brewing Giving Garden
The Growing Project maintains a “giving garden” at Odell Brewing Company. Odell is our founding sponsor and supports us in so many ways!

Community Meals
The Growing Project hosted two weekly community meal at the Educational Garden after our evening volunteer hours. Staff and interns cooked big meals with vegetables from the farm for volunteers and community members. We served 25 delicious meals and feed 15-30 people each evening!

FoCo Café Bike-In Music Festival
The Growing Project provided the space for the FoCo Café to host their annual bike-in music festival. It was a blast!
The Growing Project HIGHLIGHTS

Food Bank Resource Stand

The Growing Project provided fresh vegetables, seeds, starts, and gardening advice for food bank patrons every week.

De Colores Story Time

The Growing Project hosted a donation-based, early childhood, literacy program at the farm once a week during the summer. The program was ran in both English and Spanish!

Colorado Hail Storms

The Growing Project Educational Garden endure 2 massive hail storms that damaged crops significantly. With some community support and our very skilled farm manager, we were still able to produce 7,000 lbs. of food on our new farm!

Seed Swap and Seed Saving Event

In partnership with Poudre River Library District, we host an annual seed swap to provide anyone with the desire to garden with seeds for free! We also saved a lot of seed from our Educational Garden and had a seed packing and saving event in the fall! We believe that saving seed is very important and so is spreading this knowledge!
The Growing Project

AT THE FOCO CAFE

Horticultural Therapy Garden

TGP moved our Horticultural Therapy Garden to the FoCo Café this season. In this garden we hosted 3 weekly sessions with seniors and disabled adults in the garden. All produce went towards the café meals.

What is the FoCo Café?

FoCo Café is a donation-based café with the mission to build community by providing nutritious and delicious meals to the people of Fort Collins regardless of their ability to pay while using mostly local, organic, and sustainably grown ingredients.

What’s Next?

With such a powerful opportunity for a great partnership, The Growing Project will be building a large community garden surrounding the FoCo Café. This garden will:

- Provide fresh produce for café meals
- Provide meaningful volunteer opportunities for people to earn meal tokens for the café.
- Provide educational opportunities for youth in the garden through the Café Breakfast program.
- Provide educational opportunities for the public.

FoCo Café is a donation-based café with the mission to build community by providing nutritious and delicious meals to the people of Fort Collins regardless of their ability to pay while using mostly local, organic, and sustainably grown ingredients.
The Growing Project

2018

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THANK YOU!

Thank you to our ten interns this season that dedicated over 2,000 hours of their time to The Growing Project!