

URBAN FOOD INITIATIVES

2019 SEASON REPORT



DENVER BOTANIC
GARDENS
Urban Food Initiatives



OVERVIEW

Denver Botanic Gardens is committed to increasing access to fresh, healthy food across the metro Denver area and beyond. Over the past few years, the Gardens has built partnerships and expanded capacity to positively impact more and more people through food-based initiatives. Starting with the establishment of a Community Supporting Agriculture (CSA) program in 2010, the Gardens' Urban Food Initiatives have evolved to focus on improving access to fresh, healthy food and educating a wide range of audiences on how to grow, harvest and prepare it. This 2019 Season Report offers an overview of the Gardens' Urban Food Initiatives and highlights some recent accomplishments.



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COMMUNITY SUPPORTING AGRICULTURE PROGRAM (CSA)

The Community Supporting Agriculture (CSA) is a subscription program in which people purchase a share of the farm in winter and pick up the produce harvested each week throughout the growing season.

The CSA grew produce for 340 shares, including 20 shares donated through partnerships with individuals and organizations working to increase food access and security in the greater Denver area. In 2019 the CSA grew 38,518 pounds of produce on 5.5 acres, including over 100 varieties of 40 different crops.

In 2019 the CSA was able to trial no-till growing practices on a variety of crops. The growers at Chatfield Farms were able to observe the effects of cover cropping and minimal-to-no tillage on differing soil types and crops.





COMMUNITY

Mariposa Urban Farm

- This was the sixth season the Gardens managed a community farm and education programs at Mariposa, a Denver Housing Authority (DHA) community just south of downtown.
- 1,640 pounds of produce were grown on ¼ acre (mostly raised beds) with a market value of \$5,556.
- The weekly free food distribution served an average of 75 people each week.
- Additional farm stand activities included demonstrations by Cooking Matters, herb talks and bread donated by Grateful Bread Company.

Sun Valley Farm

- In 2019, the Gardens began a new urban farm project with Denver Housing Authority. The purpose of the Sun Valley Farm is to provide relevant crops to the ethnically diverse neighborhood and to drive job creation.
- The ¼ acre farm produces 6,004 pounds of food that were distributed weekly through a pay-as-you-can farm stand open to residents and visitors of the neighborhood.
- Popular crops included Chinese five color peppers, Thai basil, multi-colored carrots and a variety of eggplants.
- In 2020, chickens and cut flowers will be added to the farm.

Community Garden (near York Street location)

- In 2019, the community garden had 155 individual gardeners growing on 90 plots. The gardeners donated 777 pounds of produce to local hunger relief partners.
- Nearly two-thirds of the 90 plots are maintained by community members from the Congress Park and Cheesman Park neighborhoods.

COOKING DEMOS AND NUTRITION

Cooking Matters continued to be a partner this year in the nutritional and food prep education for the farm stands. They created an incentive program for farm stand customers, who received farm stand gift cards for watching a cooking demo or completing a nutrition class. Almost all gift cards (20) were redeemed, with a total value of \$190.



100 individuals served weekly

IMPACT

COMMUNITY (CONT.)

YOUTH AND SHUTTLE PARTNERSHIPS: ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING FOR KIDS (ELK)

The Clinton Family Fund Go2Gardens free shuttle program at Denver Botanic Gardens provided free rides to the Gardens (York Street and Chatfield Farms) from each farm stand location this year. Once a month, farm stand customers had the opportunity to ride to either location and take a free tour or simply visit. A highlight of this inaugural offering was ELK kids and other Montbello neighborhood residents visiting Chatfield Farms and learning how to harvest, cook and eat fresh veggies!

PREPARED SNACKS PILOT WITH WORK OPTIONS FOR WOMEN (WOW)

This year the Gardens piloted a program with the WOW program that teaches at-risk women professional chef skills. The Gardens provided weekly fresh produce, and the WOW program prepped, washed and chopped hundreds of snacks for Denver Human Services clients—mostly children waiting in line at DHS to be seen by a case worker. This program was incredibly successful and will run again next year with more snacks distributed to DHS clients. The favorite snack was kohlrabi, because most had never had it before; it was delicious chopped up raw with dip made by WOW.

WHOLESALE AND DONATED PRODUCE

The Market Garden continued to grow and donate produce to Work Options for Women's healthy snack program, Frontline farming's free-grocery program, Sun Valley Kitchen, Mercy Housing and Montbello Food bank, SAME Cafe, Mo' Betta Greens Marketplace and MetroCaring Food Bank.

SUPPORTING PARTNERS





EDUCATION

The Veterans Farm Program at Chatfield Farms

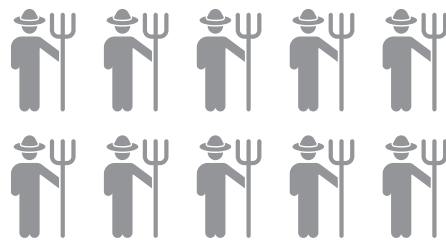
This program provides an educational training experience that will redirect veterans who are looking for a healthier lifestyle and, in the long term, meaningful careers.

Now in its sixth year, this partnership with Veterans to Farmers utilizes both Denver Botanic Gardens staff as well as other agriculture professionals to provide participants hands-on training. Participants work not only in the fields at Chatfield Farms but also at other local farms. A variety of topics – from vegetable production to food preparation and preservation – are covered to give a holistic approach to farming.

2019 DETAILS

- 10 graduates, with 300 training/educational hours for each participant – a total of 3,000 hours for the season.
- Chatfield Farms has developed partnerships with graduates onsite to help incubate their small business: Forever West Farms, Hampden Farms, Emerge Aquaponics, Trinity Ridge Ranch and Hope Mushrooms.

IMPACT



new farmer graduates

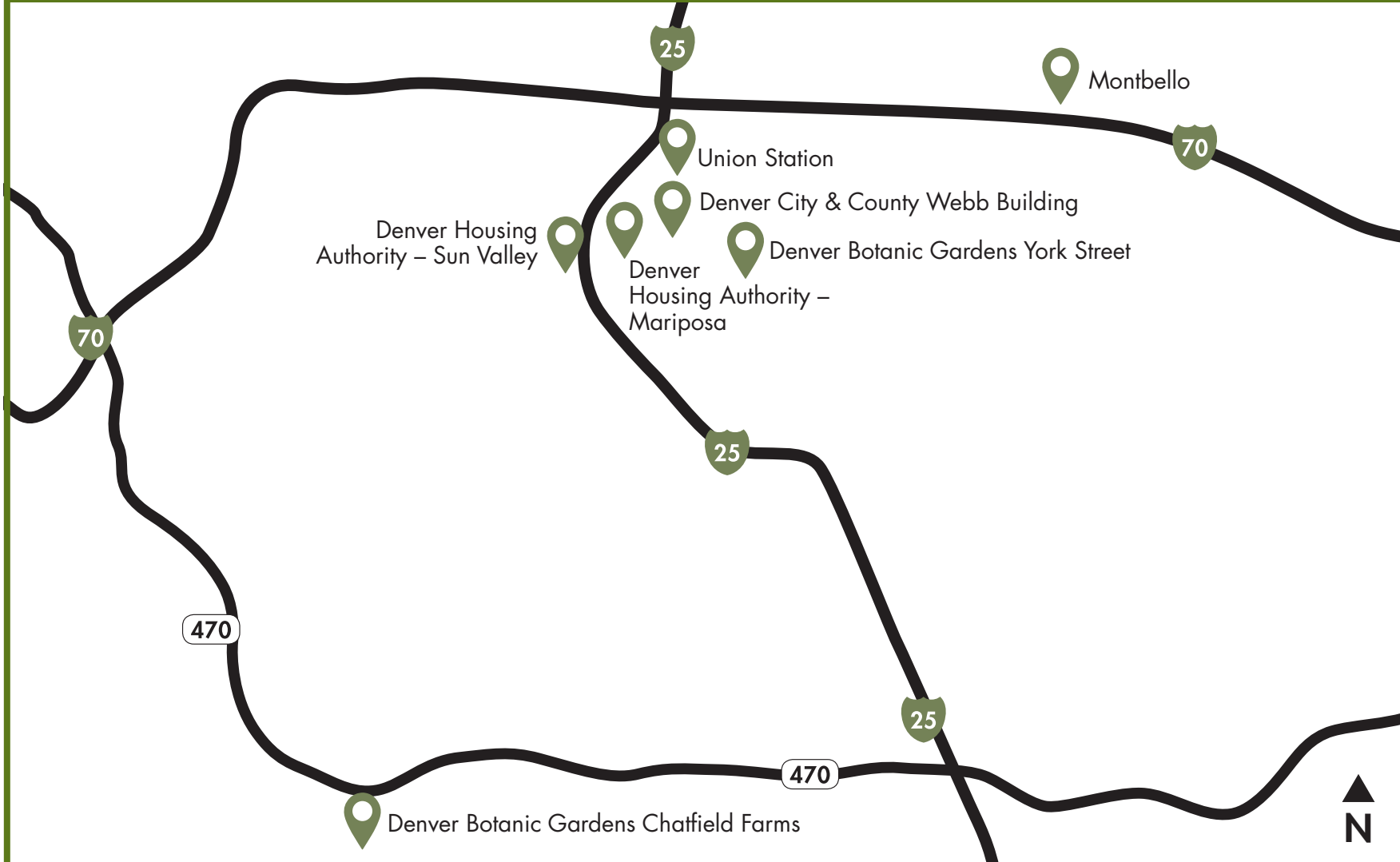
- Front Range Antique Power Association and Veterans Farm Program graduate Taylor Drew started an ancient grain trial onsite and has developed a local seed stock by saving and propagating these grains.
- Family volunteer days, bee-keeping, cooking and canning are among the favorite topics each year.
- The most popular class voted on by participants was grant writing, where participants were able to access extensive resources for potential funding for their farm business.
- Each participant gained experience marketing and selling produce at farmers market and stands in the greater Denver area.

Beginning Market Farming Certificate

- In partnership with Colorado State University (CSU) Extension Denver County, the program completed its fourth year.
- The program ran from October 2018 to August 2019, and included 13 students from Denver, Adams, Arapahoe, Jefferson and Douglas counties.
- Students attended a series of lectures and hands-on workshops throughout the season taught by Denver Botanic Gardens and CSU staff as well as area farmers. Workshops are held on farms to expose participants to as many different farming models as possible.
- Past program participants have started farming operations in Denver and Arapahoe counties as well as out of state.



URBAN FOOD INITIATIVES FOOD DISTRIBUTION POINTS



FARM STANDS & MARKETS

The farm stand provides fresh fruit, vegetables and other farm products to various audiences throughout Denver. To ensure distribution in diverse communities, the Gardens partnered with Denver Human Services and the City of Denver. The program has evolved from a strict food-desert model to more of a healthy-food access program that serves a much wider audience.

2019 Farm Stands:

The Gardens operated four weekly markets throughout Denver selling produce grown at a 1.5-acre Market Garden at Chatfield Farms. Two markets were hosted by Denver Human Services in the Montbello and Sun Valley neighborhoods. The City of Denver hosted a market downtown at the Wellington Webb Building; and a fourth market was part of the Union Station Farmer's Market every Saturday, managed by Boulder County Farmer's Market. The first farm stand started at the end of May and ran until the end of October, for a total of 21 weeks.

The Market Garden

The Market Garden at Chatfield Farms grew more than 28 types of vegetables, eight types of fruit and several varieties of each crop. The highest producing crop in 2019 were potatoes, with the red Norland potato having the highest yield of the four varieties grown. The 2018 total was 18,856 pounds. **Total volume harvested in 2019 was 16,500 pounds.**

SNAP AND DOUBLE BUCKS

The Gardens' farm stands have for several years accepted SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits by processing EBT (electronic benefits transfer) card payments onsite.

CULTURALLY-DIVERSE VEGETABLES

shishito pepper
 epazote Mexican sour
 kailaan gherkin
 opo squash nira
 yu choy sum
bittergourd
 Chinese five color pepper
 biquinho pepper Thai
 chao praya eggplant
 amaranth



PARTNERS

- City of Denver
- Colorado Farmers Market Association
- Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund
- Colorado State University Extension, Denver
- Cooking Matters – Share our Strength
- Denver Extension
- Denver Housing Authority
- Denver Human Services
- Environmental Learning for Kids
- Individual Donors
- Livewell Colorado – Double Up Food Bucks Colorado
- Mile High Farmers
- Mo’ Betta Green Marketplace
- Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
- SAME Café
- Sun Valley Kitchen
- The Denver Foundation
- The Marcus Foundation
- United Healthcare Services
- Veterans to Farmers





For more information about our programs, contact urbanfood@botanicgardens.org

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