

GARDEN NEWSLETTER

November 2023

Hello Green & Gold Community Garden Supporters

Here is our annual newsletter and report for 2023. As always, thank you to all our wonderful volunteers, customers, and donors for supporting the Garden and the women of [Tubahumurize](#).



From the Chair of the Garden Advisory Committee

As another year passes us by, I can reflect on the progress of the garden and feel that the combined efforts of our volunteers have created something far greater than the sum of its parts.

On market days our volunteers take to their tasks and excel, helping with the process of getting produce from the earth to the plate. Mostly, we're operating like a well-oiled machine. We're lucky to



have a devoted group of people, many of whom return year after year.

Our customers are privileged to be purchasing food that might have only been harvested thirty minutes earlier. And if the concern is food miles, how about thirty metres?

To give a shout out to certain volunteers would mean missing out on honouring many others. Working with enthusiastic volunteers from different walks of life is what makes the garden something bigger than any of us.

Funds Raised for Tubahumurize

This year (December 2022 to October 2023), the Garden raised approximately \$40,000 from produce sales, and \$1,500 from a generous anonymous donor. Additional funds raised from handicraft sales are reported below. The total funds raised are substantially more than last year – an increase of approximately \$10,000. WOW! Thanks to all our volunteers and customers for helping make this a reality.

We transfer all funds raised from produce and handicraft sales in regular installments (every 6 months) to the [Tubahumurize Association](#) in Rwanda. In December 2022, we sent \$10,000 (US) to Tubahumurize, and in June 2023 we sent another \$10,000 (US). As a result of our excellent year of

produce sales, we will be sending \$15,000 (US) in December 2023.

Handicraft Sales

Customers continue to support the sale of Rwandan handicrafts on Saturdays at the garden markets.

During the 2023 garden season, \$1,960.00 was raised selling crafts. However, our main craft sales happen at the craft sales we attend after the garden season. Dollars raised at these sales in November and December last year were: Just One World Sale \$1,594.00, and the Belgravia craft sale \$794.00. Total craft sales for 2023 are \$4,348.00 to date. All (100%) of the funds raised from handicraft sales are transferred back to Tubahumurize in the biannual wire transfers.

Upcoming craft sales this year will be at:

- [Just One World](#) sale on Saturday, November 18, 2023 from 9:30am - 4:30pm at the Old Strathcona Performing Arts Centre (8426 Gateway Boulevard)
- **Belgravia Craft Sale** on Wednesday, December 6, 2023, from 5pm - 8 pm on Wednesday, December 6th at the [Belgravia Community League Hall](#), 11540 73 Ave NW



Garden update

A quote within a quote: In his book, *The No-Till Organic Vegetable Farmer*, Daniel Mays writes, “The problems of the world are vast, but I believe the solution begins with the microscopic life below our feet, and the small-time farmers who nurture it to feed their communities. As anthropologist Margaret Mead said ‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.’ Let’s save the world one earthworm at a time. Let’s pull carbon out of the atmosphere and turn it into life-giving soil. Let’s build food sovereignty and community health. Let’s create local economies. Let’s make a good living working with one another and the earth.”

The diverse community of people who show up year after year to tend this small piece of the earth that we call the Green & Gold Community Garden are one of these groups, committed to the women of Tubahumurize, committed to the health of the soil, committed to the greater community, and committed to one another. Changing the world for each other, for those who consume our nutritious produce, and for the women of Tubahumurize. Truly a local garden with a global impact.

The 2023 growing season was our second full year operating under a minimal-till philosophy and its suite of agricultural methods. The three main principles of minimal-till agriculture are to disturb the soil as little as possible, to keep living roots in the soil as much as possible, and to cover the soil with mulches wherever living plants are not present. These three principles lead to healthier soils with a more diverse biological community, better water retention, and reduced erosion.

There are many ways to adhere to these principles and each region of the world can accomplish these goals differently depending on the climate and locally available resources. At the Green and Gold, we’ve tapped into a few local waste streams to reach these goals, receiving dozens of loads of wood chips from local arborists used to mulch the

24" walkways between our 30" permanent planting areas. The University maintenance crew brings us all of the leaves collected from the north campus, a volume that is hard to imagine – dozens of dump trucks full. These leaves are used to cover entire plots heading into winter to protect the soil from harsh winter conditions. In the spring, these leaves are raked into the walkways, exposing moist, biologically rich soil that is ready for planting without the need to till. A local microgreens farm sends a ¼ ton truck load of spent potting soil our way each week which we use to top some beds before planting, creating excellent conditions for germination of smaller seeds. Two community leagues bring us huge loads of pumpkins, we pick up dozens of bags of chaff from a local coffee roaster, and a city contract brings us a mountain of flower pots, full of peat moss, potting soil, and the biomass of the plants themselves. These local ingredients are blended with the leaves, wood chips, manure-based compost from the University farm, and plant matter from the garden to create our own biologically rich, weed free compost. This compost is then layered on beds like a mulch, suppressing weeds and creating perfect planting conditions. One can see, agriculture really is a community effort.



Crop stats

- 14 beds, 5 rows per bed, 50ft per row
- 3500 linear feet of carrots
- 300 Kale plants
- 150 Swiss Chard
- 2800 hills of Potatoes
- 50 Broccoli
- 400 Cabbage
- 400 Kohlrabi
- 1650 linear feet of beets
- 900 linear feet of delicious corn
- 6, 50ft rows of peas
- 200 feet of climbing beans
- 231 beautifully trellised tomato plants
- 600 feet of squash and pumpkins
- 6500 onions
- 1200 leeks
- 375 feet of the sweetest hakurei salad turnips
- 5100 huge heads of garlic
- 1400 heads of the most beautiful lettuce
- 2900 square feet of stunning cut flowers
- a 400 square foot hoop house full of crisp parthenocarpic cucumbers (look it up)
- and much more!

This season was both too hot and dry and too cold and wet, and in the opposite order we've come to expect on this part of the planet. But, because of the committed, hardworking volunteers and our dedicated customers, 2023 was a record-breaking year for the Garden. We should be proud of how we pulled together, and proud of what we continue to build. If Shirley Ross is watching, she's smiling!

Orchard Update

It was an interesting year in the orchard. As usual, the weather dictated our harvest. A quick hot spring, smoky air, and later a fierce five minute punitively jagged hailstorm changed the outcome of some of our fruit. However, all was not lost. We produced 91 pounds of elderberries...a record harvest! Mojo Jojo Pickles processed these into several hundred bottles of elderberry syrup for us

to sell at the garden markets and at winter craft sales. We also had a decent harvest of apples in spite of hail damage and were able to salvage many for our apple cider juicing sessions. The trusty haskaps produced an early, tasty crop.

Update from Rogue

Rogue, the brave hunting cat, supported by his keeper and garden volunteer, Ron, was a defending champion this year and helped deplete the perennially predatory rodent population with a final score of 80 for the season.

Grand totals from Rogue: 822 rodent catches over the past 7 years! Well done, Rogue!!



Poor conditions around pollinating time were unkind to our Evans cherries, resulting in very little for the public market. We also had fewer Saskatoons due to planned pruning earlier in the year - next year's crop will be more abundant.

We attended the Edmonton Fruit Growers spring scion exchange and were able to swap our coveted

Red Sparkle scions for some new apple and pear varieties to try out in our grafting sessions.

Gabor Botar kindly brought his grafting and pruning wisdom and expertise to the Garden in May and July. Many thanks Gabe - your sessions are always fascinating and rewarding. Our incredibly hard-working orchard volunteer, Sam, also worked diligently to organize and make the volunteer apple cider pressing sessions great. Thanks to his hard work, aided by other volunteers, we enjoyed some of the most delicious juice in years!

We are making a brand-new row for Saskatoon seedlings and plan to transplant some from an existing cultivar near the apple trees. As well we want to acquire a few of the "Smoky" variety to replace the poor souls destroyed by the usual vole suspects.

We look forward to a fruitful 2024!



Flowers

Generally, we grew most of the same flower varieties as last year. In particular, the cosmos were spectacular! Sales of bouquets and interest in flowers continue to increase. We received very

positive feedback about the quality of the blooms and their long vase life - a huge benefit of purchasing locally grown, freshly harvested flowers. Work is being done this fall to improve soil conditions in the flower beds and we look forward to reaping the benefits next season.



Hoop House

In 2023 the hoop house experimented with pole beans, eggplant and peppers, in addition to our tried and tested cucumbers and tomatoes. We also introduced succession planting of cucumbers, in the hope of evening out the boom-and-bust experience of prior growing seasons. This experimentation meant that we didn't produce as many cucumbers as prior years and that alternative crop plants were available. The automated solar powered irrigation system was a real asset during the extremely hot days and the heat loving plants flourished.

Volunteers who helped in the hoop house over the season were impressed by the measurable changes over the period of even one week and their consistent efforts produced delicious food and the contentment of a job well done.

Garden Communications

The Communications, Marketing and Media Committee facilitates the coordination of events, dissemination of information and advertising about the Garden for internal and external audiences. We work closely with Garden Sales & Front of the House Committee and the Garden Operations & Infrastructure Committee regarding pricing, garden market strategies, recruitment and orientation of volunteers, and arranging events throughout the growing season.

We started a blog post called the [Dirty Hands Diaries](#) this year to encourage volunteers to share their experiences working in the garden. The first blog post was published in a few of the surrounding community newsletters in the spring, resulting in the recruitment of new volunteers in the garden. Several informal and organized events occurred throughout the garden season. Of note, the Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC) arranged interviews with key garden volunteers and published a wonderful article about the garden in their [Community Matters quarterly journal](#). This was followed by an ESPC hosted Lunch & Learn event at the garden in September where members of the Garden spoke about growing food sustainably, the health benefits of volunteering at the garden, and our global connection to Tubahumurize.

Plans are underway to explore new ways of marketing our produce to customers for the 2024 garden season.

Grants

Many thanks to the University of Alberta for awarding us a Campus Sustainability grant of \$2,000 that allowed us to install the second phase of our drip and low flow irrigation system for additional garden plots. This substantially reduces the amount of water used for crop irrigation, as well as the amount of volunteer time spent watering.

We were also fortunate to receive a Sustainable Food Edmonton grant of \$4,568, which will allow us to purchase a used shipping container. This will be converted next spring into much needed dry storage to replace the decrepit sheds we currently have.

The Garden also received a TD Friends of the Environment grant of \$7,000, which covers many of the essential operating costs over the season.



Volunteers

Our volunteers put in an incredible number of hours this season (well over 3,312 hours, not including the long days our garden manager works at the Garden throughout the spring and summer (he has put in over 700 hours this year!).

Most weeks we had two Tuesday shifts (morning and evening), a Thursday daytime shift, and the usual busy Saturday shift. We had 63 new volunteers who signed up to help at the Garden. If you signed up to volunteer but weren't able to come out this year, no worries – please do come out next year. Everyone is always welcome.



News from Tubahumurize

Through the funds raised from produce sales, the Garden has supported the [Tubahumurize Association](#) in Rwanda for the past 15 years.

Tubahumurize's report for January – June 2023 details the group counselling services to women in

Kigali and in rural areas of Rwanda. Counselling is offered to women who experienced trauma during the genocide of the civil war or domestic violence, and women with HIV. Tubahumurize also offers individual trauma counselling sessions to the students and members of the cooperative. Additional support is offered through health education workshops, small business training, and micro credit loans without interest to women seeking to start small businesses to support themselves and their children.

This year the 15th cohort of students graduated from Tubahumurize's sewing and embroidery school. The Tubahumurize cooperative store also provides graduates with an outlet for selling their handicrafts.

In their report for the first six months of 2023 Tubahumurize sent their thanks:

"We are deeply inspired by your hard work in maintaining the Green & Gold Garden, a labour of love and of community. Our partnership fills us with pride in our work towards a mutual and worthy goal and gratitude to each member of the Garden community."



Graduation day for the 15th cohort of students at Tubahumurize

Donations to Tubahumurize

We can accept donations for [Tubahumurize](#). Please make cheques payable to the Green & Gold Community Garden. Donations are included in our twice annual wire transfers to the organization. If you would like to make a donation, please email us at: gggarden@ualberta.ca

Please know that as we are not a registered charity we cannot provide tax receipts.

Research: Social Wellness & Inclusiveness at the Garden

Dr. Cynthia Zutter, at MacEwan University, is in the first stages of analyzing the data from her research project on social wellness. Along with students Ashley and Marielle, they conducted over 35 interviews. She very much appreciates everyone's participation and looks forward to sharing the results with the community.



Thank you to everyone who supported the Garden by ordering fundraiser seeds. We are so grateful to [West Coast Seeds](#) for their generous ongoing support to the Garden through the seeds fundraiser and also through their donated seeds program. This year the seed fundraiser raised \$1,437, which allowed us to buy garden supplies, plants, and tools for the season.

Stay tuned for information on the 2024 seed sale fundraiser early in the new year.



Special Thanks to our 2023 Donors

Many thanks to the donors who gave us seeds, plants, gardening supplies, graphic design help, grant funding, and other support this year. And, thank you to our generous customers who often top up their produce purchases with extra donations to [Tubahumurize](#).

- BMR Greenhouses
- Edmonton Potato Growers
- Fort Edmonton Greenhouse
- Mojo Jojo Pickles
- Mr. Fothergill's Seeds
- Salisbury Greenhouse
- Strathcona MicroGreens
- Sustainable Food Edmonton
- TD Bank Friends of the Environment
- 20/20 Seed Labs Inc.
- University of Alberta, Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences
- University of Alberta, Energy & Climate Action
- University of Alberta, Facilities & Operations
- West Coast Seeds

*Many thanks to Jessica Musslewhite
& Ron Ferris for their beautiful
photos of the Garden this season*

Want to volunteer with us?

We always need more help at the Garden. No gardening experience is needed and we have all the gardening tools on hand. If you would like to volunteer next season please email us.

Garden email: gggarden@ualberta.ca

Website: www.greengoldgarden.com