

GARDEN NEWSLETTER

November 2024

Hello Green & Gold Community Garden Supporters

Here is our annual newsletter and report for 2024. Many thanks to our volunteers, customers, and donors for supporting the Garden and the women of Tubahumurize.

From the Chair of the Garden Advisory Committee

As the season winds down, from my vantage point as chairperson, I see so much to be proud of.

We continue to evolve. This was the first year experimenting with veggie box sales. Stay tuned because there'll be more next year. If you've not yet tried it, go online and order one next year.

Tuesday sales are now just one hour. As we adjust to changing requirements, we tried this format and we're happy with the results.

Our first year using our new shipping container building was a success. And next year we'll be bringing our double gazebos into operation.

If you already know us, please come back next year. If you've just discovered us, we'd love to see you too, maybe as a customer, maybe as a volunteer.

And finally, I'd like to express my gratitude to all who've been volunteering, our many new volunteers, as well as the grizzled veterans. Thank you for being part of our community!

Upcoming Craft Sale

Belgravia Craft Sale on Wednesday, December 11, 2024, from 5:50 pm-8:30 pm at the [Belgravia Community League Hall](#), 11540 73 Ave NW.

Rwandan crafts for Tubahumurize will be available



Funds Raised for Tubahumurize

We had a good year in the Garden this year. Our income from produce totalled approximately \$32,300 which was a little lower than last year. On the other hand, we had a number of very successful new initiatives, including our weekly produce boxes, greens and edible flowers. In addition, we raised \$1,221.00 selling the Rwandan handicrafts at the Garden. Lastly, we had two separate anonymous donations to Tubahumurize, totalling \$2,365. Thank you for these donations, they are very much appreciated.



Bee on Garden flowers. Photo credit: R. Ferris

As you recall, we had a very successful year in 2023, and as a result we sent \$15,000 (USD) in December 2023 and \$15,000 (USD) in June 2024 to the Tubahumurize Association in Rwanda. This was the first time the Garden sent \$30,000 (USD) within one year to assist with their expenses. Our support is very important to Tubahumurize as they too have been subject to increased costs as a result of high inflation. We hope to continue this level of support in the future.

Grants

Thanks to a \$23,313 grant from the federal government's New Horizons for Seniors Program and a \$7,600 grant from the TD Friends of the Environment we were able to construct two gazebos, with raised beds and seating. These will provide shade and shelter to garden visitors and volunteers, and the raised beds are already producing beautiful flowers to enhance the market kiosk area.



New garden gazebos at sunset. Photo credit: Jessica Musslewhite Art & Photography

Field Garden Update

Adapt: To make fit, often by modification

The 2024 season, like all seasons in agriculture, like all seasons in life, had its peaks and valleys, its ups and downs, its failures and its successes. The long cool spring led to a slow start for many of the crops

and delayed planting of others. The intense heat we've now come to expect each summer puts a lot of stress on certain crops.

These new-normal extremes have created the need for the Green and Gold Garden to adapt the ways we grow. For three years now we've operated under a minimal-till philosophy and its suite of agricultural methods. We till very little, mulch as much as is practical, and try to keep living roots in the soil wherever we can. We cover the soil with silage tarp to block out weeds and warm the soil when needed, and pull shade cloth over heat sensitive crops to keep them cool when the temperature rises. These are only small examples of the ways we have adapted to grow under uncertain climatic conditions.

As visible as these agriculture adaptations are, the most profound way we adapt at the Green and Gold are the adaptations we make to accommodate the ebbs and flows in the lives of the dedicated individuals that make up this beautiful, collective whole. We live our lives together, we adapt how we do things when a member's capacity is reduced, we shift support in the direction it's needed most, both for the plants and the humans that make this spot on the earth the special place that it is. These kind, collective actions leave a positive footprint larger than any individual can on their own, truly making the Green and Gold a local garden with a global impact.

We grew a great abundance of produce and raised a lot of money for Tubahumurize. On top of all the garden work, we built two huge gazebos that will be used for community gatherings and as a venue for future markets. We also bought a 40' shipping container and modified it into three separate rooms; machine storage, a bathroom, and "Shirley's office" in honor of our dear friend and leader Shirley Ross. I know she'd be proud of all we've accomplished.

Special thanks to Dyle Larsen for all his work on the Garden compost.



Beautiful beets. Photo credit: M. Phillips

Orchard update

We suffered from a cold, late spring this year. Our orchard fruit production suffered somewhat as well, since the pollinators were disrupted during the peak flowering window. Unsurprisingly, we had zero apricots (though we always hope for a few).

The Haskaps proved their worth, as did the Saskatoons, which, although smaller were productive...our raspberries fruited but were diminished due to the summer heat. We were able to glean enough plums to share with our hard working volunteers, and the Mount Royals were a delicious treat. Apple tree production was mixed, with generally fewer and smaller apples than in past years. Notable producers were Battleford, Northern Spy and Miami. Red Sparkle (PF47) produced some fruit, but smaller than it is capable of.

We did glean enough windfall assorted apples for Sam to lead about 15 of us at his September 30 Apple Pressing Workshop, wherein, despite the annoyance of the wasps, some delicious nectar of the Gods burst forth for our tasting delight. It was well attended and appreciated by our volunteers who were able to take home a fresh bottle of apple cider. There were fewer Black Elderberries than last year and we decided against producing elderberry elixir.

Thanks to the hard work and diligence of our chief orchard pruner Sam Harbison, we continued to maintain our fruit trees, and enjoy some of the apples and herbs he processed in his solar dehydrator in the orchard!

As always, Gabor Botar graced us with his omniscient presence, and led two grafting and pruning/fruit tree husbandry workshops for about 22 volunteers in May and August. He also assisted 5 volunteers with scion collection in the snow in March. Thank you, Gabe, for your wisdom and support!

Some of us attended the Edmonton Fruit Growers Spring Scion Exchange and Fall Fruit tasting sessions at LY Cairns school to network with the other fruit growers of our region. It was comforting to appreciate that others suffered similar production issues with the weather, and encouraging to see that some different varieties did exceptionally well, too!

And finally,... the Rodent Riddance Report: fearless hunting cat, Rogue caught the 1,000th rodent of his stellar career! Thank you Ron and Rogue for being good stewards of our garden, and to all of you who came out and pruned and grafted and helped harvest fruit.

We look forward to a healthy, "fruitful" 2025!



Orchard apple blossoms. Photo credit: B. Walter

Crop Stats

- 22000 carrots
- 300 kale plants
- 300 Swiss Chard
- 2400 hills of Potatoes (very sad hills)
- 50 Broccoli
- 300 of the most beautiful cabbage
- 200 kohlrabi
- 1800 linear feet of beets, beautiful beets of many colors!
- 1050 linear feet of northern extra super sweet corn
- Lots of beans, they were late this year but great when they came in
- 100 tomato plants. Big ones, small ones and in between ones. In more colors than one imagines possible
- 700 incredibly productive linear feet of squash, pumpkins, and zucchini
- 5400 onions
- 600 leeks
- 3600 garlic
- 1600 of the most beautiful heads of lettuce. Including 2 new-to-us varieties, Muir and Green Batavia. They were both great, but the Muir was something else!
- 2900 square feet of cut flowers. This plot always adds so much to the garden.
- A 400 square foot hoop house that was home to 3 plantings. Lettuce early in the season, cucumbers through the main season and a fall planting of lettuce, which, as I write this on November 13th is still growing!
- 50 square foot of beautiful edible flowers which we sell to chefs through our friends at Strathcona
- Microgreens. A high value crop, this year contributing around 7% of the total money we raised, and all in such a tiny area.

Flowers

On the last volunteer shift of the season, winter blankets of rich mulch were placed on the flower beds. The minimal-till practice will help nourish outstanding blossoms for market bouquets. Why buy local organically grown flowers? The majority of flowers sold in Edmonton are imported from countries like Colombia and Ecuador, requiring chemicals and pesticides for durability as they are flown in thousands of miles. Our Garden flowers are freshly harvested from the field to the customer's hand.

"Wait until I tell my mom I ate a flower today," said an elementary school student on a garden sampling tour through the edible flowers bed. Our blooms have graced a Celebration of Life event, weddings, and birthdays for that special person. Or treat oneself to the ephemeral beauty of petals such as the 'Cupcakes White' cosmos or more long lasting suitable for drying strawflowers and statice. Thank you for the donations of seeds and perennials from volunteers' gardens that will enhance the beauty of the Garden as well as add to the variety of plants for pollinators. Flowers help us pause and appreciate the moment while in the Garden.



Flower bouquet. Photo credit: L. Kelly. Thanks to Trudy Sjoberg for the donated sea grass & lavender

Hoop House

2024 will be remembered as the year of the spider mite for the hoop house. Beginning in early May, our cucumber transplants were showing signs of a spider mite infestation which only blossomed with the intense heat of our early summer. Heat stress tipped the balance in favour of the almost invisible pests and our cucumber harvest was drastically reduced from previous years. Our growing season was shorter this year because of the decreased plant vigor and cucumber growing was finished before the end of August, about a month earlier than usual. Lessons have been learned and like farmers everywhere, we look forward to next year and the next chance to improve the garden.



Hoop house. Photo credit: D. Topinka

Volunteers

We continue to host our volunteer orientation in April at the garden and we had an amazing new group of volunteers this year, along with our amazing veterans. From late April until late October over 163 people volunteered at the Garden and contributed over 4,774 hours of work during regular garden hours. (In past years, we've had about 100 to 150 individuals annually, logging a total of 3,000 to 3,500 hours.)

On average, there were 15 volunteers on Tuesday mornings, 13 on Tuesday evenings, 10 on Thursday mornings and 33 on Saturdays. This year 63 people came out to work in the garden at least 10 times, and of those 19 are new 2024 volunteers. Countless additional volunteer hours were donated towards special projects and areas of the garden (hoop house, orchard and composting), on infrastructure, equipment, tours, craft sales, fundraising and communication, and on overall garden management.

Thank you to all new and returning volunteers for making 2024 a success!

Handicraft Sales

Customers continue to support the sales of Rwandan Crafts on Saturdays in the garden. In the 2024 garden season we raised \$1221.00 selling crafts. Many thanks to Joyce Yau for selling the handicrafts at our Saturday markets! Our main craft sales happen at the Fall craft sales we attend post garden season. In November, we raised \$1636 at the Just One World market, and we have one more craft sale coming up in December (see page 1 for details).



Handicrafts at the Garden market. Photo credit: R. Ferris

News from Tubahumurize

Each year Tubahumurize provides us with an annual report detailing their work and budget expenses for the previous year. Their main activities are the group and individual trauma counselling sessions, sewing school and cooperative, and micro-credit loans to help women start small businesses. In 2024, a new cohort of 30 women began their six-month sewing training. Tubahumurize has also set up a sewing cooperative which enables the 25 members to earn a higher wage and sell their handicrafts through the cooperative. Twenty women also benefitted from interest-free micro-credit loans – most of which assisted them in agricultural work or in starting or expanding their small market businesses. Tubahumurize also offered public health workshops, as well as training in small business planning and accounting to the micro-credit loan recipients and to the sewing school students.



Graduation for the 17th class of Tubahumurize sewing school students. Photo credit: Tubahumurize Association

Donations to Tubahumurize

We can accept donations for the Tubahumurize Association. Please make cheques payable to the Green & Gold Community Garden. These donations are included in our twice annual wire transfers to

the organization and are not used for Garden expenses. If you would like to make a donation please email us at: gggarden@ualberta.ca (as we are not a registered charity we can't provide tax receipts).

Garden Communications & Marketing

We had four new banners* made to advertise our market garden this year. Keeping the community updated with news about the garden and recruitment of volunteers was partially achieved through community newsletters and the Tomato, in addition to articles in the Alberta Retired Teachers Association Newsletter and the University of Alberta New Trail Magazine. We continue to liaise with Sustainable Food Edmonton Community Garden Directors group, Edmonton Social Planning Council, UA Campus Food Bank, and the University of Alberta Sustainability Council.

Many thanks to Jessica Musselwhite for posting her amazing pictures and garden notices on Instagram each week and to Anna Migal for maintaining and updating the website.



New Garden banners. Photo credit: B. Walter

**Banner design [Virginia Quist](#)*

School Visits

We were happy to host and tour some wonderful groups from a couple of elementary schools this season! We enjoyed teaching spring planting skills to two groups of Grade Ones from St. Teresa Catholic School's Spanish Bilingual Program in June. We had 26 children on Wednesday, June 5th and 20 children on Tuesday, June 11. These groups were enthusiastically supported by 15 good hearted volunteers whose task was to guide and help the groups work through the 'station' of potato planting, compost, and "how food grows from seeds". The kids were each given their 'own' potato to plant, and shown how to mark the row, dig the hole, plant their special spud, and cover it! The compost 'station' let them see and feel what compost is and provided them with the thrill of being at the top of 'compost mountain'! Seeding was also demonstrated, and they were able to see how baby vegetable plants begin their life journey. This was a valuable learning experience for everyone, and was especially fun for our enthusiastic volunteer tutors and guides. The kids were encouraged to visit our fall market to try the edible bounty of that single precious potato they planted.



School visit. Photo credit: S. Dawes

Later, during harvest season, on September 11 and 13, we hosted the Grade 5 and 6 science classes from Garneau School. The older children were able to dig and harvest potatoes, learn the finer details of growing companion food plants (the three sisters of corn, beans and squash), discover the important reality of compost composition, feel the heat of decomposition, and fearlessly climb to the summit of Mount Compost.



School visit. Photo credit: M. Milner

We also offered them a chance to taste some of the edible flowers we grow for a specialty market. They enjoyed digging and eating fresh carrots, and were given beets and other vegetables to take back to the school to make soup! Each student was given a sunflower in remembrance of their field trip. The beauty of this tour was that it was accomplished at no cost to the families - they qualified for free public transport on the LRT and enjoyed a 15-minute walk to the Garden from the South Campus Station.

Teachers from both schools indicated they would be very interested in doing this kind of field trip again next year! It was a memorable, enjoyable and educational experience for everyone.

Finally, in November, two of our volunteers presented talks about the Garden to grade 1/2 and 4/5 classes at Belgravia Elementary School.

Research: Social Wellness & Inclusiveness at the Garden

Hello again from the MacEwan University research team! Many of you may remember our first project from 2021 where we looked at the physical, emotional, and social health benefits of being at the Green and Gold Community Garden. That first study had a focus on health. In 2023, we launched a second research project that had a focus on urban wellness. Urban wellness is a holistic concept that includes individual health, community connections, and the environment. Through conducting focus groups and individual interviews, we found that the Garden has two central values: community and urban wellness. These two values are evident in the diverse ways people come together at the garden, whether through shared efforts in growing food, a sense of belonging, or environmental stewardship.

Looking deeper at community, we found that the Garden serves as a vital community hub, with volunteers of all ages and backgrounds finding a shared purpose. Volunteers are inspired by the opportunity to help others, including supporting women in Rwanda. This shared sense of altruism strengthens bonds and fosters a supportive atmosphere where relationships thrive even outside the garden. Everyone brings unique perspectives, skills, and cultural backgrounds, making the garden a space of unity and mutual learning. This diversity is seen as essential to Garden's success. Education is essential for community building through providing learning opportunities about food, gardening, and environmental practices. This empowers individuals to adopt sustainable practices in their own lives. It is welcoming of new ideas and ways of doing things, and makes space for everyone to lead and feel a sense of ownership.

Beyond fostering community, the Garden promotes urban wellness—a broad term that includes health, environmental consciousness, and a sense of place. Spending time in a natural setting is a source of calm, beauty, and gratitude for many community members. The Garden allows

people to reconnect with nature and improve mental health by interacting with the land. The garden is also a green initiative, preserving the land and promoting biodiversity. Through long-lasting dedication, members transformed once barren land into rich soil, reflecting a commitment to sustainability, organic practices, and climate consciousness.

Participants also expressed many hopes for the future like attracting new volunteers/customers, and improving organization of volunteers and equipment. They wanted to see the creation of social spaces for everyone through potlucks, a gazebo, seating areas, and gatherings. Engaging the external community through garden tours, teaching skills, and outreach through schools. And, finally, preservation by recruiting/retaining volunteers, and demonstrating the true worth of the garden to resist it being torn down.

The two main outcomes from this project were:

1. Practical ideas on how the Garden can thrive and resist destruction, such as fostering connections with external communities and the land.
2. Academically, it provided a broader perspective on the connections between urban wellness, community gardens, and greening initiatives. This research underscores how the Garden is more than just a garden—it's a shared space that embodies sustainable living and community wellness. We're excited to continue exploring these themes as we engage with community members and grow this vital resource together. Thank you for supporting our work!

A recent podcast by Dr. Cynthia Zutter discusses this research: [Cultivating Wellness: Green Spaces in Urban Life](https://open.spotify.com/episode/1V0rcHTb8WrfkgXAcL8V9h). Here's the link if you'd like to listen: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1V0rcHTb8WrfkgXAcL8V9h>

Angie Bober, Dion Bews and Cynthia Zutter also had the opportunity to speak about the Green & Gold Garden in the MacEwan podcast, *The Ground Up?* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQB3yOj351c&list=PL-gTkcTI15ABxr2s8iaM64visvFhfSEKy&index=1>



Garden Seeds Fundraiser

Thank you to everyone who supported the Garden by ordering fundraiser seeds this year. This year's seed fundraiser raised \$2,196.93. As all of the funds raised through sales of Garden produce are sent to support Tubahumurize's work in Rwanda, the seeds fundraiser enables us to buy garden supplies, plants, and equipment each season.

We are so grateful to [West Coast Seeds](#) for their continued support to the Garden through this fundraiser and also through their annual donated seeds program which provides us with many of the vegetable, herb and flower seeds we grow each year.

Stay tuned for information on the 2025 West Coast Seeds sale fundraiser early in the new year.

Special Thanks to our 2024 Donors

Many thanks to the donors who gave us seeds, plants, gardening supplies, graphic design help, grant funding, and other indirect support this year. And, thank you to our generous customers who often top up their produce purchases with extra donations to [Tubahumurize](#). These local businesses and agencies support the Garden in various ways. Please support them as well when you can:

- [AWN Kitchen](#)
- [BMR Greenhouses](#)
- [Edmonton Potato Growers](#)

- [Government of Canada – New Horizons for Seniors Program](#)
- [Mojo Jojo Pickles](#)
- Mr. Fothergill's Seeds
- [Parkland Potato Varieties](#)
- [Prairie Urban Farm](#)
- [Strathcona Microgreens](#)
- [Sustainable Food Edmonton](#)
- [20/20 Seed Labs Inc.](#)
- [TD Friends of the Environment](#)
- [University of Alberta, Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences](#)
- [West Coast Seeds](#)
- Many thanks to Sheila Luther & her friends for donating the proceeds of their heritage tomatoes sale
- & thanks to a generous anonymous donor



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.

If you signed up to be on the volunteer list, but are no longer able to or interested in volunteering, please don't be shy in asking us to remove your name from the volunteer list. You can always sign up to the customer email list instead to get our weekly produce emails during the growing season: www.mailman.srv.ualberta.ca/mailman/listinfo/gggarde