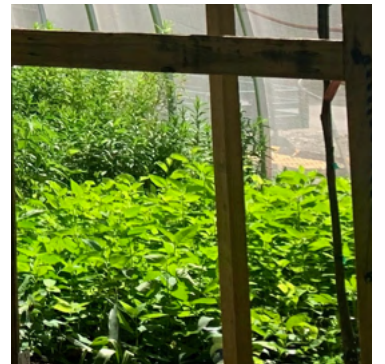
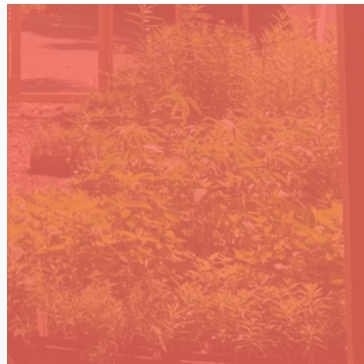
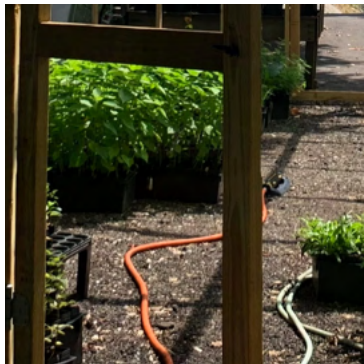
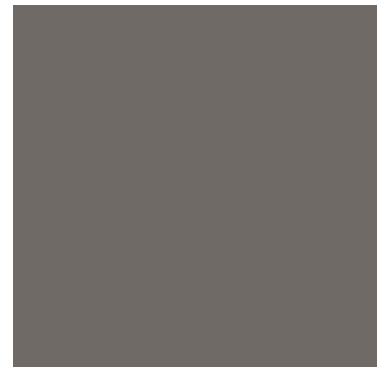
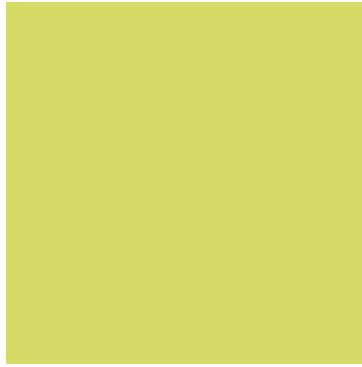




2023 ANNUAL REPORT





OUR PROGRAMS

Through classes, volunteer opportunities, plant festivals, resources and more, the Civic Garden Center (CGC) empowers people of all ages and backgrounds to learn, grow and connect around two main topics:

URBAN AGRICULTURE

Urban agriculture provides critical access to healthy food for local communities as well as jobs, more green spaces and closer community ties. We believe good food for everyone is possible when adults and youth have the skills, capacity and will to act as food citizens and land stewards. Whether you grow at home or in a community garden, with students or for sale, the CGC is your go-to resource for making food personal and local.

CONSERVATION

Conservation is no longer just the purview of large organizations. Like growing food, it's becoming highly personal. Aggressive invasive plants, continual urban development and habitat fragmentation threaten most Midwest cities, and Cincinnati is no exception. Every day we see people of all ages in our community working to align their corner of the planet—be it backyard or neighborhood park, community garden or school grounds—with our local ecosystems. We love supporting and facilitating that work.

Read the full story
behind this report:
[civicgardencenter.org/
2023-annual-report](https://civicgardencenter.org/2023-annual-report)



OUR WHY

MISSION

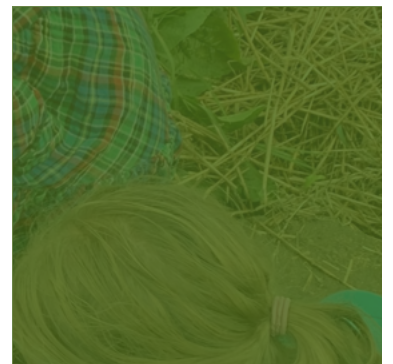
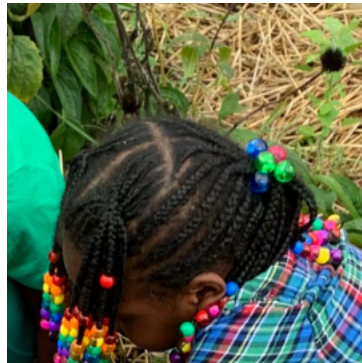
Building community through gardening, education and environmental stewardship.

VISION

A sustainable future for all where environmental and social responsibility drive individual and institutional actions.

VALUES

- **INCLUSIVE:** We believe it is essential that all people participate in solving the environmental challenges we face.
- **PASSIONATE:** We are passionate about making a meaningful impact on people and the planet.
- **EMPOWERING:** We seek to inspire people, businesses and communities with experiences, knowledge and tools that enable them to take action.
- **RESPONSIBLE:** We act in a manner that respects and protects the well-being of people and the environment, including our staff, our volunteers and the places we work.
- **INNOVATIVE:** Through the application of our experience and knowledge, we embrace and drive change.





FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

Okay, all you former Girl Scouts and Brownies out there, sing with me:

Make new friends, but keep the old.

One is silver, the other is gold.

A circle is round, it has no end.

That's how long, I will be your friend.

A fire burns bright, it warms the heart.

We've been friends, from the very start.

You have one hand, I have the other.

Put them together, we have each other.

Silver is precious, gold is too.

I am precious, and so are you.

You help me and I'll help you

and together we will see it through.

The sky is blue. The Earth is green

I can help to keep it clean

Across the land, Across the sea

Friends forever we will always be

This song has been running through my mind as I considered what to write about for this annual report. I was thinking about how the Civic Garden Center's history has always informed any new or expanding aspect of its work. When I looked up the song's complete lyrics, I was struck by how many touchpoints are in them which reflect the experience I've had with—and the future possibilities I see in—the organization.

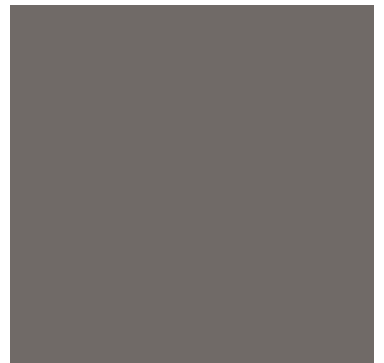
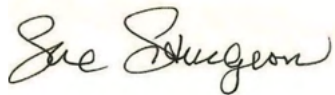
As an organization, the CGC has and will always reach out to “make new friends,” building community throughout our region. The CGC has and will always depend on the helping hands of volunteers to deliver its mission while keeping the sky blue and the earth clean and green.

I’m filled with tremendous gratitude for the many passionate, dedicated individuals who have immeasurably contributed to the CGC’s long-standing history. We are proud of our history and how far we’ve come—from the early days of helping people build Victory Gardens to a place that invites everyone, regardless of their environmental knowledge or experience, to take part in the fight for a better tomorrow.

At the end of the day, it’s not only what we do that’s changed but how we do it. We have modernized our approach to tackling critical environmental issues and mobilizing support from as many stakeholders as possible. Our reach has expanded as we educate more people about the environment that sustains us and provide the tools for taking action.

With these legacy values firmly recognized and in place, new initiatives are fueling the ongoing relevance and impact of this organization. Some of the “new” may seem to merely be change, but I see it as progress because, as Harry Truman wrote: Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better. That’s what’s happening at the CGC—we’re taking active strides to achieve our vision of everyone taking action for a healthy planet.

All the best,



FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2023, success for the CGC was defined by our willingness to learn from our community of donors, volunteers, teachers, students, partners, constituents and participants—in other words, from you.

We sensed that our best path forward was to build on efforts to strengthen our work through an unwavering focus on diversity, equity, justice, belonging and authentic inclusion—truly welcoming, respecting and valuing each other versus breaking into camps, tribes or groups.

Mounting research points to the necessity and wisdom of making participants' experiences central to managing and leading an organization. Yet we saw how too many in the nonprofit world have held a limited conception of participants, seeing them as targets of social change ideas rather than as people who engage nonprofits to make changes in their lives. In 2023, we began to think more seriously about how to align our strategies with our participants to ensure that their experiences guide the overall operation and governance of the CGC.

The good news, we've discovered, is that doing so seems to be part of the CGC's DNA, its historical legacy. We just need to be more intentional about it now.

In 2023, we focused more resources on our capacity to support staff in building collaborative quality relationships with participants and within communities. Our goal is always to foster community, to strengthen relationships. When I look back, I see that we collaborate today with organizations we worked with a decade ago—in another capacity, on another project, with another agenda. I also see plenty of new faces and organizations and businesses and neighborhoods engaging with us in exciting ways.

Great collaborations don't just happen. They are built over time, and we at the CGC focus on building collaborative teams that are going to stay together from one project to another, from one venture to another, from one alternate reality to another. That requires significant investment (of time, commitment, content) into a shared experience that builds those relationships—the kind of quality relationships necessary to achieve outcomes that require long-term collective action.

Nature underpins every aspect of our society, wellbeing and economy. But nature is in crisis. Our economic activities are operating outside the safe zones for six of the nine planetary boundaries that keep Earth habitable. This is causing declines in the services nature provides and disruptions in everything from weather to global supply chains and from business investments to migration

patterns. And climate change is bringing different types of challenges to each region of our country. Here in the Midwest, extreme heat, heavy downpours and flooding will affect infrastructure, health, agriculture, forestry, transportation, air and water quality and more.

Within this context, it's important to recognize that more of the same won't address the greatest challenges of our time and to advocate for adjusting our efforts back to innovation—in institutions, understanding, technology and leadership. History has demonstrated that seemingly impossible change can come about, but only when the right combinations of drivers come together.

When someone has "really come into their own," it means that they've reached a point of maturity, confidence and self-assurance. They have found their true identity, strengths and talents and are fully embracing and expressing them. This phrase often implies a sense of growth and a strong sense of authenticity.

In 2023, it felt like the CGC came, once again, into its own, achieving a kind of renaissance. Just like great artists know that an empty canvas can become anything, great organizations—and the people who are part of them—can become anything, too.

As we move into 2024, we see a clear trajectory for the CGC towards greater collaboration, innovation and impact. I believe that by very intentionally taking time to redefine and refocus our work on urban agriculture and conservation, we've been able to build a more stable organization, make better decisions and deepen our impact—together and with each of you. Which is a great way to create a masterpiece.

Karen Kahle

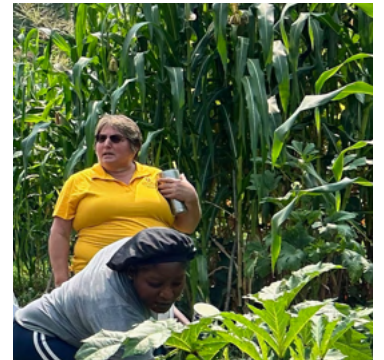


URBAN AGRICULTURE

In 2023, we changed the name of our Community Garden program to our Urban Agriculture program to fully represent our efforts around food and access. In addition to offering our free HUB Garden classes and running our Community Garden Development Training (CGDT):

- We added two new gardens to our network and reactivated three others.
- We installed native pollinator gardens in two community gardens using CGC-grown plants.
- We worked with the City of Cincinnati to install water access in our Madisonville Community Garden.
- We increased the number of HUB Gardens from seven to ten.
- We held three plant giveaways for our community gardeners: April, May and September.
- We worked with the City of Cincinnati and leading environmental organizations to install 11 Johnson-Su Bioreactors in our community garden network.

17
Community Garden
Development
Training graduates



20
free HUB Garden
classes offered around
Cincinnati



11
Johnson-Su
Bioreactors built in
community gardens



“HUB Garden classes were a success in the Carthage Community Garden...Kymisha was not only well informed but also genuinely thrilled to talk to the participants about other garden issues.”

- Ann, garden coordinator

YOUTH EDUCATION

2023 brought opportunities to reflect on some of our Youth Education programs and build relationships. Despite our Youth Education Coordinator being out on maternity leave for the spring, we kept the majority of our programs rolling right along thanks to the support of our great staff.



12

free Lil' Sprouts sessions for children ages 3-8



“This program gave me the resources and expertise to create, present, and get approval for a school garden proposal that will be implemented next school year.”

- *Growing Our Teachers* participant

13

Compost Kids field trips for 452 students

In addition to launching Lil' Sprouts for young children and running our Summer Sprouts programs and Compost Kids field trips:

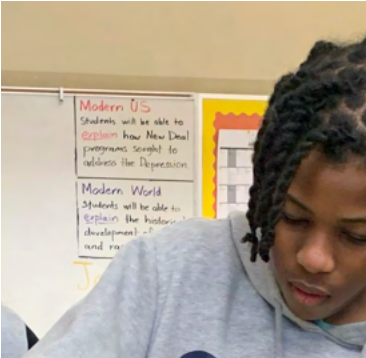
- We began providing consultations to two Cincinnati Public Schools prioritized by the Green Schoolyards Action Network and the CPS District to receive new school gardens.
- We wrapped up our second cohort of Growing Our Teachers and began our third.
- Our Pendleton Children's Garden received some TLC so that it can continue to thrive as a community resource and greenspace.

98
visits to participating
schools and
organizations

GREEN TEENS

In 2023, what started as our budding Green Teens program truly bloomed!

- We wrapped up the pilot of our Green Teens Challenge in the spring, then launched the full year-long event with the start of the school year in the fall.
- We conducted 98 visits with ten schools and one homeschool group participating in the Green Teens Challenge.
- We received over 200 submissions to our Green Teens Challenge from participating schools.
- We worked with seven student interns from the Zoo Academy and Gamble Montessori, each of whom spent a quarter with us.
- We welcomed 373 students and teachers to our grounds over 18 EcosySTEM “From Dead Ends to Donuts” field studies, which guide students to explore the need for sustainable cycles.
- We held seven free tours of our LEED Platinum Green Learning Station.



7
teen interns from the
Zoo Academy &
Gamble Montessori

18
EcosySTEM field
studies



“Green Teens proves that our young people can make positive impacts on the mindsets of the community by speaking out to about the consideration of green solutions to the problems of today.”

- Green Teens teacher

CONSERVATION

In 2023, we formally recognized our long-established conservation work as an official CGC program. Doing so allowed us to expand our existing efforts and lay the groundwork for new projects.

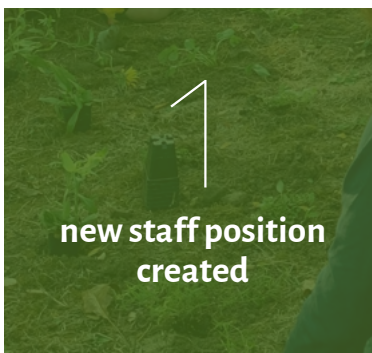
- We established the Conservation Program Manager as a full-time staff position.
- Together with Cincinnati Parks and the Walnut Hills Bio-Eco Club, we installed a native prairie along Walnut Woods of Evanston.
- We caged newly planted trees in our active Treeforestation sites to improve tracking and care.
- We propagated more than 3,500 native plants and 300 native trees and shrubs as part of our ReRooted program.
- We launched Cincinnati Conservation Stewards with Cincinnati Parks and the Cincinnati Parks Foundation to train volunteers working in public parks.
- We established the Urban Restoration Coalition together with Keep Cincinnati Beautiful, Groundwork Ohio River Valley and Green Umbrella to better support urban greenspace projects in Greater Cincinnati.

“I love Walnut Workdays because not only do I get to make a difference in the world but I also get to meet other awesome people with the same interests as me! It’s also a really good way for me to get outside with no distractions.”

- Ava, Walnut Hills High School Bio Eco officer

2

new long-term
collaborations
established



VOLUNTEERING

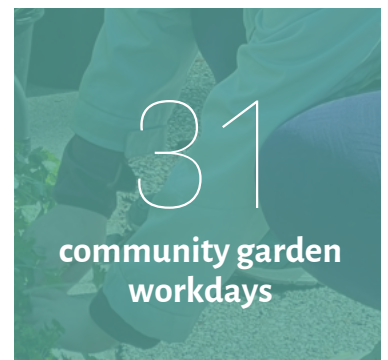
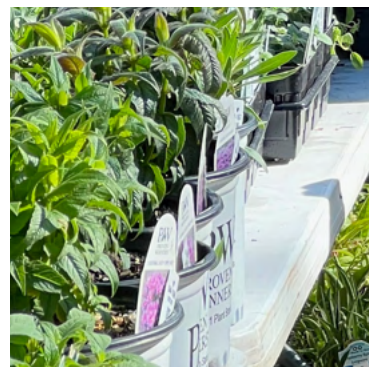
In 2023, we established volunteer teams: Horticulture, Conservation, Urban Agriculture, Events & Outreach and Education. Doing so allowed us to better connect our volunteers with the opportunities that interested them most.

The wonderful people in our volunteer community put in 6,000 hours on the CGC's behalf—and we couldn't be more grateful! With the incredible support of our volunteers:

- We built a hoop house on our grounds to support our ReRooted program.
- We propagated and cared for around 4,000 native plants, trees and shrubs.
- We installed a native prairie at Walnut Woods of Evanston.
- We caged newly planted trees at both our active Treeforestation sites.
- We supported 13 of our community gardens across 31 workdays.
- We ran 13 Compost Kids and 18 EcosySTEM programs, reaching just over 900 students and teachers.
- We held a successful online and in-person spring plant sale and first-ever Fall Native Plant Festival.

We also reestablished our monthly volunteer newsletter and welcomed Shelby Beckner to our team as our Community Engagement Coordinator.

"I think the CGC is making environmentalism accessible to people of all ages. They make learning about nature fun and inviting!"
- *Compost Kids volunteer*



CLASSES & EVENTS

2023 was a year of growth and reinvention for us as we worked to tailor our classes and events to our mission as well as the needs and wants of our evolving community.

- Our first Fall Native Plant Festival brought more than 1,100 people to Hauck Botanic Gardens for plants, education and community.
- After a successful spring Plant Sale, we took a long, hard look at the online/in-person format and our goals around the event and solidified a plan to model the spring sale—christened GrowFest—on our successful Fall Native Plant Festival.

1.1k
visitors during our
Fall Native Plant
Festival

- We offered 79 one-off classes and events with almost 1,700 registrations! They included monthly native plant classes, a free virtual lunch and learn series (Botany Bistro), dementia-friendly classes in partnership with the Episcopal Retirement Services Center for Memory Support (Nurturing the Mind) and two performances of Mary Kroner’s show “X Marks the Spot.”
- We revamped our Holiday Weekend, bringing back the Friday night open house and filling the days with classes and free events for all ages.



79
one-off classes and
events



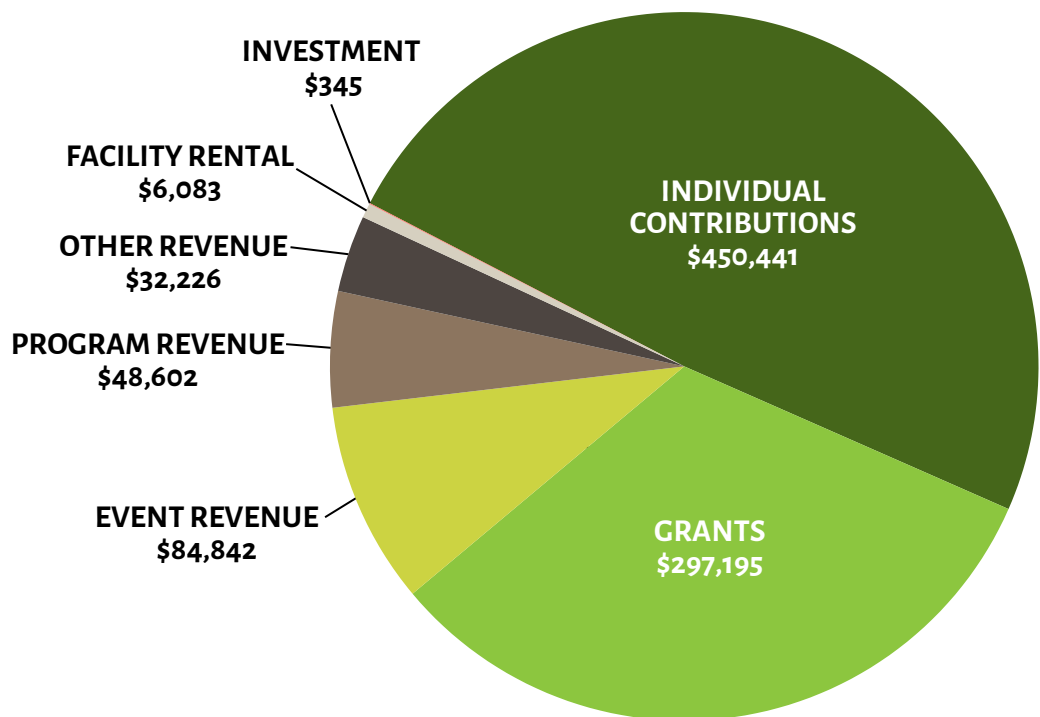
“Mary’s classes are rich with reliable, up-to-date information, delivered in her exuberant, friend-to-friend style. I always come away delighted and enthusiastic, ready to practice all I’ve learned.”

- Catherine, class participant

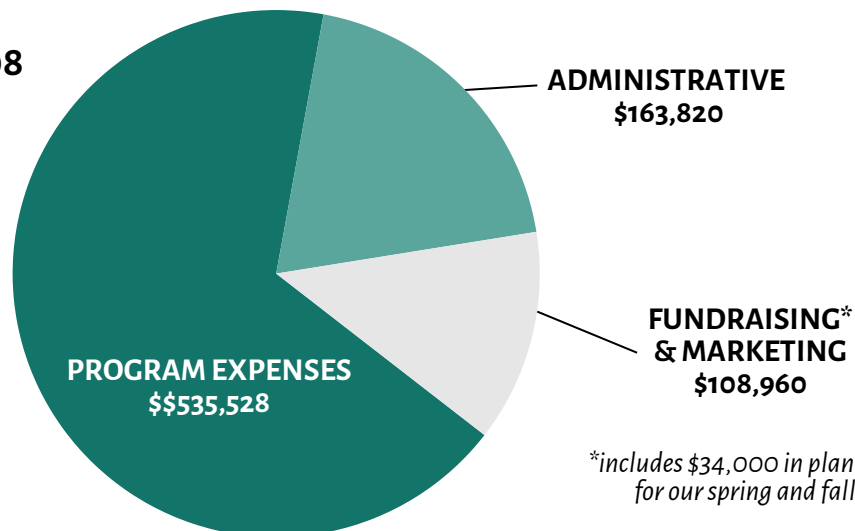
2023 FINANCIALS

At the Civic Garden Center, every gift matters. Each day, we're inspired by the generosity of our supporters who join us in taking action to build a sustainable future for all. Your belief in the CGC as a valuable community asset helped us do some great work in 2023. While we still face some challenges—inflation has left its mark on charitable giving and trust is a global problem right now—we strive every day to earn your trust and to be good stewards of your investment in the CGC.

CONTRIBUTIONS & REVENUE: \$919,734



EXPENSES: \$808,308



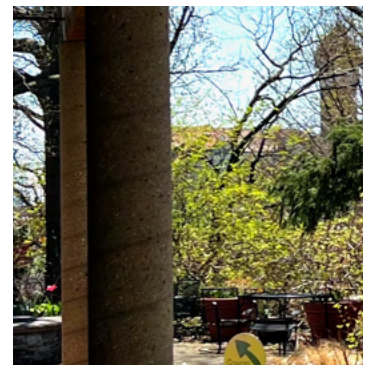
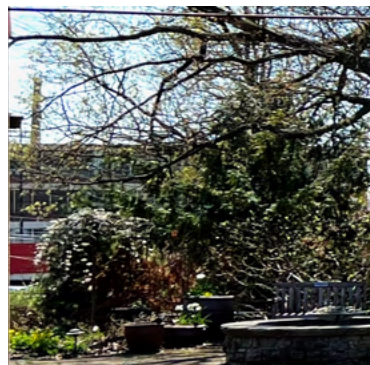
**includes \$34,000 in plant purchases for our spring and fall plant sales*

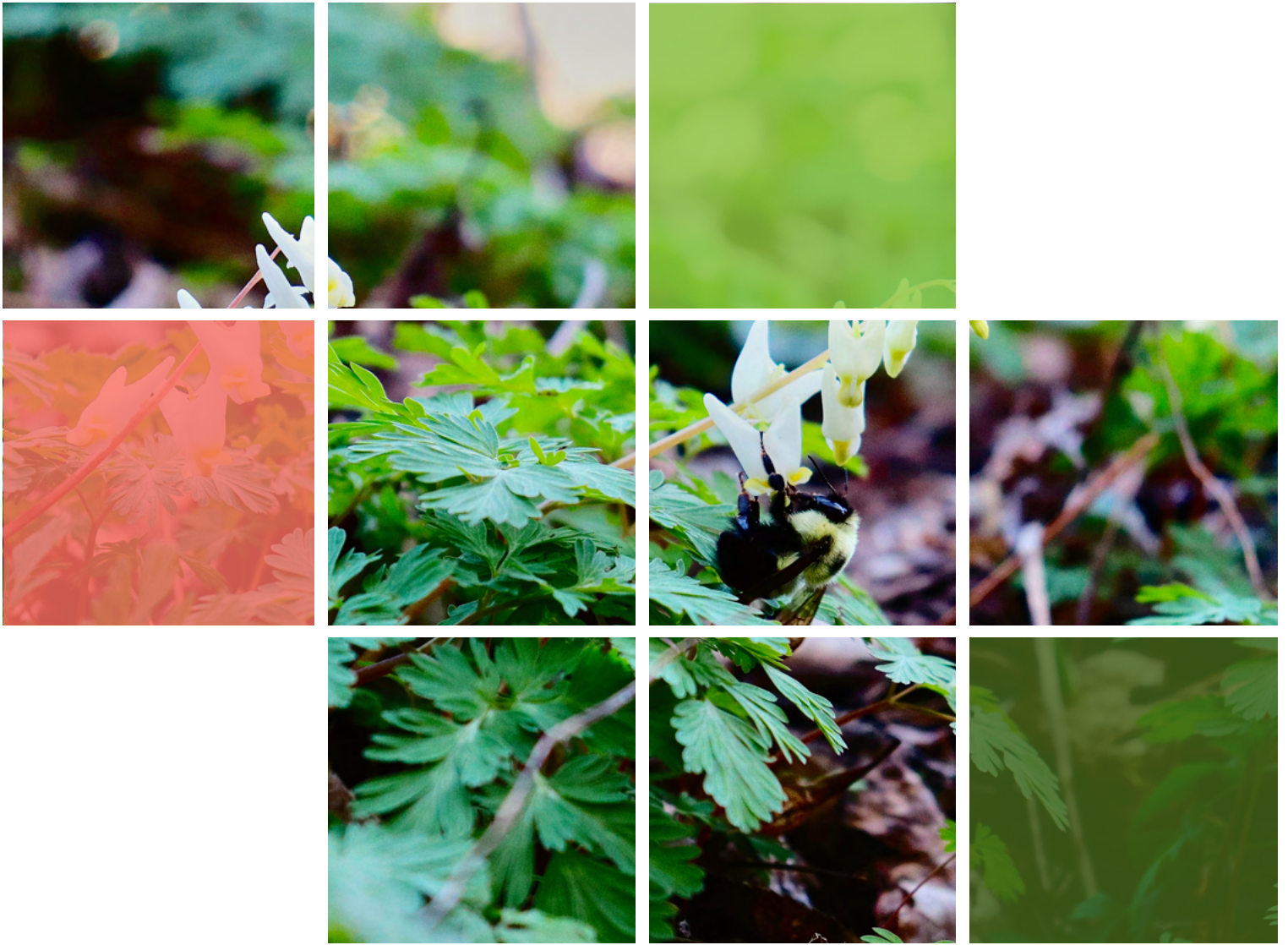
LOOKING AHEAD

Many of the stories in these pages will continue into 2024 and beyond. Some of the developments we're looking forward to include:

- Piloting our new Market Garden Training series to prepare people to take on entrepreneurial roles in increasing access to healthy food in their communities.
- Supporting CPS schools due to receive new school gardens and continuing to work with Bond Hill and Midway to provide training and programming.
- Building connection among our Green Teens Challenge participants and bridges between Growing Our Teachers graduates and Green Teens interns.
- Finding a new Treeforestation site.
- Holding GrowFest, our reimagined spring plant event, and growing our Fall Native Plant Festival and Holiday Weekend.
- Working with more Green Teens partners.
- Piloting an Urban Restoration Coalition project in Bond Hill.
- Once again having a staff person dedicated full time to supporting our volunteer program.

Through it all, we'll continue to strive to hear what you, our community, wants and needs from the CGC and to provide that in a way that aligns with our mission of building community through gardening, education and environmental stewardship.





THANK YOU, DONORS!

The work we accomplished in 2023 is a direct result of your generous and ongoing financial contributions. We're so grateful to everyone who supports our work! As we think about what 2024 may bring, one thing is certain: It will offer both challenges and opportunities that we will meet together. Our work is possible because of you, and we extend our heartfelt thanks.

OUR 2023 SUPPORTERS



civiggardencenter.org/current-supporters/

BECOME A 2024 SUPPORTER



civiggardencenter.org/donate/



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Mary Dudley

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