CULTIVATE KC

2020 Annual Report
Hindsight is 2020

As much as we like to say that 2020 is a year we’d like to forget, it ought be a year we always remember. From the challenges of the pandemic and the outcries of systemic inequities emerged truth and urgency regarding our local food system.

We kicked off the year with our Annual Farmers & Friends Meeting, where we optimistically looked forward with hope and potential as we discussed alternative distribution and revenue streams for small farmers. We knew that the market for local food was changing and that small growers would need to be adaptive.

We’d soon realize how adaptive and innovative our community of farmers would prove to be.

When the pandemic hit our city, Cultivate KC doubled down on our work to promote local food and advocate for local urban farmers who proved to be essential to the health and well-being of our community and economy.

Before stepping away from her role as Executive Director, organization co-founder Katherine Kelly penned an opinion piece championing and arguing for the importance and safety of local farmers markets. She rallied to keep them open amid the call for business operations and gatherings to close at the start of the pandemic.

Our farmer trainers adapted their work to minimize the risk of viral transmission while still working closely with our city’s next generation of New Roots graduate farmers.

We saw an increased demand not just for local food to eat, but for seeds and education from a city of residents wanting to grow their own food while isolating and quarantining.

We changed our farm plan at Westport Commons and coordinated with our food access program managers to share food with our neighbors in need. We accomplished all this while still working to increase the health and viability of the soil on the former school playing field.

Cultivate KC was able to do this because of our years of investment in growing food, farms and community for a sustainable and equitable food system. We look forward knowing that there is more work to be done and remain committed to it.
In the face of pandemic, Juniper Gardens grows, flourishes

Semra Fetahovic, Program Manager, Juniper Gardens Training Farm

The COVID pandemic dictated a lot of program activities and how they were executed or implemented, with plenty of highs and lows. Despite the many negatives, two positives stood out:

First, our program staff and New Roots farmers stepped up to the challenges. They innovated, adapted and successfully completed another growing season.

Second, support for local agriculture and communities grew. The pandemic emphasized the importance of resilient, local food systems.

Sales outlets saw an increase in sales from $144,176 in 2019 to $163,291 in 2020.
**Other updates:**

Cultivate KC’s Food Access Program Manager Lana Dominguez and I developed a new program in which we delivered New Roots produce directly to low-income seniors throughout the growing season. We were able to distribute more than $10,000 worth of produce to approximately a thousand seniors.

Juniper Gardens Training Farm was home to 13 farm families-in-training, three land-leasing graduates, 10 community gardeners and four staff growing on-site.

Four farmers graduated from the program, which brings our total program graduate count to 36. Three new farm families were recruited to start in 2021.

Amanda Lindahl joined the program team as both Farmer Trainer and Graduate.
I started at Juniper Gardens in May and began field walks in June.

Since these regularly scheduled one-on-one meetings with farmers started a bit late in the season, I did my best to support their fieldwork and advise on growing practices already in use.

All farm training activities happened from a safe distance with interpreters present or on the phone.

I’m proud of how resilient farmers are, adding in more safety protocols and still growing high amounts of produce to sell to their community.

The pandemic, among other things, limited some farmers’ abilities to be on the farm. I was pleased, however, to see and hear farmers supporting one another by sharing resources and knowledge in their fields.

With additional funding from a new grant, I started as Graduate Support Specialist in November. In this new role, we will be able to offer support and resources to our farmers after their participation from the training program. In just a few months, I’ve already supported three farmers in an effort to gain access to USDA funding.

I’ve also started teaching a series of classes for third and fourth year farmers where they begin visioning and making plans for their farm upon graduating from the training program.
Farm Share secures sales for growers during pandemic

Paw Wah Tamla, CSA Specialist, New Roots for Refugees

New Roots farmers faced some huge challenges both on the farm and off in 2020. Market sales were down 30 percent from 2019, and wholesale channels decreased by almost half.

The CSA aggregated fresh produce from 16 New Roots farmers, four of which were graduates.

Despite the challenges, the CSA-Farm Share reached its sales goal with 205 customers and 40 flower-share customers. This helped keep the farmers’ incomes stable in an otherwise unstable year.

We doubled CSA sales in 2020 and expanded sales by seasons (Spring Greens, Early Summer, Late Summer, and Flowers.) The aggregated CSA sold out at the beginning of the season with several customers added to the waitlist.

Because of the pandemic, we shifted from having customers picking up and self-selecting at an indoor venue to pre-packing shares and offering outdoor and curbside pick up.

In 2021, CSA staff are looking at new software to offer more flexible options for customers and efficiencies for staff.
Metro Farms program sees farmers grow their business

Mark Gawron, Program Manager, Metro Farms & Food Systems

In 2020, the Get Farming Mini Grants awarded $18,000 to six recipients for projects that included a washstand and cooler in the Ivanhoe Neighborhood and equipment such as an innovative tool to spread compost and mulch on no-till permanent beds.

One particularly interesting project awarded a mini grant was for 10 raised beds using Shou Sugi Ban at Harvey Towne Urban Farm (above). The farm used the Japanese wood preservation technique on the timbers for bed construction. The charring encases the lumber making it waterproof and resistant to mold, insects and fire.

The MFFS also assisted four New Roots graduates that have joined the Spring Greens CSA/Farm Share. We helped three of those farmers build high tunnels in 2019 to expand their production to be able to offer an early season CSA.

We helped with production planning and checked in with them frequently in the winter of 2019.

The CSA met its goal of serving 30 members in 2020. Two farmers received help in applying for a second high tunnel grant, which they were awarded. We will help get those constructed as those farmers plan to expand their CSA to serve 40 members.
Food Access creates new channels to reach consumers

Lana Dominguez, Program Manager, Food Access

Through Cultivate Kansas City’s 2020 Food Access Programs just over 3,400 families, seniors, and individuals in the greater metro area were able to access fresh fruits and vegetables from over 513 local farmers and growers in Kansas and Missouri.

Double Up Food Bucks helped 2,207 SNAP users purchase more produce at 13 farmers markets. Additionally, Cultivate KC Coupons provided 120 seniors with $3,545 in farmers markets coupons to purchase more fresh fruits and vegetables.

**This year we added two new Food Access Programs to help Kansas Citians secure fresh fruits and vegetables amidst a global pandemic and economic crisis.**

In partnership with New Roots for Refugees, we created Senior Farm Share that fed more than 1,000 seniors and 1,302 shares which supported farmers with almost $10,000 in sales. These shares were delivered to Don Bosco Senior Center, Bethel Neighborhood Center, and Shepherd’s Center for approximately 20 weeks.

We moved funding from Cultivate KC Coupons to create the Senior Farm Share since we believed this would be a better way to reach seniors who didn’t feel comfortable shopping at farmers markets amid a pandemic.

In partnership with Westport Commons Farm, we donated 3,313 pounds of produce to Metropolitan Lutheran Ministry’s food pantry and Welcome House. The food provided 9,765 meals and served an estimated 1,500 individuals.

In 2021, we want to keep both Cultivate KC Coupons and Senior Farm Share through strategic fundraising. We will keep donating produce from Westport Commons Farm as well. Although numbers are down in 2020 for Double Up Food Bucks, we are confident that our continued outreach efforts will reach new SNAP enrollees.
Westport Commons soil update
Dan Krull, Site Manager, Westport Commons Farm

When we started at Westport, our task was to bring back the organic matter, and convince the soil microbes to reaggregate the soil for us. By bringing in organic matter in the form of free leaves, woodchips, and compost, growing vigorous cover crops, and inoculating the soil with beneficial microbes and organisms, we have transformed much of the field into excellent conditions for growing.

We have measured our success partially through visual and physical observations of the appearance of the soil, water infiltration, and crop growth, and partially through the use of soil tests. Although some of the readings in a soil test can be ephemeral due to nutrients cycling through the soil organismal community, I find three main quantifications very useful:

Soil organic matter is an excellent indication of your soil health. In March of 2018 when we conducted our first soil samples, our soil organic matter was at 4.3%. In our most recent test in December of 2020 we got a whopping 9.6% reading on the section of the field where we had conducted our most intensive soil conversion work! That is a huge success.

Our second quantification is Cation Exchange Capacity. This is a measure of the soil’s ability to hold and store plant available nutrients called cations. At our initial testing in March of 2018, our CEC reading was 18.7, and by the fall of 2019, that number hadn’t moved at all, and came in at 18.7 again. In December of 2020, our CEC came back at 22.4. This is an excellent result, and a sign that we are heading in the right direction as the field matures.

Our final quantification is soil pH, which is directly affected by CEC and soil organic matter. I was expecting some swings as both of those increased and stabilized. In March of 2018 our soil pH came back at 6.8, which is a slightly acidic reading, and just about perfect for growing crops. Fall of the following year, that pH number had spiked up to 7.6. Again, sort of what I expected, and though not perfect, still within an acceptable range. In December of 2020, that pH value had come back down to a nearly neutral 7.1. I’m happy with that, and I’m curious to see how that number adjusts as the field continues to mature.

All in all, things are going great at Westport, and our soil is amazing. I want to stress that none of these accomplishments would have been possible without the help of hundreds of volunteers; the leaf removal and tree trimming companies who have brought us hundreds of yards of free organic matter; and Missouri Organic Recycling for donating hundreds of yards of compost and woodchips. The tools used were donated and equipment borrowed from Juniper Gardens Training Farm and the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Tool Library. Westport’s soil is a reflection of a community of generous, helpful people.
## Financials

### Income

**Earned Income**
- Contracted Services and Fees: $5,496
- Sales: 45,936
- Educational Events: 2,255
- Miscellaneous: 760

**Total Earned Income**: $54,447

**Support Income**
- Corporate & Business: $38,581
- Individual: 82,662

**Fundraising Events**
- Cultivate KC: -
- Third Party: $2,500
- Foundation Grants: $383,098
- Government Grants: $396,280

**Total Support Income**: $903,121

**Total Income**: $957,567

### Expense

**Administrative**: $28,392
- Advertising Expense & Market Fees: 1,108
- Agricultural Inputs: 25,817
- Direct Assistance to Individuals & Organizations: 143,367
- Equipment: 4,617
- Fees: 43,053
- Insurance: 9,689
- Maintenance: 2,946
- Occupancy: 49,613
- Supplies: 28,598
- Staff expenses: 596,478
- Travel: 4,675

**Total Expense**: $938,352

**Net**: $19,215
Grants & Gifts

Abbott Laboratories
Accenture
American Century Investments Foundation
American Family Insurance Dreams Foundation
Bank of America
Betty Rae’s Ice Cream
Blue Cross Blue Shield
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