

Hamilton Community Garden Networking Program 2016 Annual Report

What is the Hamilton Community Garden Networking Program?

The Hamilton Community Garden Networking (HCGN) program is run by Neighbour 2 Neighbour to sustain and expand the garden community of Hamilton and support Hamiltonians in using gardens to build the community, enhance the environment, and promote wellness.

The HCGN serves as a hub of the garden community by helping people:

- **Access Resources and Tools** to start, run, or participate in gardens through guides, and factsheets, and get connected to supplies
- **Find Gardens** through the interactive garden directory and map
- **Learn and Connect** through list-servs, events, workshops, and meet-ups

Mission

The HCGN program engages and connects community garden organizers, members, and supporters as well as the public to collaboratively build and sustain the garden community of Hamilton.

Vision

A community in which everyone has the opportunity to participate in and benefit from gardens grown to meet their needs.

Definition

Community Gardens are spaces where plants are grown by a community to meet its needs.

History

In 2007, guided by community interest, Hamilton Public Health Services approached North Hamilton Community Health Centre about resurrecting a Hamilton-Wentworth Garden Network. Interested parties came together and the HCGN was formed.

In 2010, stakeholders came together with the Community Food Security Stakeholder Committee to develop and pass the Hamilton Community Garden Policy. In 2011 and 2012, Green Venture developed the HCGN to include branding, outreach tools, and workshops with support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the City of Hamilton Public Works, Public Health Services and many partners.

In 2013, the Ontario Trillium Foundation supported Green Venture and Neighbour 2 Neighbour in continuing to grow and define the HCGN and support food growing garden projects in Hamilton. Today Neighbour 2 Neighbour continues to grow and support community gardening initiatives in Hamilton through the HCGN program. Learn more at hcgnc.ca.

Annual Report Overview

The HCGN program provides support for garden coordinators, gardeners and community members wanting to connect with community gardens in Hamilton. An annual report is produced to reflect on the program and for the greater community to see what was accomplished. In order to assess how Neighbour 2 Neighbour provides support to community gardens, an annual program survey is conducted with garden coordinators. The results help to adjust programming and improve the ways help is provided to gardens in the city. The findings of the survey are included in the Annual Report.

2016 HCGN Annual Report features:

- Current partners and supporters of the HCGN program
- The ways Neighbour 2 Neighbour has engaged community through the HCGN Program
- The ways Neighbour 2 Neighbour has provided support to gardens
- The successes of the community gardens in the city
 - These success are organized into 3 areas: building community, enhancing the environment and promoting wellness
- Hamilton Community Garden Networking Program Statistics

Partnerships and Supporters of the HCGN Program

In 2016, Neighbour 2 Neighbour leveraged partnerships and worked with a diversity of Hamilton groups to strengthen the HCGN program.

Partnerships included:

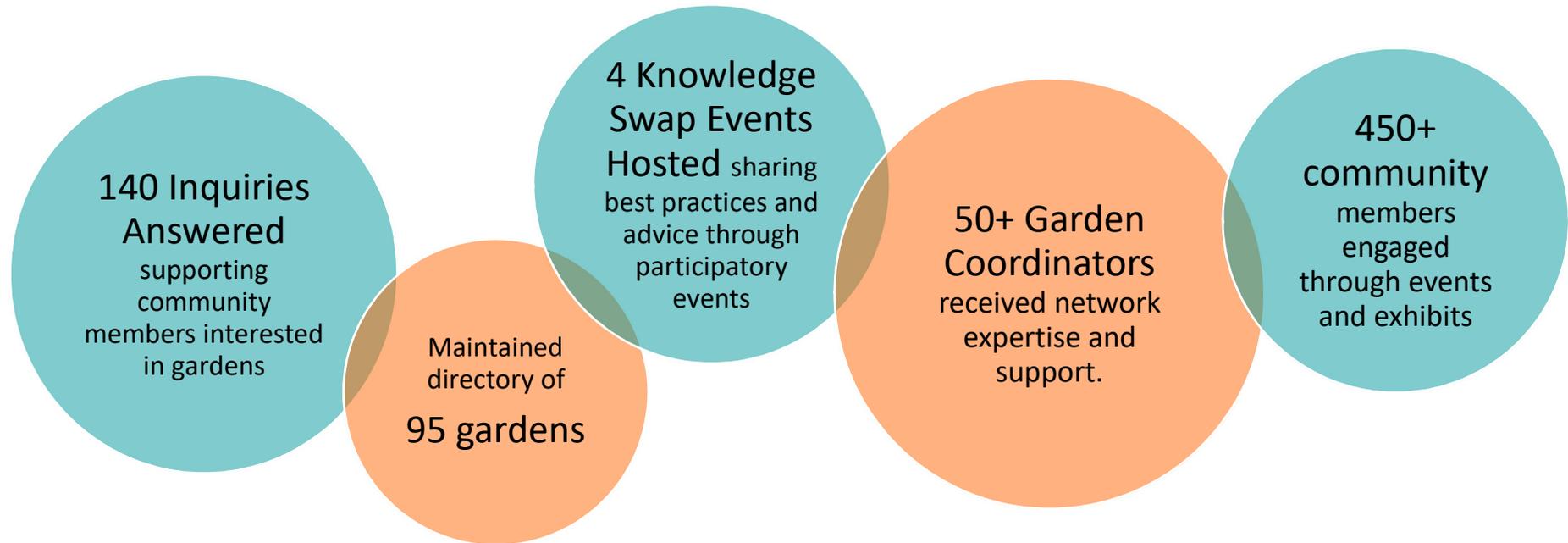
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Hamilton, Public Health Services and Public Works • CityHousing Hamilton • Hamilton Victory Gardens • North Hamilton Community Health Centre (NHCHC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Royal Botanical Gardens • McMaster University • Hamilton Mountain Paramedics • Mohawk College • Hamilton Wentworth Public and Catholic School Boards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Venture • Local suppliers • Community Food Centres Canada • McQuesten Urban Farm • Dundurn National Historic Site, Kitchen Garden |
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Support was provided by:



**TD Friends of the
Environment
Foundation**

HCGN Program Engagement



Additional Network Engagement and Community Outreach

- Created an at-a-glance food bank and meal program Donation Directory to make it easier for community gardens to donate excess produce to 8 food banks and meal programs in Hamilton.
- Hosted one Gardening in Schools Workshop and integrated teachers into HCGN program to connect them to other garden coordinators through the HCGN coordinator list-serv and Knowledge Swap events.
- 18 youth interns participated in 3 garden skill-building workshops taking place at various partner gardens throughout Hamilton.

HCGN Program Support for Gardens

Neighbour 2 Neighbour has been able to offer annual or semi-annual Resource Boost opportunities for community gardens to access tools, equipment, and materials to improve their community gardens. In addition to this support a website featuring an online Hamilton Garden Directory, interactive map and library of online resources for coordinating gardens is maintained, a garden coordinator email list-serv is provided and moderated, and monthly winter Knowledge Swap meetings for garden coordinators are hosted.

- Resource Boosts in the spring and fall of 2016 provided \$5300 of in-kind donations and financial support for gardens and coordinators in the HCGN program.
- 70% of coordinators surveyed said that the Resource Boost was a useful way that the HCGN provided support to their garden.
- 33% of garden coordinators reported that the Resource Boost helped cover all seasonal garden expenses. Rental fees, other grants and donations were other significant source of funding for gardens.
- Top 3 garden expenses were: equipment (tools, hoses, etc.), building materials (for planters, raised beds, fences, sheds, etc.), and soil and compost.
- 85% of coordinators reported that the coordinator email list-serv was a major benefit to being in the program allowing them to be in touch with other garden coordinators in the City of Hamilton.
- The online garden directory and online resources were useful to 65% of gardeners surveyed.
- Winter Knowledge Swap meetings were of less importance to coordinators, with only half of those surveyed reporting that these meetings were beneficial to them.

“Many of our gardeners are [relatively new] to gardening and the quick response of network support, when needed, has been invaluable to maintain and expand our garden's initiatives.”

– **Stuart Street Community Garden**

“The HCGN program supports us with materials and information. They are an excellent resource for knowledge and training.”

– **Powell Park Community Garden**

“For me, it's very helpful to know that there are other garden coordinators throughout the city - I've posed questions to them in the past and they were very supportive.”

– **Corktown Community Garden**

Community Success Stories

The HCGN program supports coordinators of gardens to improve life in the City of Hamilton in the following ways:

Build Community

People develop and leverage relationships out of gardens leading to other projects and partnerships. People from all backgrounds can get engaged and share their skills and traditions in a safe gathering place.

- Opening of Bobolink Community Garden – This garden is the 34th community garden at a CityHousing location bringing community members from Bobolink together to grow fruits, vegetables and flowers for themselves and their families.
- Neighbour 2 Neighbour provided support to CityHousing gardens through on-site visits to animate gardens by engaging community and sharing garden skills.
- Integration of School Education Gardens into HCGN program. Through the HCGN program a Gardening in Schools Workshop was hosted where educators learned how to run gardens throughout the school year and how to manage gardens over the summer break.

Enhance the Environment

Community gardens help the ecosystem by aiding water management and maintaining biodiversity, including important food sources for pollinators

- Of gardens surveyed, **81%** have on-site composting, **76%** use organic practices, and **67%** have pollinator species planted to promote pollinating insect and bird populations.
- **1,044 sq ft** of green space was created in 2016 through community gardens
- There is approximately **165,851 sq ft** of community garden green space in Hamilton.

Promote Wellness

Community gardens increase access to fresh produce while promoting an active lifestyle and community involvement.

- **65,000+ lbs** of produce was donated to over **15 food agencies** in 2016
- **41%** of gardens actively promoted equitable inclusion in their gardens through inclusion policy; translated materials and signage; partnering with organizations for newcomers, LGBTQSI folks, and people transitioning from corrections; and connecting to post-secondary campus groups and services for minorities. Several gardens focused resources on building accessible gardens and pathways for people using wheelchairs, walkers and other accessibility devices.
- **64%** of gardens promoted senior participation by having raised and accessible beds and by connecting with existing seniors programming at recreation centres and churches. **60%** promoted youth participation through existing youth programming at schools, churches and recreations centres and development of age-centred gardening activities. Many gardens offer volunteering opportunities for high school aged youth.

Hamilton Community Garden Networking Program Statistics

HCGN Program Stats by Ward	
Ward Number	Number of Gardens 2016
Ward 1	12
Ward 2	17
Ward 3	11
Ward 4	7
Ward 5	4
Ward 6	8
Ward 7	9
Ward 8	12
Ward 9	0
Ward 10	0
Ward 11	3
Ward12	5
Ward 13	4
Ward 14	1
Ward 15	2
Total	95

HCGN Stats - Total Gardens Per Year by Type to 2016								
Type	Pre 2010	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Plot	7	10	14	17	19	22	21	24
Youth/School	2	3	5	10	12	13	11	12
Donation	1	1	2	2	5	5	5	3
Hamilton Victory Gardens	0	0	1	4	5	9	15	15
Communal	1	1	1	2	2	2	8	7
CityHousing	0	0	7	20	28	33	33	34
Total	11	15	30	55	71	84	93	95