

Hamilton Community Garden Networking Program

2021 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 community gardening in Hamilton by supporting Hamiltonians to use 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 fact sheets, and connection 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 reinstating the 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 N2N continues to grow and support community gardening initiatives in Hamilton through the HCGN program. Learn more at <http://www.n2ncentre.com/hamilton-community-food-centre/community-garden-networking-program/>

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.

2021 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
 - 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 2021, Neighbour 2 Neighbour leveraged partnerships and worked with a diversity of Hamilton groups to strengthen the HCGN program.

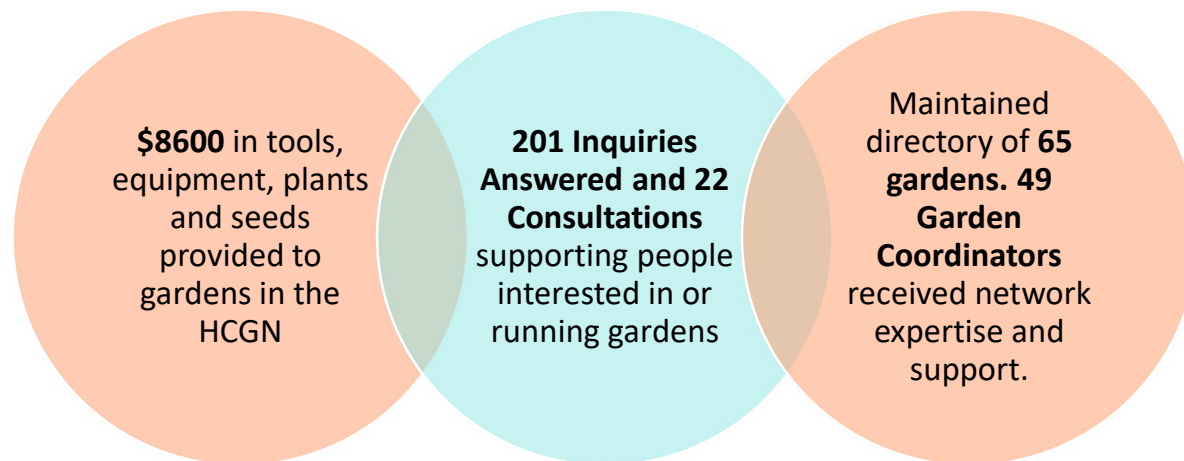
Partnerships included:

- City of Hamilton, Healthy Environments Division, Public Health Services, Healthy and Safe Communities Department
- CityHousing Hamilton
- Hamilton Victory Gardens
- Compass Community Health Centre
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- Hamilton Mountain Paramedics
- Mohawk College
- Hamilton Wentworth Public and Catholic School Boards
- Green Venture
- Local suppliers
- Community Food Centres Canada
- McQuesten Urban Farm
- Dundurn National Historic Site, Kitchen Garden

Support was provided by:



HCGN Program Engagement



HCGN Program Support for Gardens

Neighbour 2 Neighbour offers 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 regular Knowledge Swap meetings for garden coordinators are hosted (virtually).

- Resource Boosts in the Spring and Fall of 2021 provided over \$7,000 in new gardening equipment. Through the HCGN, \$1600 of donated tools, plants and seeds were distributed to community gardens in 2021.
- Rental fees, grants and donations were other significant sources of funding.
- Top 3 garden expenses in 2021 were the same as 2020: 1. Soil/compost, 2. Garden Equipment (tools, hoses, etc), and 3. Plants and seeds.
- Email list-serv, Knowledge Swap meetings, online directory and online resources remain important and useful to coordinators of community gardens.

Impact of HCGN Program for Coordinators of Community Gardens in Hamilton:

“During the pandemic this year, community gardens have helped immensely with social isolation, food security, mental wellness and community building.”

– Nonprofit Community Garden Coordinator

“I envision garden coordinators struggling with many issues without the knowledge they need to overcome them and confidence that increases through peer sharing. Gardens would be lost due to lack of resources and support of various kinds. New gardens may not happen.”

– Garden Coordinator explaining what it would be like without the HCGN program

“It's reassuring to know that the HCGN is there to troubleshoot, bounce ideas, communicate important safety information, and share resources - this year (with Covid) more than ever. Gardening is a collaborative act so it makes sense that we have a garden network.”

– Communal Garden Coordinator

Community Gardening Benefits

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.

- More than 1200 gardeners grew food in gardens across Hamilton in 2021.
- Despite restrictions on programming and events, over 200 volunteers helped out in gardens in 2021.
- 86% of gardens surveyed said that their participants return each year to garden.
- Green Venture ran their Grow A Row Program again with over 20 home gardeners planting and donating nearly 600 lbs of produce to N2N's Food Bank.
- Powell Park Community Garden added 1200 sq. ft. of gardening space that was tended communally by gardeners and given away to neighbours and donated to local food banks.

Enhance the Environment

Community gardens help the ecosystem in many ways.

- As in previous years, community gardens are using organic practices, have pollinator species, are composting on site, growing native plants, watering in part with water harvested from rainwater and rotating crops.
- Newer environmental practices for community gardens include low soil disturbance, over winter soil protection, and creating berms and swales to capture water.
- Approximately 1500 square feet of community garden space was added in 2021.
- 60 native plants were given out to gardens in the HCGN, converting over 600 square feet back to natural habitat for pollinators and other beneficial species.

Promote Wellness

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

- 20,000 lbs of produce was donated to Hamilton food banks and meal programs in 2021.
- The Food with Grace Garden at Grace Anglican Church in Waterdown grew fresh fruits and vegetables for the Food with Grace Food Bank.
- In order to address social isolation in the winter months and during lockdowns, several community gardens ran online workshops.

Success Stories...

"We were able to provide a lot of vegetables this year to members in the community and not just for use by the gardeners for their families."

- Garden Coordinator at Coop Housing site.

"Our gardeners help each other with suggestions and the work involved, especially for those who are older. It has been awesome to see how much everyone enjoyed the year and the excitement caused us to need more plots and we have 6 more plots for next year and this is resulting in 8 more persons to join us for next year. Gardening has become contagious."

- Garden Coordinator at CityHousing Building for seniors.

"Gardeners are constantly deepening their relationships with the plants and each other. This year I've seen new community connections form - one participant brought children's books to share with a child. Another participant started bringing surpluses of other groceries to share with other participants. We are learning what each other likes to eat and we are learning new ways to prepare and preserve food."

- Communal Garden Coordinator

Hamilton Community Garden Networking Program Statistics

HCGN Program Stats by Ward	
Ward Number	Number of Gardens in 2021
Ward 1	5
Ward 2	14
Ward 3	11
Ward 4	4
Ward 5	3
Ward 6	4
Ward 7	3
Ward 8	6
Ward 9	0
Ward 10	3
Ward 11	1
Ward 12	2
Ward 13	4
Ward 14	2
Ward 15	3
Total	65

HCGN Stats - Total Gardens Per Year by Type to 2021												
Type	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Plot	10	14	17	19	22	21	24	25	23	21	19	19
Youth/School/Education	3	5	10	12	13	11	12	13	14	13	0	1
Donation	1	2	2	5	5	5	3	3	8	9	9	9
Hamilton Victory Gardens	0	1	4	5	9	15	15	17	10	8	6	6
Communal	1	1	2	2	2	8	7	7	6	4	4	4
CityHousing + Tenant	0	7	20	28	33	33	34	34	36	37	23	24
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	2
Total	15	30	55	71	84	93	95	101	99	94	63	65

Garden Closures:

- Temporary garden closures include 13 school/youth gardens and 4 gardens located on university or other institutional property including the Hamilton Victory Garden at Macassa Lodge.
- New gardens include: Kehila School Garden created in partnership with Temple Anshe Shalom and Hamilton Hebrew Academy (Adas Israel Synagogue) and Kiwanis Homes Community Garden (Tenant Garden) on Upper Wentworth Street.