

Hamilton Community Garden Networking Program 2023 Annual Report

Annual Report Overview

Neighbour 2 Neighbour's Hamilton Community Garden Networking 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.

2023 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
 - Successes 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

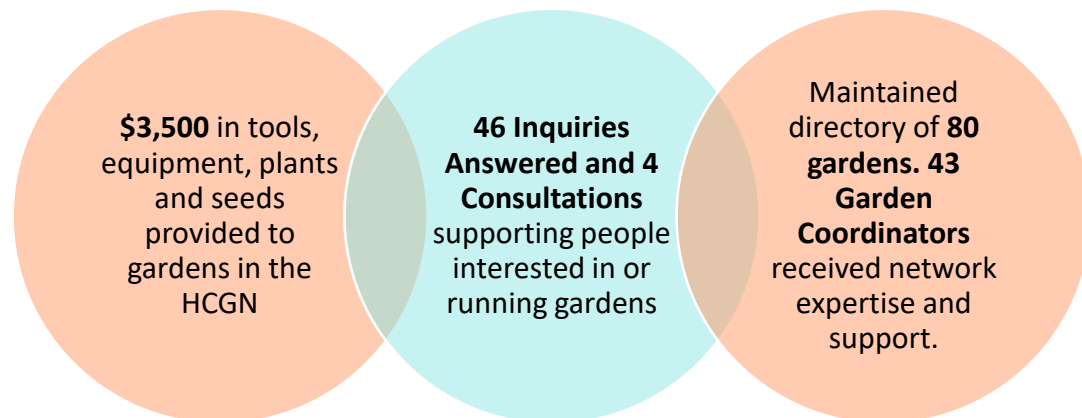
In 2023, Neighbour 2 Neighbour leveraged partnerships and worked with a diversity of Hamilton groups to strengthen the HCGN program.

Partnerships included:

- City of Hamilton, Public Health Services and Healthy and Safe Communities Department
- CityHousing Hamilton
- Hamilton Victory Gardens
- Compass Community Health Centre
- Hamilton Mountain Paramedics
- Mohawk College
- Green Venture
- Roots to Justice Community Garden
- Community Food Centres Canada
- McQuesten Urban Farm / Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg
- The Children's Garden Project Canada

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 webpage featuring an online Hamilton Garden Directory, interactive map and library of online resources for coordinating gardens is maintained and a garden coordinator email list-serv is moderated.

- Resource Boosts in the Spring and Fall of 2023 provided over \$3,500 in new gardening equipment. Through the HCGN, \$600 in native pollinator plants and shrubs were distributed to community gardens in 2023.
- 53% of gardens surveyed said that the HCGN Resource Boost was a significant means of financial assistance. Rental fees, grants and donations were the next most significant sources of funding.
- Top 3 garden expenses in 2023 were 1. Garden Equipment (tools, hoses, etc.) 2. Soil/Compost and Water (for those not receiving water in-kind from the City of Hamilton), and 3. Building materials (for planters, raised beds, fences, sheds etc).

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

Outside enjoyment really brightens the day of many of our gardeners. Many rely on what they grow and produce to help with their food budget so the assistance we receive is of great help to those with a garden. Thank you for all you do.

-Community Garden Coordinator in the HCGN

In past years we have relied on HCGN mostly for knowledge on what and how to plant.

-Community Garden Coordinator in the HCGN



Community Gardening Benefits

Community Gardens improve life in the City of Hamilton in the following ways:

Build Community

People develop and leverage relationships and new partnerships out of gardens.

- The T. Melville Bailey Park Community Garden was built through the leadership of St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton with the goal of providing programming on-site for clients.
- Roots to Justice Hamilton expanded on their garden built in 2022 to offer weekly public programming for community residents and the Roots to Justice Youth Garden Program for community members 15-19 years old.
- The McMaster Teaching and Learning Garden, renamed the "OPIRG McMaster Community Garden", expanded their site on campus at 1280 Main Street West because of the growing community of gardeners.

Enhance the Environment

Community gardens help the ecosystem in many ways.

- Nearly all community gardens surveyed report using ecologically sound gardening practices including on-site composting, creating habitat for indigenous plants and insects, rainwater collection and crop-rotation.
- Approximately 700 square feet of community garden space was created in 2023.
- 61 native plants were given out to gardens in the HCGN, converting more than 650 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.

- More than 711 gardeners representing 372 families grew food in gardens across Hamilton.
- An estimated 3,163 lbs of produce were donated to food banks or food programs.
- Riverdale Salad Bowl Community Garden (Ward 6) received the Community Trillium Award in recognition of their positive contribution to the City of Hamilton.

Success Stories

"Our garden is like a little neighborhood. We all help each other with whatever needs to be done and then share the bounty of crops with others, including others in the building who don't have a garden. It is a pleasure to see many just sitting in the garden area enjoying the plants and flowers and the beauty of nature.."

- Community Garden Coordinator in the HCGN

"One of our garden plots is maintained by the local EarlyOn Program. Watching the little toddlers and children learn garden practices is always fun, chaotic, and amazing.."

- Community Garden Coordinator in the HCGN

"The relationships forged in our community garden are a wonderful blessing! We always have a great group of people that offer, not only their time, but a wealth of talents and experience as well to anyone in need of assistance. We have a wide variety of cultures represented which is so beneficial to different types of gardening styles and produce!"

- Donation Garden Coordinator in the HCGN

HCGN Program Stats by Ward	
Ward Number	Number of Gardens in 2023
Ward 1	7
Ward 2	15
Ward 3	14
Ward 4	9
Ward 5	3
Ward 6	4
Ward 7	4
Ward 8	8
Ward 9	1
Ward 10	1
Ward 11	1
Ward 12	1
Ward 13	6
Ward 14	3
Ward 15	3
Total	80

HCGN Stats - Total Gardens Per Year by Type 2018 to 2023						
Type	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Plot	23	21	19	19	21	24
Youth/School/Education	14	13	0	1	7	7
Donation	8	9	9	9	9	11
Hamilton Victory Gardens	10	8	6	6	4	6
Communal	6	4	4	4	5	4
CityHousing + Tenant	36	37	23	24	24	23
Other	2	2	2	2	2	5
Total	99	94	63	65	72	80

Hamilton Community Garden Networking Program Statistics

Garden Openings and Closures:

- Community pollinator gardens created through the Adopt-A-Park program joined the HCGN.
- New gardens include: T. Melville Bailey Park Community Garden (Ward 8) and the Central Park Community Garden (Ward 2).