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# COMMUNITY GARDEN CONNECTIONS

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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**Report prepared by:**

Community Garden Connections

Co-Coordinator:

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Faculty Advisors:

Libby McCann, PhD and Jean Kayira, PhD



# COMMUNITY GARDEN CONNECTIONS

*"Diggin' in since 2011"*

## Mission Statement

Community Garden Connections (CGC) serves to build our local capacity to grow food and enhance personal and communal well-being among those most impacted and disenfranchised by climate change, Covid-19, and other social, economic, and ecological injustices. CGC offers safe places for community members to get outside, learn, and connect through gardening. It addresses food insecurity related to climate change, personal and communal health, and resiliency. With the help of a private donation from the Rashti Foundation, CGC supports the installation and cooperative maintenance of 70+ raised gardens in partnership with local service agencies, students, and community members. These funds also support educational outreach to meet the specific gardening interests of community partners.



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40 Avon Street, Keene, NH 03431



## Why CGC?

Community gardens provide access to healthy landscapes, enhance our connections to outdoor environments, create strong social networks, increase self-sufficiency and local food security, and increase wellness. Gardening provides an affordable, nutritious food source. It cuts across social, economic, and racial barriers to bring together people of all ages and backgrounds.

## Who is involved?

### Advisors:

- Dr. Jean Kayira, Dr. Elizabeth McCann

### 2021 Co-Coordination:

- Rachel Brice, Alex Lacy, Lea Kablik, Kristen Thompson, Emma McHone, Ximena Gallegos, Sara Lobdell, and Abby Schneider
- 2021 Westmoreland Garden Project Manager: Alex Lacy
- 2021 C&S Workplace Organic Gardens Project Director: Rachel Brice; C&S Workplace Garden Educator: Grace DeMeo





# CONTINUED SUPPORT IN TOUGH TIMES

With the continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic, CGC kept many of the same program adaptations that began in 2020. We were thrilled to be able to satisfy our mission to increase local capacity to grow food by providing a way for community members to grow produce remotely and safely through container gardening. While enduring the continued pandemic, CGC was able to offer:

- Technical support
- Garden bed repairs
- End of season HarvestFest Gift Baskets (in lieu of in-person event)
- Attending and supporting events with community partners



*CGC team member Kristen with Keene Housing Authority partner Lea showing off the HarvestFest gift basket received*

## STELLAR STATS

### Donations and Distributions

684 pounds planted, tended and harvested for donation to The Community Kitchen



### Community Outreach

Emma McHone & CGC high school volunteer extraordinaire, Paige Cote, presented at the Monadnock Sustainability Roundtable by The Alliance for Youth Climate Leadership and Monadnock Sustainability Hub (November 18, 2021)

### Staff

Hired 4 new CGC Co-coordinators!

### Additions and Creations

6 beds of garlic planted at the Keene Recreation Center

### WOW!

Since CGC began stewardship of the Westmoreland Garden Project in 2012, staff and volunteers have grown and donated **15,464 pounds (7.732 tons!)** of fresh produce to community members.



Emma McHone



Ximena Gallegos



Lauren Dausch



Nicolette Gagnon



# 2021 GARDEN SITES AND PARTNERS

- Antioch University New England Campus Garden  
40 Avon St., Keene, NH
- City of Keene Parks and Recreation Center  
312 Washington St., Keene, NH
- Fuller Elementary School  
422 Elm St., Keene, NH
- Benjamin Franklin Elementary School  
217 Washington St., Keene, NH
- Keene Family YMCA  
200 Summit Rd., Keene, NH
- Keene Senior Center  
70 Court St., Keene, NH
- Monadnock Area Peer Support Agency  
64 Beaver St., Keene, NH
- Monadnock Developmental Services  
121 Railroad St., Keene, NH
- Keene Housing Authority  
8 Harmony Ln. & 105 Castle St., Keene, NH
- Cheshire County (Westmoreland Garden Project (WGP))  
193 River Rd, Westmoreland, NH
- RISE for Baby and Family  
147 Washington St., Keene, NH



CGC Garden bed at Monadnock Developmental Services

## Westmoreland Garden Project



Apple Cider Making Fall Celebration at the Westmoreland Garden Project in collaboration with the Environmental Studies Student Alliance from Antioch University New England



Happy harvest volunteers at Westmoreland Garden



Beekeeping workshop at Westmoreland Garden in partnership with Imagine That Honey!





*Sara and Gracie hard at work rebuilding garden beds at Franklin Elementary School*



*Rachel and Kristen helping to keep C&S workplace garden beds "weed free" this season*



*Lots to do throughout the growing season to steward CGC's Westmoreland Garden Project, from tunnel care, fence repairs, weeding, planting and more. A hearty "THANK YOU" to all of our volunteers--past, present and future!*



*Another successful volunteer garden party at Westmoreland.*



*Just because who doesn't like a chicken picture?*



## C&S Workplace Organic Gardens

At C&S Wholesale Grocers in Keene, organic workplace gardens provide a way for employees and their families to grow produce for themselves and for direct donations to local hunger relief organizations. C&S and Antioch University New England have been partners since 2011, and this year, worked hard to provide garden resources and educational opportunities while keeping safety a top priority. The garden educator provided 12 newsletters, spent 3 hours per week on-site for “garden hours,” met monthly with the North and South Hatfield, MA sites for virtual garden chats, and created a garden program binder to facilitate site coordinator onboarding and continued garden program success.

At the end of the 2021 season, program evaluation highlighted multiple perceived benefits by program participants, including:

**33%** An increase in overall happiness

**66%** An increased or improved sense of fulfillment, purpose, and physical health

**75%** An improvement in overall mental health

**58%** An increase in overall work productivity



*Prepping for the season at C&S workplace gardens*



*Antioch students gear up for a fresh picked produce donation run!*

Participants in the C&S Workplace Organic Gardens Project report strong emotional connection to the gardens, including pride, happiness, joy, and relaxation. One participant remarked “it is so fulfilling to garden, grow flowers and have them in the office in vases.” Another said that gardening at work helps them “connect with the earth.” Additionally, garden participants care about the ways the garden project can positively impact the larger community. Ninety-two per cent (92%) of survey respondents said it was important to them that the gardens improve the environment, 83% that the gardens donate food to the community, and 75% that the gardens address food insecurity in the community.

## LOOKING AHEAD

We are incredibly excited to be in the midst of planning our 10-year anniversary event series. CGC's 10th year celebration was intended for 2021, but it was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We dubbed this year's celebration series CGC's 10 +1 “Diggin’ in since 2011”! This will be a series of events involving alumni, community partners, and the general public. Events include the following: in-person, hands-on workshops, virtual workshops and speakers, and both in-person festivities, garden stories and more. These events will celebrate our community impacts over the past decade and explore our visions for the future. Follow CGC's social media for details!

