

ANNUAL HARVEST REPORT



2020



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

2020 wasn't the year we expected at The Big Garden. We started off thinking we would offer our regular hands-on programming: providing garden education in schools and childcare centers for thousands of children and youth, hosting our summer urban ag internship for young adults, and teaching workshops for adults through our Growing Gardeners program. And then the global pandemic happened.

When the pandemic began, many of us in the nonprofit world were asking ourselves, "What are we going to do now? How are we going to adapt to this new situation?" **One of the things we realized pretty quickly at The Big Garden was that the need for fresh produce, the need for food was going to grow because of the pandemic.**

In March, we began a collaboration with other local urban agriculture organizations, realizing that by working together we could put more land into cultivation and have a greater impact. In partnership with Latino Center of the Midlands and other organizations, fourteen interns were hired to plant, maintain and harvest our garden beds in and around Omaha. Big Garden staff members supervised, transported and worked alongside the interns installing raised beds, planting gardens, watering, weeding, harvesting, and delivering produce to local food pantries. **This shows what can happen when organizations think creatively and work together in the face of a crisis.**

We also pivoted to develop more spaces where we could cultivate food: growing emergency food in our greenhouses, cultivating previously underutilized areas of our campus, and partnering with several of the schools and other organizations that we traditionally work with that have on-site gardens. Many of these places were closed, but our staff planted and maintained their gardens, donating the food to local pantries and food distribution programs where the need was so great.

Our educators stepped up as well, making educational videos to reach children and youth who were learning online. They worked to successfully translate our education programs into online video lessons that are available on our website. Our educators even provided kits for some classes, sending kids home with 5-gallon buckets, soil, seeds, and trowels so they could follow along with our online programs.

In the fall, for the first time ever, we began year-round cultivation in our greenhouses. We kept the heaters running, dedicated staff to greenhouse production, and focused on growing culturally-appropriate vegetables for home deliveries for homebound neighbors. We also began installing two hoop houses on our campus where we can increase our year-round growing capacity.

The pandemic has changed us all. It has also made us realize that so many of our neighbors are one step away from food insecurity. **We have been proud to be able to provide our services when they were needed most.** With your support, we are creating communities that are stronger, more equitable, and more resilient when faced with challenges.



Nathan Morgan, Executive Director



Photo courtesy of
Omaha Community Foundation

HIGHLIGHTS

153 raised garden beds built & installed
430,000+ pounds of soil moved

11 new gardens built or significantly overhauled

56 videos created for online education
222 gardening and cooking kits distributed



20,000+ seedlings grown in our greenhouses

HIGHLIGHTS

9 orchards
installed



340 jars of
salsa & pickles
preserved and
distributed

18 summer interns
40 gardens planted &
maintained
15,000 pounds of fresh
produce cultivated by our
staff; countless more
cultivated within our
network!



OUR TEAM

STAFF

Nathan Morgan, Executive Director
Matt Freeman, Director of Operations
Cami Cavanaugh Rawlings, Development Manager
Jaimee Trobough, Director of Communications
Stephanie Finklea, Director of Education
Mioux Stabler, Education Coordinator
Erin Higgins, Siembra Raíces & Giving Grove Coordinator
Molly Baurain, Kansas Coordinator
Alajia McKizia, Education Coordinator
Chancellor Smith, Education Assistant
Demone Gaspard, Education Assistant
Kay Wilwerding, Education & Volunteer Coordinator
Amy Gee, AmeriCorps
Brittany Beyer, AmeriCorps



SIEMBRA TEAM LEADS

Kaya Baker
Ramsea Lucas

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Dwayne Brown, Slate Architecture
Vice President: Brad Christian-Sallis, Civic Nebraska
Secretary: Melissa Taylor, Mutual of Omaha
Treasurer: Mike Ramsey, Mutual of Omaha
Pat McGill, Great Plains Conference United Methodist Women
Marcia Ghali Bergren, LIMHP | MSW
Jay Lund, Greenslate Development
Carly Wegner, University of Nebraska Foundation
Burke Harr, Houghton Bradford Whitted Law Firm
Alex Wolf, Koley Jessen
Rev. Kent Little, First United Methodist Church Omaha

The Big Garden's mission is to cultivate food security by developing community gardens, creating opportunities to serve, and providing education on issues related to hunger.



Growing healthy food, healthy kids, and healthy communities.

The Big Garden

5602 Read Street

Omaha, NE 68152

Website: www.BigGarden.org

Email: info@BigGarden.org

Facebook: The Big Garden

Instagram: [@bigardenomaha](https://www.instagram.com/bigardenomaha)