



IMPACT REPORT

2018

kids
GARDENING.ORG
HELPING YOUNG MINDS GROW



**HAPPIER,
HEALTHIER KIDS
LEARNING IN THE
GARDEN AND
CONNECTING TO
NATURE**

Our mission is to ensure all kids have a garden in which to play, learn, and grow.

Dear Friends,

My professional path has taken me from a charter school in Chicago's West Town, to an outdoor education center in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, to teaching English in Nicaragua and Honduras, to guiding students through the many ecosystems and diverse communities of Bolivia and Peru, and, more recently, to supporting schools to buy local food and sustain school gardens in Southern Vermont's Green Mountains. The common thread that has connected all these experiences has been my passion for experiential learning. "Learning by doing" allows students of all ages, and from all social, economic, and cultural contexts the opportunity to connect to their natural environment and their communities, and to engage in self reflection, leading to social-emotional growth. My experience has culminated in joining the KidsGardening team in April 2018. Here, I found a dynamic, passionate, and talented team that is committed to ensuring that all kids in our country can benefit from garden-based learning.

An inherently experiential learning tool, gardens are so much more than just soil and plants. They are vibrant, ever-changing learning laboratories for inquisitive minds. They are sanctuaries for those who seek refuge from internal or external strife. They provide bounty to feed empty stomachs. They are a feast for the senses. And, they offer us a tangible way to connect to the natural world, regardless of their size, location, or productive capacity.

During our annual Kids Garden Month contest in April, we asked kids to "Dream Big" and tell us about their dream gardens. 2018 was also a year for us to "Dream Big" as an organization. We embarked on an ambitious strategic planning process and have emerged with a renewed focus on propelling the youth gardening movement forward by facilitating deeper connection and engagement among the educators and parents we serve.

I know that, with your support, there's no stopping us in fulfilling our mission of ensuring all kids have a garden in which to play, learn, and grow.

With love and gratitude,



Helen Rortved
Executive Director





Wow!

We relaunched three years ago and I'm so proud of all we've accomplished. We have strong leadership with Executive Director Helen Rortvedt, and a passionate and talented KidsGardening team and Board of Directors.

This year we held a strategic planning session to set our five-year goals, with one being to increase the breadth and depth of our grant programs to help create more opportunities for kids to learn and grow in the garden. Already in just the first few months of 2019, we've increased our grant awards, working with sponsors and partners, from 46 to 221.

I've met so many kids over the years whose lives have been changed by gardening. Ian McKenna of Austin, Texas, always stands out for me. When Ian was only eight years old, he learned some of his classmates were going without meals. Determined to make a difference, he grew a garden and donated food to his hungry neighbors. As a teenager, he's now leading others of all ages to garden and grow food for their neighbors in need.

As you know, our work strengthens school communities and helps struggling youngsters find their path to academic and social success. From feeding the hungry, to igniting a passion for science, to a new appreciation for the health of our planet, if ever there was a time for us to expand our work, it is now. And that is exactly what we are doing.

Thank you all for your support and inspiration,

Jim Feinson
Chair, KidsGardening
Board of Directors



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“My hope is that together we can grow a kinder and gentler world one garden and gardener at a time. And what better way than to start with kids?”

- Melinda Myers
KidsGardening
Advisory Board



Dream Big!

CELEBRATING KID GARDENERS

April is Kids Garden Month, and to celebrate, we partnered with Chartwells to ask kids about their dream gardens!

From intricate maps to unicorn poop fertilizer, we were absolutely amazed with kids' creativity. Well over 500 kids participated in our contest, and they could enter as individuals, or as a class or group. We selected six winners total, four weekly winners and two grand prize winners - one individual and one class - who won prize packages provided by Gardener's Supply Company.



“This is the happiest world I can think of.”

- Genevieve, age 8

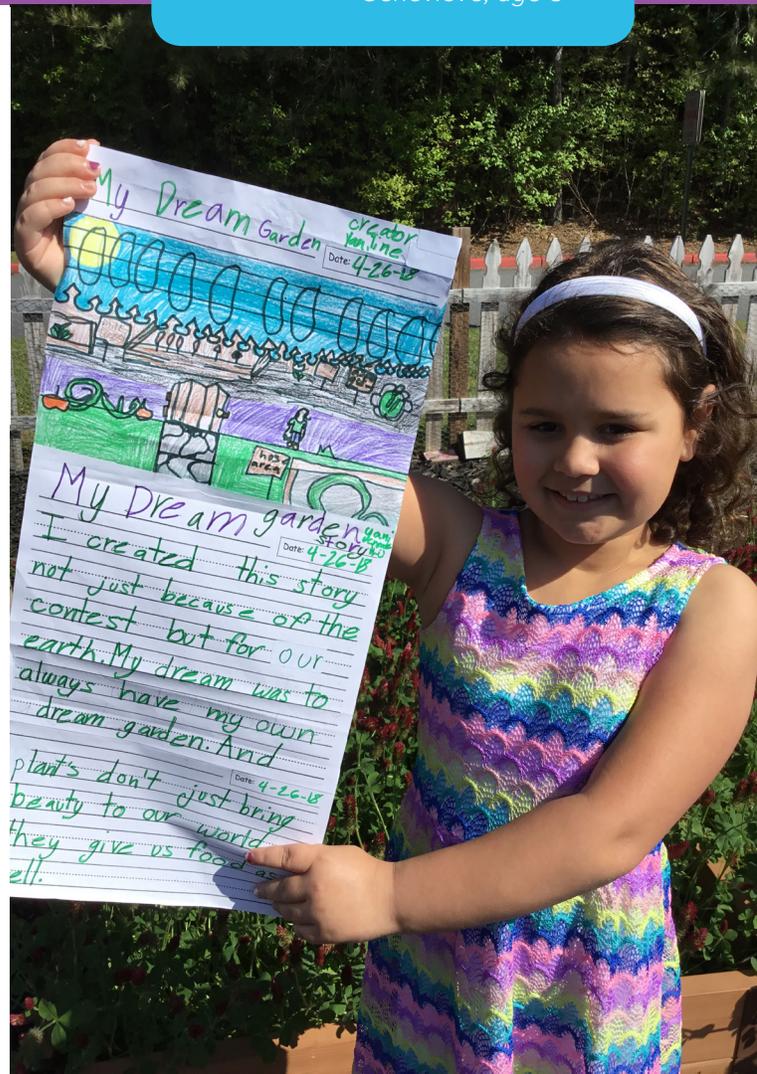
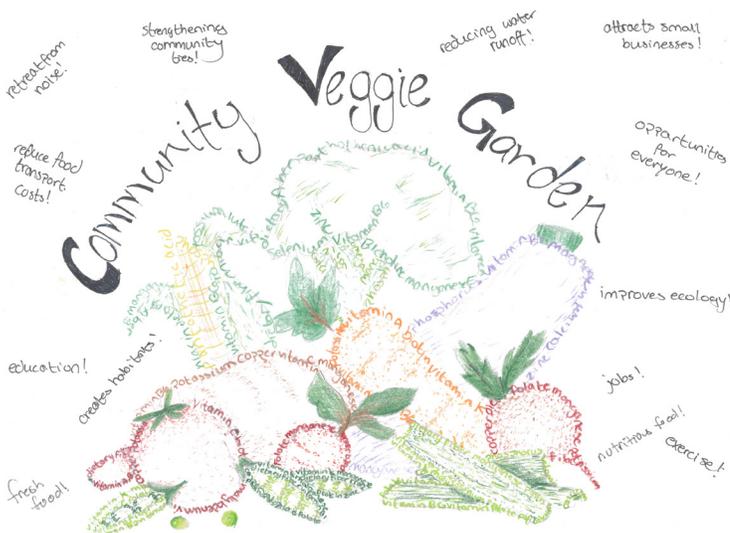
My Dream Garden Poem

My dream garden is imagination like a talking flower

The trees whisper

The flower makes perfume

The leaf makes food



Program Spotlights

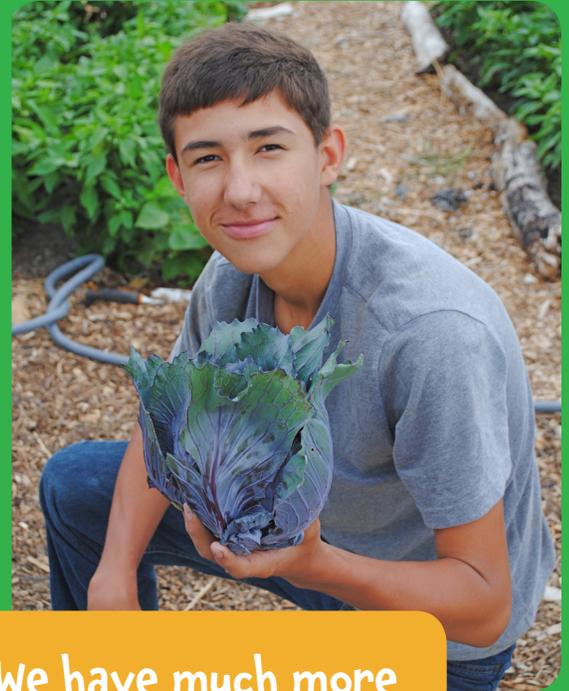
YOUTH GARDEN GRANT



We've been helping get young people into the garden with this grant since 1982! Selecting just twenty-five programs for our 2018 awards from among the over 800 entries we received was tough. There are so many schools and organizations that want to bring the benefits of gardening to kids.

One of our grand prize winners was the REDCO Community Food Sovereignty Initiative, located in Mission, South Dakota. They are striving to increase the amount of locally grown food on the Rosebud Reservation, as well as educate and engage the community, especially youth, in local food production. They educate young gardeners about traditional Lakota foodways, focusing on indigenous seeds and planting techniques, on telling the story of Lakota foods, and revitalizing preservation methods, such as drying meat and berries.

The leadership of REDCO Community Food Sovereignty Initiative hopes to develop a model that other communities on the reservation can follow, spreading the benefits that gardening offers in the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional education of young people through growing food.



“We have much more capability this year to educate our youth and allow them to find out what gardening means to them personally and how it can enrich their lives.”

- Michael Prate, REDCO

SCHOOL GARDEN BUILD WITH PT HOLDINGS

For the fourth year in a row, KidsGardening partnered with PT Holdings to build a school garden in the suburbs of Chicago as part of the local company's Giving Back Initiative. This year North Elementary School, in Villa Park, IL, was the recipient of this exciting opportunity.

Over the course of a sunny May morning, PT Holdings staff, the North Elementary School community, and members of the KidsGardening team built eight raised beds, twelve benches, a small storage shed, and a weather station. Volunteers also transplanted over one hundred plants, and moved approximately ten yards of mulch, eight yards of soil, one yard of gravel, and half a yard of compost!



CARTON 2 GARDEN



The Carton 2 Garden contest is part of sponsor Evergreen Packaging's ongoing effort to raise awareness among consumers on the eco-friendly benefits of paper cartons.

KidsGardening and Evergreen Packaging presented the fourth annual Carton 2 Garden contest in 2018. Students and educators designed projects repurposing milk and juice cartons to build and enhance their school garden while engaging in hands-on experiences focused on environmental stewardship, sustainable packaging, and healthy living. The grand prize winning project, "Follow the Pollinators to Our Garden!" from Johnsburg High School in Johnsburg, IL, organized a community-wide campaign to share the importance of native bees to our food supply. Other prizes included winners in STEM, sustainability, and health and nutrition specialty categories.



"I love how, after telling a few of my students about (Carton 2 Garden), they embraced it and ran with it. It truly sparked leadership abilities in them that I hadn't seen before and offered them an opportunity to learn and grow by doing activities I wouldn't normally have initiated in our classes."

- Judy Krueger, teacher,
Johnsburg High School

Over 270 schools participated in the Carton 2 Garden contest, and each student involved had a unique opportunity to connect to the natural world and learn in a hands-on way.



BUDDING BOTANIST



In partnership with the Klorane Botanical Foundation, the Budding Botanist grant awards six schools funding to help students learn about plants, explore their world, and be inspired to take care of the life they discover in their local ecosystems.

The Academy of Global Citizenship in Chicago was one of the six awardees of the inaugural Budding Botanist grant. The grant allowed the school community to come together to rebuild and reimagine their garden into one that meets the needs of their classes. A functioning, safe garden space allows first-graders studying concepts such as Farm to Table to have hands-on learning experiences harvesting fall crops, as well as planting crops that "sleep" through the winter to grow again in the spring (such as garlic).

Curriculum & Partnership Spotlights

BRINGING KIDS' UNDERSTANDING OF SOIL TO LIFE

DIGGING INTO SOIL

Our fast-paced, technology-driven society spends very little time thinking about one of the most important natural resources on Earth - soil. It is literally the foundation of all life, however we treat it like it is just dirt. Unfortunately, soil education is a topic that gets very little focus in schools. Most curricula available only provide a broad overview of soil structure without introducing the web of life found underground, leaving students unaware of the precious resource we walk on every day.

In 2018, KidsGardening teamed up with Dr. Steve Apfelbaum and Susan Lehnhardt, experts from Applied Ecological Services and the Lower Sugar River Watershed Association, to create an activity guide connected to the Next Generation Science Standards to help high school educators engage students in a more comprehensive exploration of soil. Available as an electronic download, *Digging into Soil: A Garden Practicum* offers hands-on activities to teach topics ranging from soil basics to investigating how human actions impact soil health. Based on the belief that the future depends on caring citizens making environmentally sound decisions and that people must also feel connected to the soil to be motivated to find and implement solutions needed to protect this precious resource, the goal of the guide is for students to understand that soil is a complex system critical to our health, well-being, and survival.



"I believe students of all learning types will benefit from these lessons. I have to say this unit is a great starting point for any teacher, novice or experienced in teaching any number of lessons about soil or water."

*- Richard Meyer, Educator,
Burlington High School, VT*

A "HEAD START" FOR TODAY'S YOUNGEST GARDENERS

This year, we began an innovative three-year partnership with the National Head Start Association and The Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation.

We'll be working together to combat some of the most pressing challenges facing today's youngest generation, improving access to healthy food and increasing time spent outdoors connected to nature. Together, we are bringing the powerful, life-enhancing benefits of gardens to one million at-risk Head Start children and families across the country through the development of edible gardens and hands-on garden education and professional development.

Impact & Financials

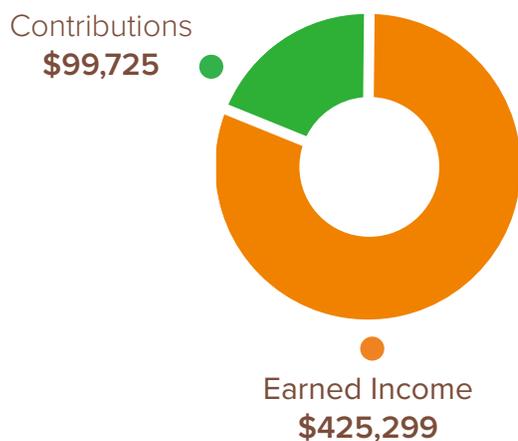
Here's how we brought gardening to youth across the United States in 2018:



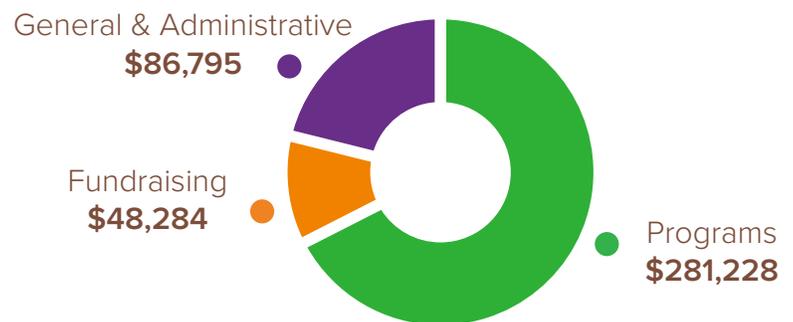
BUT WE CAN DO MORE

920,000. That's a lot of lives touched through gardening, but there is still so much more work to do. We are only able to award 10% of the many worthy programs that apply to our Youth Garden Grant every year. The rest are shovel-ready programs, with dedicated staff and great ideas, who are ready to start or expand garden programs that will grow kids for years to come. They just need our help to get started! With increasing support from sponsors and donors, we're excited to expand our granting capacity to meet this need and to ensure that all kids have a garden in which to play, learn, and grow.

INCOME



EXPENSES



Our Supporters

Thank you to the hundreds of generous partners and supporters across the country who made our mission possible in 2018. Together, we're growing a generation of happier, healthier kids!



AeroGrow • American Meadows / High Country Gardens • America's Best Flowers
B. B. Barns Garden Center • Bluestone Perennials • Cabot Creamery • Epicor Software
Nutritower • Stark Bros. Nurseries & Orchards • Wood Prairie Family Farm

WHY I GIVE

My third graders' classroom science experiment grew into a garden!

That's the short version of how I became a garden educator, and why I have been a regular donor to KidsGardening for over 14 years. My third-grade class transplanted our pole beans from paper cups into a row along a nearby fence. As the years went on, I found myself infusing my teaching with outdoor education, and the garden area expanded. Garden-based learning became a regular part of our classroom activity, supported with two grants we received from KidsGardening.

It wasn't until we received our first grant from KidsGardening that we were able to buy proper gardening tools and equipment. Oh, the excitement we felt when the boxes of garden grant gifts arrived! Now we had much needed kid-sized tools, a garden cart, vegetable seeds, and more. The local newspaper even highlighted our garden and our grant award. This brought additional support and valuable networking with other school garden leaders.



In my retirement years, I find great joy in volunteering as a garden educator, and in sharing the benefits of gardening with hundreds of kids each year. I can't think of anything more important as we educate the next generation. I am pleased to be a regular donor to KidsGardening, having received significant support and valuable materials from this great organization.

Judy Sims
Garden Educator & KidsGardening Donor



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