

2021 IMPACT REPORT





2021. What a year. In so many very big ways.

Still under the shadow of the pandemic, 2021 emerged as a year of listening, reimagination, and regeneration for Denver Urban Gardens.

On the heels of our 2020 listening tour, DUG started the year ready to think about our work differently. How do we optimize our existing network of community gardens to provide the greatest benefit to the greatest number? With an unparalleled reach across all of metro Denver, what were the problems our gardens were solving and how could we solve even more problems for more people with the simplest of solutions: growing food in community.

We decided DUG needed an updated Vision, Mission & Values to guide us through this next chapter.

Mission

A sustainable urban future where people are deeply and directly connected to the earth, each other, and the food they eat

Vision

To provide the access, skills, and resources for people to grow healthy food in community and regenerate urban green spaces

Values

Earn TRUST
Demonstrate INTEGRITY
Embrace EQUITY
Build COMMUNITY
Inspire CURIOSITY

Community Gardens are places of impact – far more than might meet the eye. We started talking loudly about DUG's six areas of great impact, beyond just growing healthy organic veggies.

Climate Action Community Building Food Access Health & Wellness Skill Building Ancestral Foodways

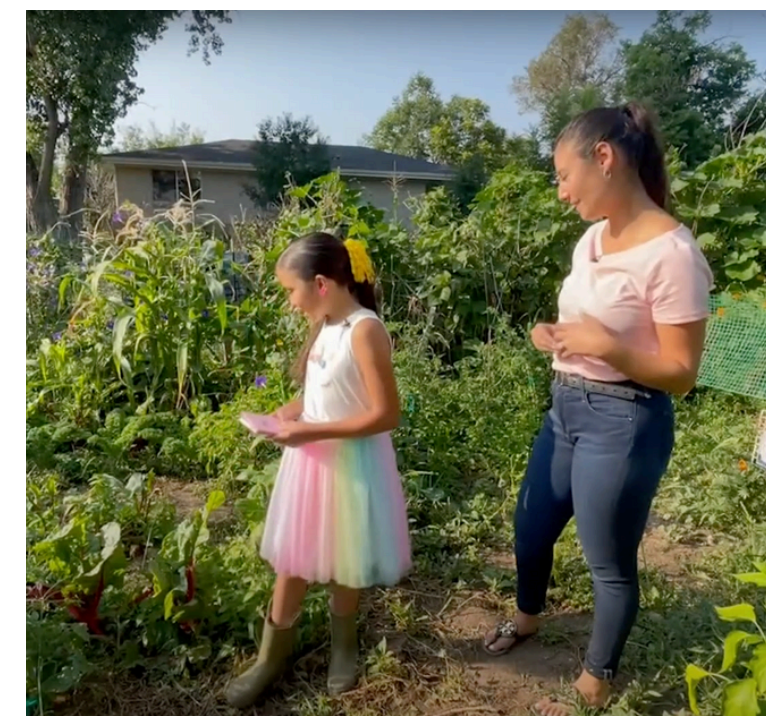
We needed more hands in the soil to ensure our network was resourced to thrive because it is the humans that make the magic happen. We established the Baseline Infrastructure Initiative (BII), a holistic program centered on establishing and increasing equity across DUG's community gardens by bolstering the gardens' physical and human infrastructure. We piloted the DUG Corps, a seasonal workforce (now an Americorps program) to provide 'hands in the soil' for all gardens, building community, supporting new gardeners and supporting garden leaders.

And our core programs just got better: Gardens, Education and Food Access.

Read on to learn more!

Linda Appel Lipsius

Linda Appel Lipsius
Executive Director + Cabbage Enthusiast





FEEDBACK DROVE OUR DECISION-MAKING

In 2020, during DUG's first **Listening Tour**, we interviewed more than 500 stakeholders across the DUG network. **Our gardeners shared their desire for more support, education, leadership training, community building and a more equitable organization.**

In response, in 2021 DUG launched the **Baseline Infrastructure Initiative (BII)**, a holistic program with the goal to ensure better equity across the DUG Network.

The BII provides a framework to audit all DUG gardens for physical + human infrastructure needs. By evaluating DUG gardens on their physical structures, overall condition, leadership, garden activation, and accessibility, we can better address any gaps that might be present.

Workday with volunteers to weed and repair plot borders before activating the garden.

WE PRIORITIZED UNDERSTANDING + IDENTIFYING JEDI ISSUES

To prioritize **Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) work**, we established a new role, **Equity + Food Access Director**, to hold DUG accountable to our organizational value of embracing equity.

As a staff, we:

- Utilized Bread for the World's **Racial Equity Scorecard** to assess how successfully our programs and policies apply a racial equity lens. The scores were then ranked to come up with a **list of priority areas and recommendations** on how best to address the current biases, gaps, and inequities.
- Attended two **JEDI-related trainings** on intentional team culture and privilege & social identities.
- Participated in the **21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge** hosted by Food Solutions New England.



Teaching students at about diversity of seeds
and companion planting at a school garden

OUR NETWORK KEPT GROWING

Our **190 community and school-based gardens** support **33 acres of green space** across metro Denver.

In 2021, DUG completed:

2 New Community Gardens

3 Outdoor Classrooms

25 BII Infrastructure Projects

17,740 people benefited from a DUG garden

Rebuilding the Cook Park Community Garden
as part of Tito's Block 2 Block event





**GARDENERS WORKING TOGETHER TO INSTALL A
275 GALLON WATER RESERVOIR FOR SEASON EXTENSION**

WE ADDED 'HANDS IN THE SOIL' SUPPORT

We launched the DUG Corps.

Our seasonal workforce provides support across the DUG Network, building community, welcoming new gardeners, and supporting Garden Leaders.

IN 2021, THE DUG CORPS COMPLETED:

- 18** Micro Network Events
- 36** Garden Workdays
- 129** Garden Audits and Spot Interviews



We partnered with Groundwork Denver to establish a Youth Green team.

The Green Team learned practical, hands-on skills in urban gardening and growing and provided assistance to DUG Corps in activating dormant gardens and supporting in workdays.



WE FOCUSED ON ACCESSIBILITY

In 2021, DUG's longstanding **Grow a Garden program**, which connects individuals, families, and community groups with **seeds + seedlings and educational resources**, transitioned from an income-qualifying model to a pay-what-you-can model. This change made it easier for folks to apply and allowed more people to participate and try gardening.

13,553

seed packets
distributed

14,580

seedlings
distributed

14,621

people
benefited

"We are a single family income who can't always find it in the budget to buy lots of fresh vegetables. Growing a garden this year gave me and my children confidence. We did something as a family and worked together to see an end result which turned into more family time. My kids found out how delicious a cucumber is and how perfect peas are."

Setting out free seedlings for neighbors
and gardeners to pick up at the DUG office





GROW A GARDEN

PARTICIPANTS REPORTED...

66 % their **grocery bills were reduced** by growing a garden

68 % **increased their physical activity** by growing a garden

72 % an **increased consumption of fruits and vegetables**

73 % **being more able to provide food** for their families

"I never would have started gardening if it weren't for the Grow a garden program. It has given me the chance to raise food for my family and teach my children about gardening."

OUR VOLUNTEERS MADE IT ALL POSSIBLE

Our impact would not be possible without the support of community members.

958

volunteers
completed

2,220

hours of work

531

Garden Leaders
gave

55,120

hours of service

Workday with Milgrom & Daskam,
one of our volunteer partners



"Being able to work in and volunteer for a community garden has made me feel like I'm contributing to the global future."



WORKDAY AT MOREY MIDDLE COMMUNITY GARDEN
WITH MLB MASCOTS + STAFF DURING ALLSTAR WEEK

WE KEPT ON GROWING

SKILLS AND SOIL

Through our **Urban Roots Garden Education (URGE)** and **community education** workshops, people in all stages of their gardening journeys deepened their knowledge of gardening in Colorado's challenging climate. They learned how to regenerate poor urban soils, extend the growing season, organically manage pests and diseases, preserve food, and reduce waste.

Our **Master Composter** 12-week training program (in partnership with the City of Denver's Office for Climate Action Sustainability and Resiliency (CASR)) utilized a 'train the trainer' model for 16 participants to deliver free **Learn To Compost** workshops and represent at farmers markets across the city.



23

URGE + community education workshops were held virtually + in person

1027

community members learned organic gardening fundamentals from seed to harvest

136

participants took our free **Learn To Compost** workshops

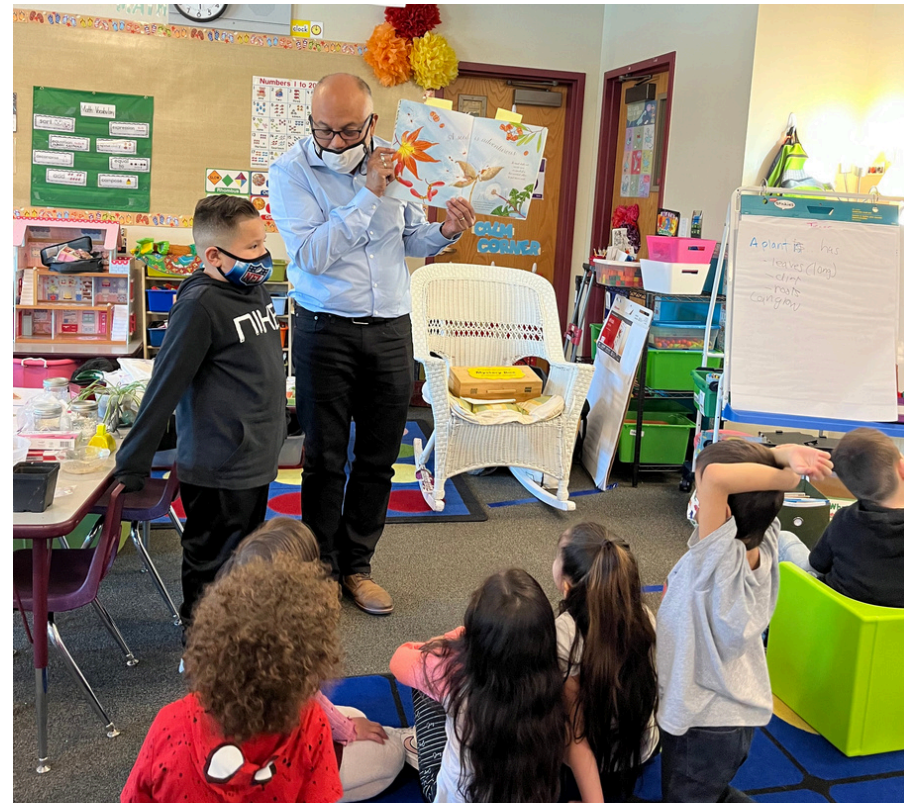
965

hours of volunteer-led community education delivered by Master Composters

WE'RE CULTIVATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF GARDENERS

In 2021:
1,249
students
experienced
DUG programs

206
teachers
delivered DUG
curriculum



Growing Gardeners Initiative

Developed new programming that supported 177 early childhood students and 12 teachers while building capacity for community partnerships across Metro Denver.



Teacher Training

Offered professional development in STEM instruction while getting students outdoors in the garden at five DPS schools with DUG Gardens.



Cooking Classes

Supported 186 students with cooking classes in partnership with Slow Food, providing cooking utensils for students and 1,456 meal ingredients from local produce.

OUR ONLINE ROOTS GREW

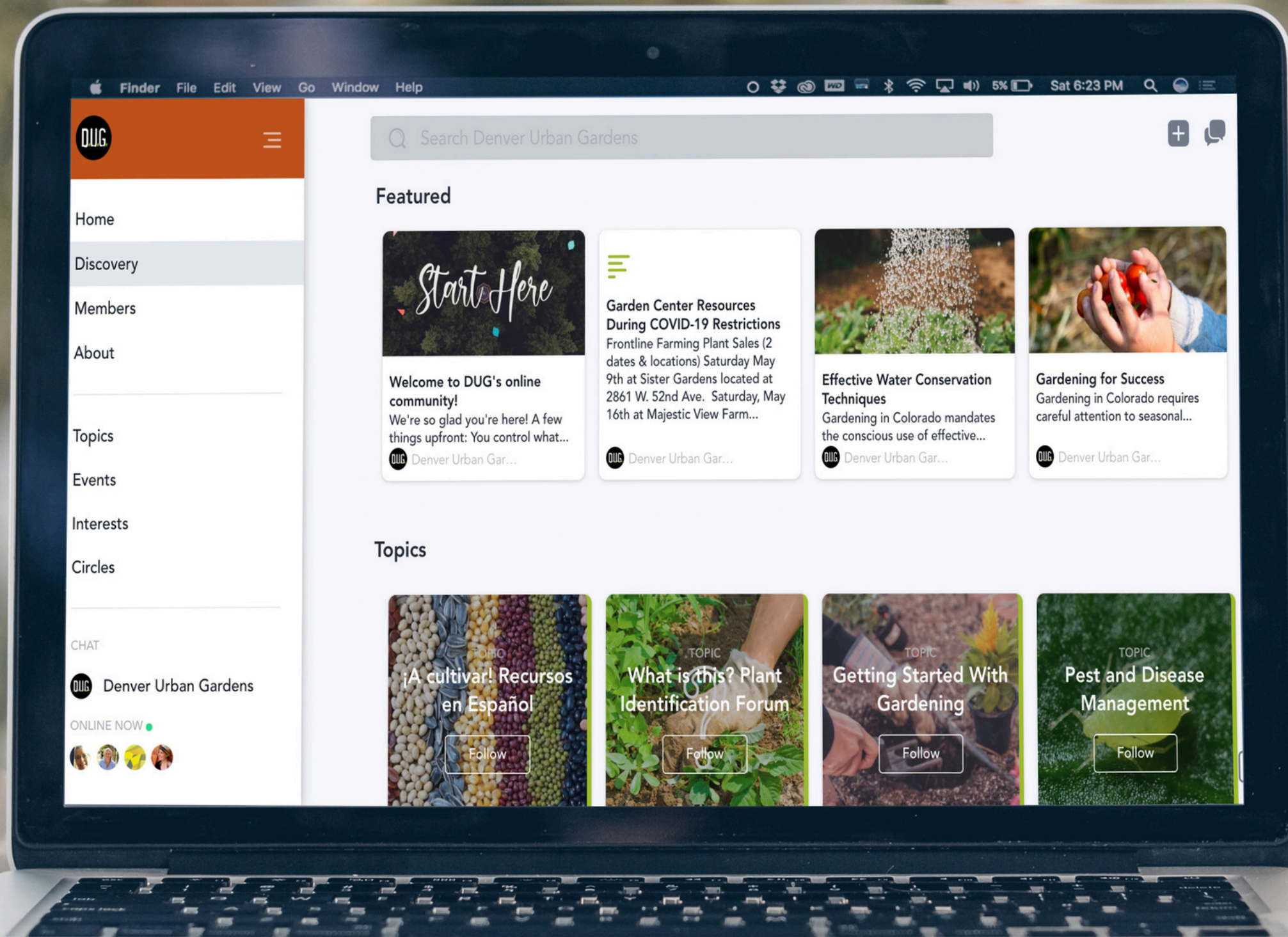
In 2020, we launched **DUG Online**, a hub of resources, community, and direct connection to DUG's horticulture experts.

In 2021, we grew our network from 800 to 1,800+ and launched new private group Circles for our gardeners to connect by location and topics of interest.

We also developed and filmed a series of four **Master Classes, "Gardening Throughout The Seasons,"** providing easy-to-follow expert instruction for the beginning gardener. Available on DUG Online from spring 2022.

Find us online!

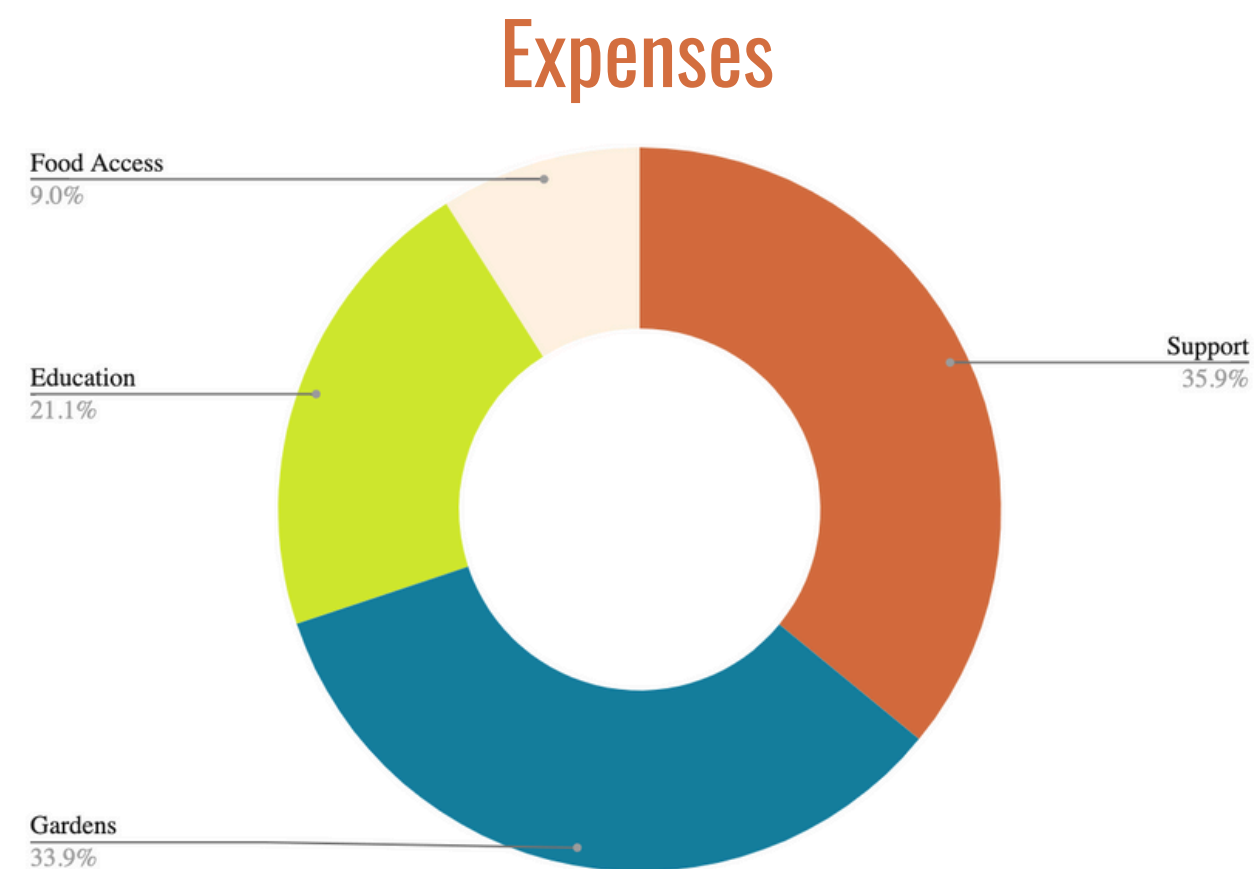
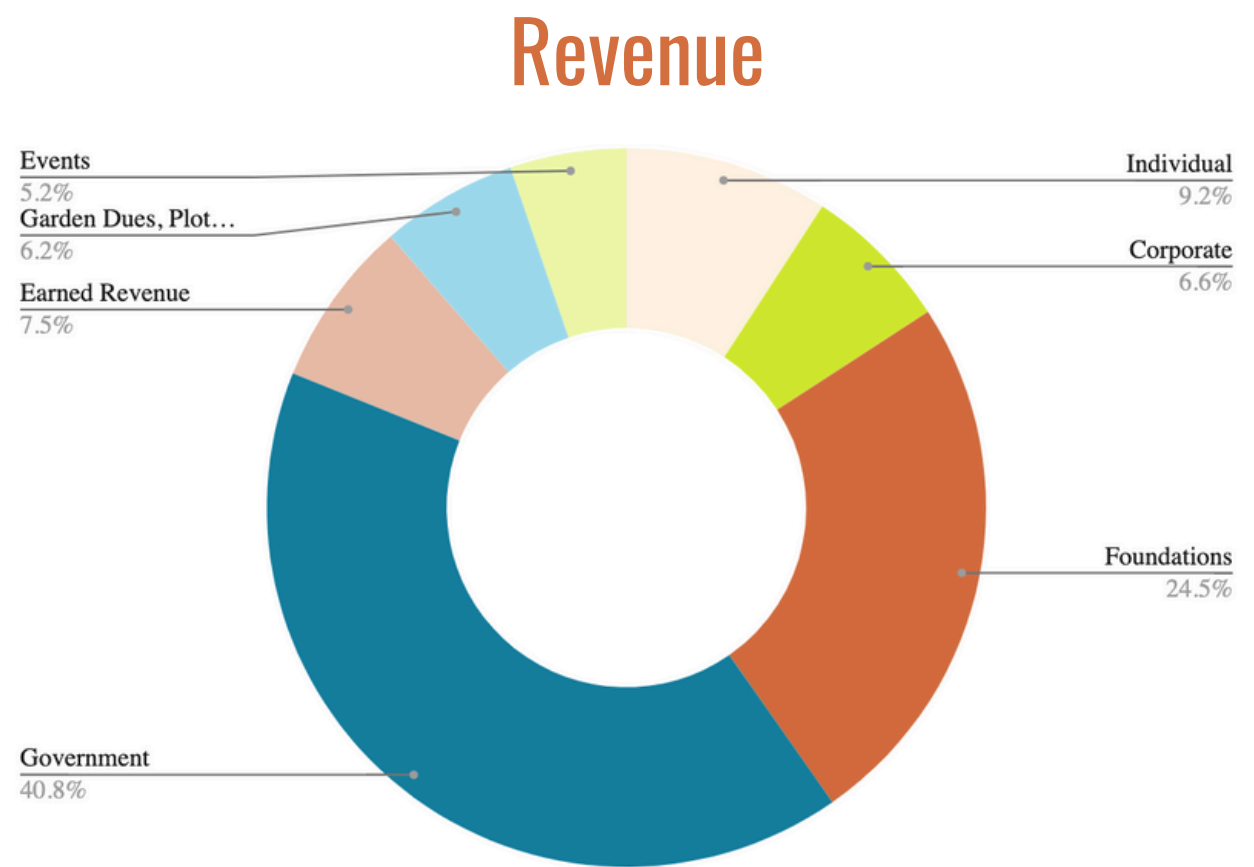
<https://community.dug.org>





**PLANTING FALL COVER CROP SEEDS AND MULCHING
IN A SCHOOL-BASED GARDEN WITH ECE STUDENTS**

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Andy Walker

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Doug Yetman

Zaidy's Bakery & Deli

SOME OF THE MANY REASONS DUG GARDENERS GROW FOOD...

"I know where my food comes from. Feels good to grow it. Love having a place to go."

"I thought it would save us money on the foods we eat and give us more of the food."

"I was new to the city and wanted to get to know others in the neighborhood while also getting connected to the earth."

"I make lifestyle decisions based on sustainability and my impact on the earth; growing my own food is a great way to eat local and combat the heat island effect in cities!"

"I grew up in a place without safe outdoor spaces or access to fresh organic food. I feel like my whole life has been trying to reverse this for myself, my children, and whatever community I live in."

"Learning to grow my own food and herbs seemed like a great goal in terms of accessibility, sustainability, community connection and survival"

"After living in Hong Kong for nearly seven years, where virtually ALL of our food came from outside the territory, it was important that I learn to grow my own food when my family returned to the States."

"My grandmother's example, connection to the earth, contributing to the cycle of life."

"Gardening is a rewarding and grounding experience that brings us closer to nature and the environment."

"My father had a large vegetable garden and it just seemed natural to have one as well when I started having children."

"I started gardening in the 1970s as a method of self sufficiency."

"When I started gardening, I was a single mom with a young child. Gardening supplemented my grocery bill."



VISIT

community.dug.org to explore our online network of resources and connect with other local gardeners

GIVE

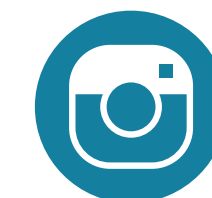
the gift of knowledge, skills, and resources for growing food with your donation. Visit dug.org/donate

JOIN

DUG for a volunteer worksday and get growing! Visit dug.org/volunteer for more info.

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Denver Urban Gardens

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