

# 2022 IMPACT REPORT



Students exploring the garden at  
**Fairview Elementary Community Garden**  
Denver, CO





**Denver Urban Gardens** started as a grassroots movement in the late 1970s when gardeners in Denver's Northside neighborhood came together to create a space for a group of local Hmong women to grow their own food. Working collaboratively, they transformed a vacant parking lot into what is now the Pecos Community Garden, and over the following years, more community gardens began to spring up as the group helped other neighbors do the same.

DUG was formally incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in 1985. Since then, our network of community gardens has expanded across six metro Denver counties comprising more than 193 gardens and six food forests.

# Impact of DUG Gardens

FOOD

CLIMATE

COMMUNITY

## Our Vision

We're working towards a sustainable urban future where people are deeply and directly connected to the earth, each other, and the food they eat

## Our Mission

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

## Our Values

- Earn TRUST
- Demonstrate INTEGRITY
- Embrace EQUITY
- Build COMMUNITY
- Inspire CURIOSITY

## Reflecting on 2022 - the year DUG found our new groove.

As we started 2022, our priority as a team was to take clear-headed stock of where we've been, acknowledge all the changes over the last two years, and start to chart the course of what we want to accomplish in Denver Urban Gardens' next chapter.

Our commitment to equity across the organization shifted from a focus point to a foundational one. We are committed to hearing all voices, accepting challenges, and establishing an equal playing field as part of our operating system. This shift impacted hiring, culture, processes, and our work in the field through the BII (Baseline Infrastructure Initiative). We were also thrilled to be invited to join the Belonging Innovation Lab at the American Immigration Council, a fellowship supporting our work to examine and improve our system-wide culture through a more inclusive lens. There will always be more work to do here.

Our commitment to going deeper vs broader manifested in the establishment of the Etkin Family Food Forest Initiative, our elementary teacher cohorts, and a revamped Grow a Garden program. We made strategic decisions around our existing programs and identified ways to have greater impact within the established constructs, benefiting more people, more deeply, without overextending the organization.

And finally, 2022 was the year that we started shouting from the rooftops about how much more community gardens and food forests 'do' for a city beyond producing healthy food (which in and of itself is transformational and worth celebrating). They inspire and facilitate community connection and positive climate action, offering something healing and empowering to neighbors across metro Denver, whether or not they are DUG gardeners. We believe that community gardens and food forests should shift from "nice to have" to "must have" infrastructure for thriving cities. To that end, we have been hard at work strengthening the foundations of our own organization and seeking ways to support other community garden organizations across the US to help them realize their full potential and impact.

Raise a shovel to the "Growing Movement."

*Linda Appel Lipsius*

Linda Appel Lipsius  
Chief Executive Officer





# FOOD



***"We have lost touch with our food systems.*** Community gardens are an awesome way to rekindle our relationships with age-old practices."

-DUG gardener response in our 2022 annual survey



# DUG GARDENS at a Glance: 2022

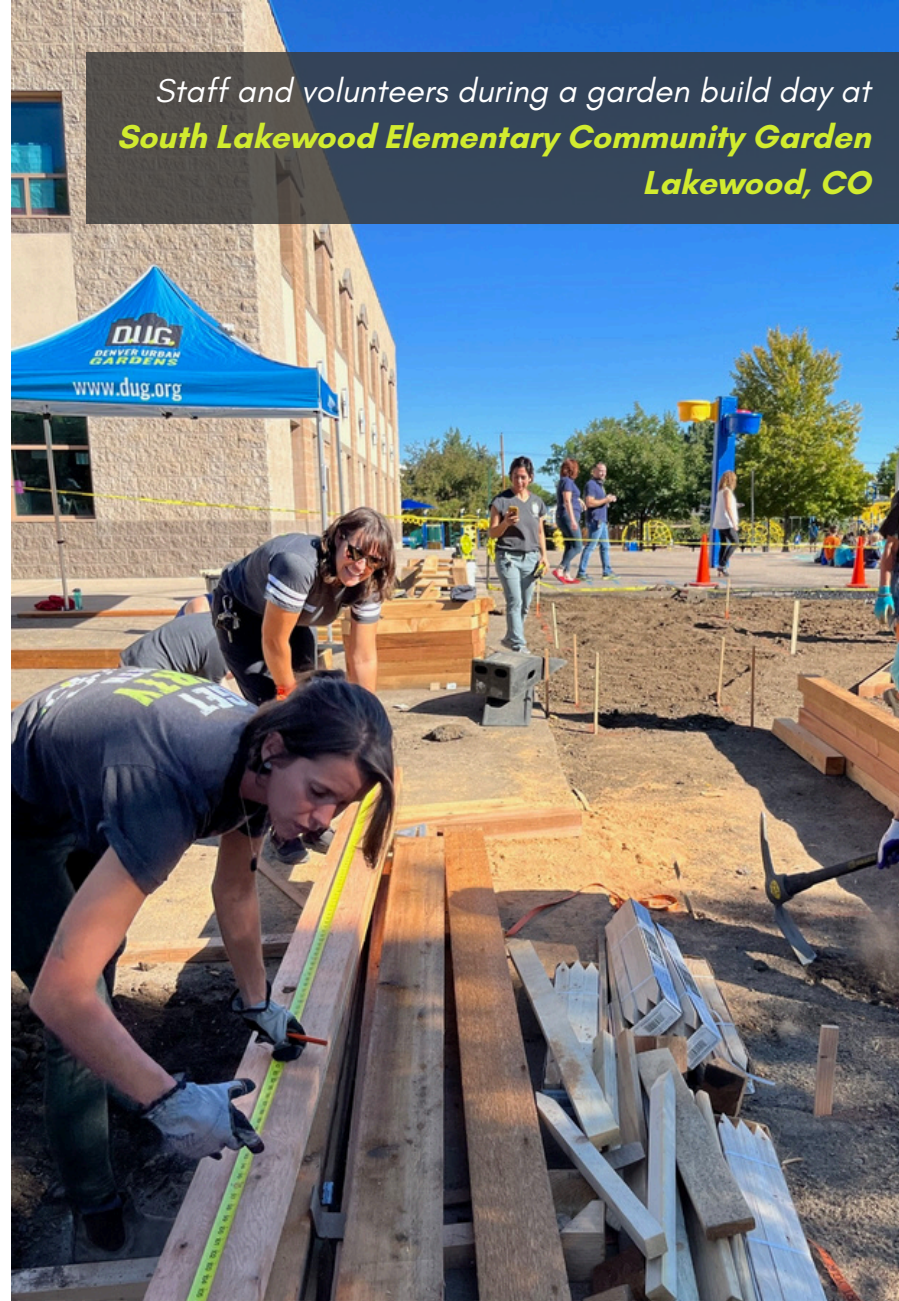
DUG community gardens are open to the public and managed by more than 350 volunteer Garden Leaders. The diversity of our gardens is reflected in their sizes, organizational structures, community cultures, and internal community policies.

DUG gardens are comprised of several separate garden plots that are each cared for by individuals or families. Shared spaces like pathways, perennial herb and flower beds, sheds, and gathering spaces are cared for by all community members.

Many gardens also have spaces dedicated to growing extra produce for community redistribution in partnership with local food banks, community organizations, and mutual aid groups.

In 2022, we added new gardens at **South Lakewood Elementary** and **Parker Apartments**, building **44 new plots** and space for **176 new gardeners**.

Staff and volunteers during a garden build day at  
**South Lakewood Elementary Community Garden**  
**Lakewood, CO**



33

Acres under  
DUG stewardship

193

Gardens

4,533

Garden plots

18,004

People directly benefitting  
from DUG gardens

627,926

Estimated pounds  
of food grown



Volunteers planting trees, and perennial bushes at the  
**Samuels Elementary Food Forest + Community Garden**  
Denver, CO



# DUG's **FOOD FOREST** Initiative

## Took Root

**The Etkin Family Food Forest Initiative** was launched in spring 2022 with the goal of planting accessible food forests in small, underutilized areas in public spaces and community gardens.

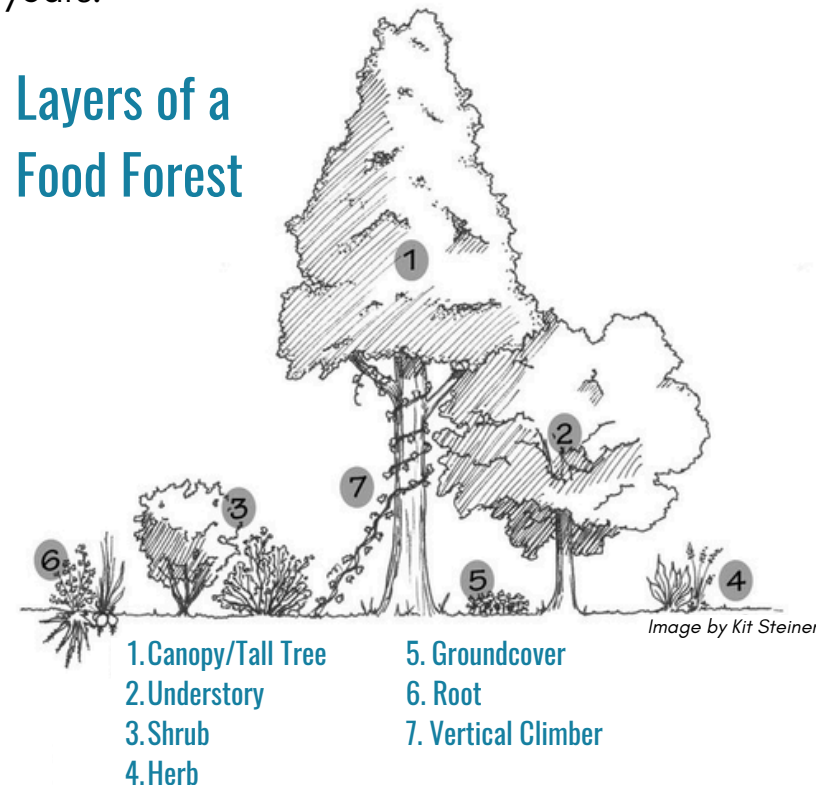
DUG food forests are shade-producing oases planted with water-conscious dryland techniques. They are built to thrive in a changing climate and feed the community at the same time. Each food forest has at least two volunteer Tree Keepers who steward the site to ensure it survives and thrives over the years.

**113**  
trees

**116**  
berry  
bushes

**120**  
companion  
plants

### Layers of a Food Forest







# Improved Efficiency & Streamlined Our **FOOD ACCESS** Program

For the first time, we offered our signature food access program **Grow a Garden** as a 'kit'—prepackaging seeds and seedlings we knew would grow and eat well together.

By offering participants a choice of five Garden Kits instead of filling custom orders, we were able to meet community demand at a larger scale while keeping the program a pay-what-you-can model.

This production change created more space for our food access team to develop and share educational resources as touchpoints throughout the season.

with funding support from



**1,500** Grow a Garden Kits distributed

**52,458** Meals Produced

*"I've used this program as a teaching tool for my family  
and it's been a great resource for food.*

*It's greatly appreciated and is so needed. It's helped our family with  
groceries and the ability to source our food naturally. This program  
personally allows me to put fresh veggies on the table."*

*-2022 Grow a Garden Participant*

Did you know our Grow a Garden participants reported:

**78 %**

experiencing some degree of **financial insecurity** (up from 47% of participants in 2021)

**72 %**

increasing their consumption of **fruits and vegetables**, level of **physical activity**, and **overall wellness** because of gardening

**67 %**

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



# CLIMATE



***The Master Composter Program should be measured by more than the number of classes taught or numbers of people educated. Its graduates have become business leaders in sustainability throughout the community.***

*We teach residents that composting is more than a method of waste management; small-scale, local compost directly influences water usage sustainability, ecological restoration, and responsible food production.*

*-2022 Master Composter Participant*





Members of the 2022 **Master Composter** class pose with their end-of-program certificates

## We Continued Spreading COMPOST EDUCATION

Our train-the-trainer **Master Composter** program is run in partnership with Denver's Office of Climate Action, Sustainability & Resiliency. Participants become trained in compost methods as well as grassroots facilitation techniques to teach composting and vermicomposting to community groups.

DUG also offers free classes in composting several times a month throughout spring, summer, and fall. Each compost class is a two-hour, hands-on workshop in the fundamentals of backyard composting and vermicomposting techniques for local residents.

with funding support from



# 22

**Master Composters**  
trained in backyard composting,  
vermicomposting, and integrated  
solid waste management

# 1,100

**hours of volunteer-led  
community education**  
delivered by Master  
Composters

# 24

**Learn To Compost  
workshops**  
offered throughout  
the city

# 1,998

**community members**  
received free compost  
and vermicomposting  
education



# SKILL-BUILDING Workshops Were Back

After two+ years of mostly virtual programming, we were ready to get our hands in the soil in person with our community members again.

Our most exciting changes for 2022 included transitioning our **Urban Roots Garden Education (URGE)** adult education programming to a pay-what-you-can model for greater accessibility and creating a menu of class offerings to bring skill-building workshops to community groups and local companies.

**479**  
participants

**27**  
workshops

Our classes focus on organic gardening basics, including garden planning, pest and disease management, harvest preparation techniques, extending the growing season, and more.



*Participants getting a firsthand look at garden pests during an **URGE workshop***



# YOUTH EDUCATION Programming Engaged Learners across Age Groups

with funding support from



We know that the earliest children are exposed to gardening, the more likely they are to develop healthy eating habits and to garden as adults.

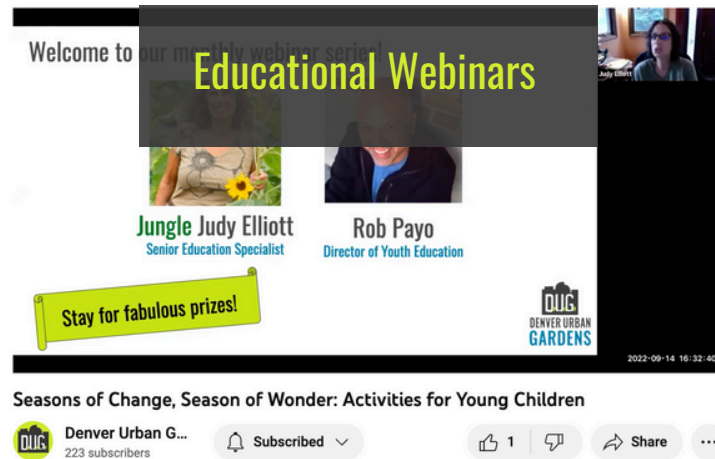
We're growing the next generation of gardeners by teaching sustainability and nutrition skills through our developmentally-appropriate curriculum.

**Total 2022 Participants: 3,449**



**Teachers received year-long support from DUG with resources, training, and garden education**

- 2 cohorts supported 21 teachers at 9 schools
- 440 kids ages 3-5 received classroom lessons on vermicomposting, seeds, garlic planting, and soil health



**Monthly webinar series of activities, ideas, and resources geared toward young children for parents and educators**

- 8 live webinars reposted on YouTube
- 278 attendees



**Strive Prep High School classes and gardens**

- Students partook in cooking, garden education, and food justice classes
- 180 participants in spring semester and 191 students in fall semester



# COMMUNITY

A group of diverse people are gathered in a community garden area. In the background, there is a large, multi-story building with a stone facade and arched windows. To the left, a lower brick building is visible. The garden area includes raised beds, some with straw mulch, and various plants. Several people are standing and talking, while others are working in the garden. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

***"I love the exposure to others whom I wouldn't have the opportunity to meet- to exchange recipes, techniques, and small talk.***

*Enriching my neighbors' food supply is satisfying to me, in addition to what it means for them."*

*-2022 End of Year Survey Participant*





# Gardens Brought Us **TOGETHER**

**DUG gardens are places of gathering and nourishment.**

From ribbon-cutting ceremonies for new gardens to anniversary parties, DUG gardens provided spaces for connection and participation. We held 20 free garden-based events, including community composting trainings, organic gardening labs, and social gatherings throughout the year.

Our volunteer network is the foundation for the community building that happens across the DUG network.

**360**

**Garden Leaders**

supported gardeners throughout the season

**950**

**Volunteers**

helped out at workdays and community events

**2,500**

**Hours**

were given in service to DUG

Micro Network Social event at  
**Place Bridge Academy Community Garden,  
Denver, CO**



10th Anniversary Party at  
**Ruby Hill Community Garden  
Denver, CO**



Live music nights in the garden at  
**Rose Roots Community Garden  
Arvada, CO**



Ribbon cutting ceremony at  
**Commons Park Community Garden  
Denver, CO**



# Our **GREEN WORKFORCE** Grew (And So Did Our Capacity)

In its second year, **DUG Corps** became a partnership program with Colorado State University and AmeriCorps, supporting seven, half-year-long positions.

## With the support of **DUG Corps**, last year year we:

- Conducted site visits at all public DUG community gardens
- Held 69 volunteer workdays
- Led 20 garden-based Micro-Network events around the city, providing hands-on learning in organic gardening and composting while strengthening community
- Improved accessibility at gardens with new ADA raised beds
- Installed new plot borders, irrigation, and water tanks at under-resourced gardens through the Baseline Infrastructure Initiative (BII)

At the end of the season, we hired two DUG Corps members as full-time members of the DUG team.





# We Continued to Prioritize Community **FEEDBACK**

In the summer of 2020, we held our first Listening Tour to hear from stakeholders on what they wanted and needed from DUG, implementing several program changes based on that feedback.

In the summer of 2021, we focused on connecting with folks we didn't hear from in the initial sessions due to language, transportation, and technology barriers.

- We held **listening sessions** at 6 DUG gardens where English is not the primary language, with 81 adult participants and 10 children sharing their thoughts with us through interpretation.
- One-on-one **spot interviews** were conducted by DUG Corp members in gardens across the city, with 62 gardeners providing on-the-ground feedback about their needs and experiences.

We also launched our **Change Committee**, an inclusivity-focused group for people with marginalized identities to voice in their own words what they want and need from DUG. This work led to updating **DUG's Community Agreements** for clearer expectations across DUG gardens.



*Gardeners during a listening session at the  
**Asian Pacific Development Center Community Garden**  
Aurora, CO*



# What We **HEARD**

Through our 2022 Listening Tour and End-of-year survey, we learned that DUG gardeners:

85%

agreed that being involved in a DUG community garden **improved their gardening skills and knowledge**

83%

agreed that being a part of a community garden **increased their access to fresh, healthy food**

81%

shared that they **donated or shared food they harvested** from their community garden with others

70%

reported that without their DUG community garden plot, **they would not have grown their own food** last year

66%

felt that being a part of a DUG community garden helped them **feel less lonely and improved their mental health**

48%

reported feeling **more empowered and knowledgeable about climate action and the environment** by being in a DUG garden







# 2022 Garden Adopters

In 2022, DUG launched the **Garden/Food Forest Adoption Program**, designed to directly connect local businesses with the DUG community.

Adoptions are a three-year commitment that helps DUG ensure consistency of resources from season to season. A portion of yearly adoption fees goes directly to the garden with the balance supporting DUG's **Baseline Infrastructure Initiative (BII)**, which further ensures equity across the entire DUG network.



Conover/Wonder  
Family Foundation



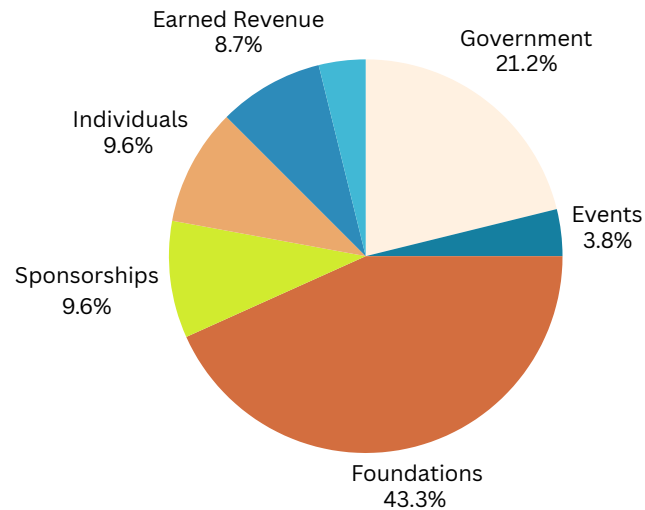
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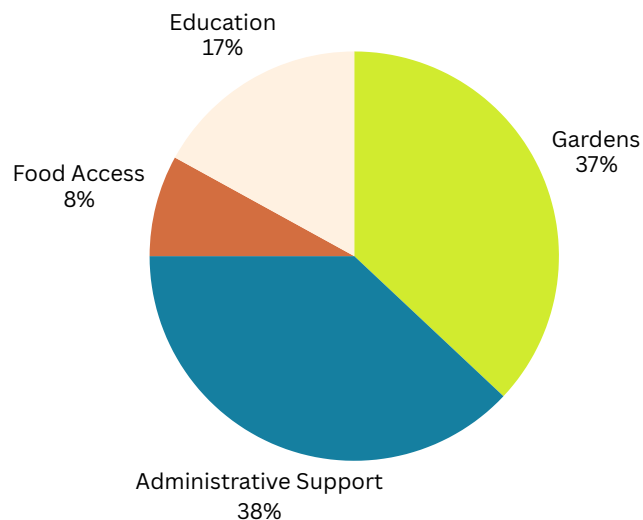


# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

## Revenue



## Expenses



# BOARD of DIRECTORS

Brooke Gabbart, *Penn St. Communications*

Le'alani Boykin, *Connected Realities, LLC*

Tim Craft, *Craft Companies*

Andrew Feldman, *Legacy Wealth Partners*

Karen Good, *City & County of Denver*

Jesse Ogas, *9 News*

Melissa Rosas, *Apex Design*

Chris Shaffner, *CoBank*

Melinda Warner, *Golden Community Garden*

Zane Way, *Chase*



# 2022 DONORS

## \$100,000+

Etkin Family Advised Fund at Aspen  
 Community Foundation  
 HDR Foundation  
 Schlessman Family  
 Foundation  
 Sodexo Stop Hunger  
 Foundation

## \$10,000-\$99,999

American Immigration Council  
 The Anschutz Foundation  
 The Warner Family  
 CASR (City & County of Denver)  
 DDPHE (City & County of Denver)  
 City of Aurora  
 CoBank  
 Colorado Garden Foundation  
 Continuum Partners  
 DaVita  
 Delta Dental Foundation  
 DPS Foundation  
 El Pomar Foundation  
 Illegal Pete's  
 Liberty Global, Inc.  
 Max and Elaine Appel  
 SCFD  
 Snooze an A.M Eatery  
 Sprouts Healthy Communities  
 Foundation  
 The Giving Grove  
 The Marcus Foundation  
 Tito's Handmade Vodka  
 UNFI Foundation  
 Short Family Charitable Fund  
 Whole Foods  
 Jefferson County Public Health  
 Denver Public Schools  
 USDA

777 Investment Corp.  
 AdCellerant LLC  
 Alpine Bank  
 Amazon  
 Linda Appel Lipsius  
 Atlas Real Estate  
 Briana Hart  
 Brothers Plumbing, Heating &  
 Electric, INC.  
 Bumble  
 Campari America  
 The Capitol Hill United  
 Neighborhoods  
 Community Impact Fund  
 Cart-Driver  
 Craft Companies, LLC  
 James Theye and Denise Chirafisi  
 Charitable Fund  
 City Floral  
 Colorado Health Foundation  
 Delwest Management  
 Conover/Wonder Foundation  
 The Denver Foundation  
 Denver Public Schools  
 DNash Accounting & Tax Services,  
 Inc.  
 Emich Cares

## \$1,000-\$9,999

Fairway Independent Mortgage  
 Lender/ The Stirling Team  
 Front Range Organic Gardeners  
 (FROG)  
 Fulcrum Foundation  
 Anonymous Donor-Advised Fund  
 of the Giving Foundation  
 Brooke Gabbert  
 Good Karma  
 Graland Country Day School  
 Monica and John Geocariss Fund  
 GroundFloor Media  
 Barry Hirschfeld  
 Keltner Family Foundation  
 Kiewit  
 Kroger  
 Mark Young Construction  
 Meow Wolf  
 Molson Coors  
 New Hope Garden Network  
 OPTIV Security, Inc.  
 OZ Architecture  
 Photobucket  
 Rachio Inc.  
 Ramonna Robinson  
 Dana Rodriguez  
 Rocky Mountain Ace Stores (RMAS)  
 Riverfront Park Community Foundation  
 Melissa Rosas  
 Rose Community Foundation  
 Same Cafe  
 Chris Shaffner  
 SeEds Family, Inc.  
 Slow Food Denver  
 Specialty Wood Products (c)  
 Adam Smith  
 Jennifer Stokes  
 Sutherland Foundation  
 TEGNA Foundation  
 The Marigold Project  
 TIAA  
 Tri-County Health Department  
 Tributary Real Estate  
 Twelve Twenty One Fund  
 United Healthcare  
 Amanda Van Pelt  
 Denise Wanzo  
 Walker & Dunlop  
 Walters and Mason Retail Inc.  
 Wells Fargo  
 Whole Kids Foundation  
 Xcel Energy Foundation





## 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](https://dug.org/donate)

## JOIN

**DUG for a volunteer workday** and get growing! Visit [dug.org/volunteer](https://dug.org/volunteer) for more info.

## FOLLOW

**us on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn** to stay up to date with the latest news, photos, and videos.

