



BACKYARD
Growers

2022
ANNUAL IMPACT
REPORT

DEAR FRIENDS,

In this annual impact report, we're sharing an update on our leadership transition, including how our programs have deepened their roots and continued to bloom throughout this period of change thanks to a committed core Backyard Growers team, incredible volunteers, extraordinary community support, steadfast corporate sponsors, and generous funders.

In our community, 2022 represented a year of continued economic strain, with grocery prices soaring by up to 13 percent and putting even greater pressure on the wallets of already vulnerable members of our community. It was vital for our programs empowering people to grow their own food to maintain momentum and grow their impact on Cape Ann and beyond.

At the same time, at Backyard Growers, 2022 represented a year of transition, as our Founder & Executive Director and Program Director moved on to new opportunities. When I joined as the new Executive Director in April 2022, we developed a new Leadership & Strategy team.

By summer, Katy Marques joined us as the Development Director, and in the fall we added to our deeply talented programs team with the addition of a new Program Coordinator Xavier Vega. I'm so proud of this team, and can't wait to share our progress with you.

We hope you're as excited about our growth in 2022 as we are!

Be well,



Alison W. DiFiore
Executive Director





DEAR COMMUNITY,

Backyard Growers is a labor of community love. Over the course of the last decade, the organization's programs have been able to grow, thrive, and meet new community needs through the support of the people within it, like you and me.

As a Gloucester-based pediatrician, I have witnessed firsthand the shift in perspective and behavior that Backyard Growers' presence in our schools and community has inspired in both parents and children.

I joined the Board of Directors in 2018. I have loved stewarding the organization and its leadership forward as it transitioned from a small grassroots organization with just three full-time staff members and a crew of AmeriCorps and FoodCorps service members to a well-established, financially strong organization with a robust leadership team and a skilled, knowledgeable full-time staff of seven.

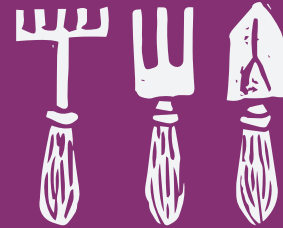
As I close out my tenure as President of the Board of Directors, I wish you and the organization all the best growing forward together.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Orr".

Dr. Brian Orr
2022 President of the Board of Directors





BACKYARD GROWERS' MISSION

is to cultivate healthy, connected, resilient communities and fight for food sovereignty by empowering people to grow their own food. We increase access to fresh, culturally meaningful food for low- to moderate-income families, immigrant and refugee households, seniors, and children in backyards, community gardens, schoolyards, public housing developments, containers, and more.



2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Brian Orr, President
 Pediatrician, Brian Orr
 Pediatrics

Allison Mueller, Vice President
 Member of Wellspring
 Board of Directors and
 Trustee of Awesome
 Gloucester

**Elizabeth Redmond,
 Treasurer**
 CFO, Pathways for
 Children

Karen Taggart
 Member of Associates
 of the Boston Public
 Library Board of
 Directors and Mountain
 Top Arboretum Board of
 Directors

Heidi McGrath
 Retired teacher,
 O'Maley Innovation
 Middle School

Mark Nelson
 Owner, Sweeping Heart
 Zen

Jennifer Perry
 Director of Operations,
 The Open Door

Paul Romary
 Former CEO, Lemuel
 Shattuck Hospital;
 Burnham's Field
 Community Gardener;
 Member of Burnham's
 Field Community
 Garden Board

Toni Waldron
 Community Organizer
 & Educator

Nick Walton
 Chief of Staff, Vice
 President at Easterly
 Partners Group

Jen Zola
 Volunteer Outreach
 Specialist

2022 STAFF

Lara Lepionka
 Executive Director

Corinne Lippie
 Program Director

**Alison Woitunski
 DiFiore**
 Executive Director

Katy Marques
 Development Director

Courtney Allen
 Director,
 Communications &
 Outreach

Jess Reid
 Program Director

Hailey Small
 School Garden Educator

Meg Stratton
 Special Projects
 Manager

Xavier Vega
 Program Coordinator



**SEEDING COMMUNITY GROWTH:
LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR
EXPANDED GROWING SPACES IN
DOWNTOWN GLOUCESTER**



The growth of Burnham's Field Community Garden

Throughout the pandemic, it became clear to us that downtown Gloucester residents urgently needed more space to grow their own food. For example, the wait list at Burnham's Field Community Garden tripled in length. Thanks to robust community support, a Federal Food Security & Infrastructure Grant, support from the City of Gloucester, and over 60 volunteers, we were able to implement a 47 percent expansion of Burnham's Field Community Garden in downtown Gloucester. This means that in spring 2023 we will be able to empower at least 17 new low- to moderate-income households to grow their own food in this space.

Burnham's Field is a public park in downtown Gloucester with a playground, athletic fields, walking paths, and 36 raised vegetable garden beds (in operation for 2022 growing season)

39% of gardeners are 65+

36% of gardeners are in households with kids

14% come from multilingual or non-English speaking households



"Being able to eat a snap pea from my garden [was the best part of the experience]. It was the first thing I grew and it tasted so good. I still could not believe I grew them from a seed and there were so many of them. Very excited to grow them next year!"

- Backyard Growers Program Participant

Breaking ground at agriCulture

Plus, in the face of skyrocketing materials costs, supply chain issues, and unexpected invasive plant obstacles at agriCulture - the new food-growing and gathering space adjacent to Willowood Community Garden - we were able to forge new community partnerships with nonprofit Cornerstone Creative, Araneo Landworks, and Brooks Gibson Company to bring the project to life. Made possible in part by funding from Essex County Community Foundation's Creative County Initiative, we officially broke ground on the project this year following a collaborative design process with residents at Willowood Gardens. Stay tuned for a 2023 ribbon-cutting!

The Gloucester Housing Authority (GHA) neighborhood at Willowood Gardens is diverse and vibrant, comprising **60 housing units**

33% of units are leased by households of color, **81% by female heads of household**, and a growing percentage are occupied by immigrant and refugee families

At least **8 different languages** are spoken in the Willowood community

123 children live at Willowood and have been Backyard Growers' partners in bringing Willowood to life





STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE: EXPANDING OUR GROWING POWER TO NEW HOUSEHOLDS

Backyard Growers was born out of a period of economic hardship in 2008, and the value of our programs has continued to grow since the start of the pandemic. In 2022, prices at the grocery store continue to soar, increasing by 10 percent and putting acute pressure on already-vulnerable members of our community.

We expanded our partnership with The Caleb Group, which already partners with Backyard Growers at Pond View Community Garden. The Caleb Group chose to roll out our GrowBag Garden Program across six new affordable housing neighborhoods in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. We were also able to partner with Mainstay

Supportive Housing to support the creation of a new vegetable garden at a Norwood, Massachusetts, group home. We helped them identify an appropriate site, build the garden beds, create a garden plan, and provided training and technical assistance. Community partnerships which took root in 2021 continued to bear fruit in 2022, including garden trainings and GrowBag distributions through Ipswich Housing Authority and Salem Council on Aging.

On Cape Ann this year, 20% of our program participants who grow food with Backyard Growers in backyards, community gardens, and GrowBags, are from households that self-report that they receive EBT or SNAP benefits. Eighty four percent of our community program participants live in low-income households. We are committed to continuing to expand growing spaces that prioritize and serve the food and housing insecure in our community. Beyond our programs, we continue to provide 20-50% discounts on growing resources for community members with WIC, SNAP, or ConnectorCare (e.g. additional GrowBags, Neptune's Harvest fertilizer) thanks to the Massachusetts Cultural Council's Card to Culture initiative. Additionally, our powerful partnerships allow us to deepen our impact by managing vegetable gardens at nonprofit organizations such as The Open Door and Action, Inc., emergency shelter, which have a collective reach of over 4,500 people annually.



**FULL-CIRCLE GROWTH:
EXPANDING GLOUCESTER'S
SCHOOL GARDEN
CURRICULUM TO 8TH
GRADE SCIENCE CLASSES**





Healthy soil is an essential ingredient for a robust harvest. Through Backyard Growers' Soil Health Program, funded in part by our incredible partners at Gloucester Education Foundation, the 8th graders at O'Maley Innovation Middle School work with us to learn how to care for their school garden's soil.

Students tested the soil for key nutrients, water absorption, and PH, among other things. Based on their findings and regenerative soil practices, they then amended the soil's nitrogen levels before wheat is sown in the garden again in the spring by the 7th graders.

The Soil Health Program is the culmination of Gloucester kids' food systems education through Backyard Growers' school garden programs, beginning with Salad Days and Fall Harvest Days in pre-k and elementary school, through our corn and wheat programs in grades 6 & 7. Gloucester kids know where their food comes from - from healthy soil and seeds to harvest and their table!

ROOTS AND WINGS EXTENDED PLAN

In January 2022, on the eve of a key leadership transition, Backyard Growers put an 18-month interim strategic plan in place, “Roots and Wings Extended Plan.”



Expand Access to Resources, Spaces, and Programming that is Responsive, Equitable, and Mission-Aligned



In addition to the ground-breaking of agriCulture and expansion of Burnham’s Field Community Garden, Backyard Growers implemented communications and approaches that increase access to our community programs. At Burnham’s Field Community Garden, we put the annual garden fee on a sliding scale for the first time, allowing gardeners with more resources to pay a higher fee, up to \$60, to contribute to the maintenance of the garden and support gardeners in a lower income bracket.

Backyard Growers also put signage in place featuring five common languages spoken in our Gloucester community gardens - English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Arabic - ensuring that a diverse population can understand the function of each space and how to get involved.





Expand and strengthen Backyard Growers' impact through consulting to schools, housing developments, and other community organizations beyond Gloucester

In 2022, Backyard Growers continued its consulting relationship with Salem Council on Aging and Ipswich Housing Authority, engaging 80 seniors and low-income residents in both raised bed and GrowBag gardening workshops. Our relationship with The Caleb Group expanded to six other affordable housing neighborhoods in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. We kicked off our first year of partnership with Mainstay Supportive Housing, supporting the creation of a new vegetable garden at a group home in Norwood, Massachusetts. Plus, Newburyport Montessori School joined the network of Massachusetts schools adapting our Salad Days™ and Fall Harvest Days™ curriculum, impacting 100 new students.

To date, Backyard Growers' school garden consulting program has engaged 32 schools or 11,900 students outside of Gloucester. Our community consulting has engaged 12 nonprofit organizations in the last two years, impacting 400+ households. Together, our consulting practices represent an extraordinary expansion of our impact.





Shepherd Backyard Growers through its first major leadership transition

In 2022, Backyard Growers' founder and executive director Lara Lepionka stepped down to pursue new opportunities after leading the organization with creative vision for over a decade. Program Director, Corinne Lippie, also moved on to pastures new after leading our programs for two and a half years, including through the pandemic, strengthening organizational systems and deepening our impact.

Alison W. DiFiore stepped into the role of Executive Director with four goals: listening and learning, building a skilled leadership team, and supporting and bolstering Backyard Growers' staff team and ensuring that Backyard Growers maintained and expanded quality programming. In eight short months, Alison recruited a new Development Director, Katy Marques. She

rounded out the leadership and strategy team with internal promotions of Program Director and Communications & Outreach Director. In October, farmer Xavier Vega completed our programs team, joining as Programs Coordinator. In addition to ensuring the organization was fully and meaningfully staffed, Alison took steps to reflect Backyard Growers' Diversity, Equity and Inclusion values internally, with pay scale transparency, work computers, mileage reimbursements, a paid parental leave policy, and a roadmap towards staff retirement plans.

Because of this, Backyard Growers is able to enter 2023 with a stable, strengthened staff team, and room for growth.



SUPPORTING BACKYARD GROWERS IS AN ACT OF COMMUNITY CARE

Volunteers Make Veggie Gardens Possible

Backyard Growers relies on a generous and hard-working crew of community volunteers who mentor new gardeners, do the heavy lifting of building garden beds and filling them with soil from Black Earth Compost, maintain community garden spaces, pitch in on events and office work, and more. In 2022, volunteers were essential to not only supporting existing gardeners and gardens, but supporting the expansion of projects like Burnham's Field Community Garden and agriCulture. We couldn't do this work without them.



2022 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Action, Inc.

Cape Ann YMCA

City of Gloucester

Gloucester Housing Authority

Gloucester Public Schools

Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce

Massachusetts Farm to School

Pathways for Children

Sawyer Free Library

The Caleb Group

The Open Door

Wellspring House





TOGETHER, WE'RE EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO GROW THEIR OWN FRESH FOOD



Katie Brinkman's Story

Katie Brinkman moved to Gloucester with her partner Ryan in May of 2020. She also became a stepmother to Ryan's two children, Aurelia and Asher, who were 2 and 5 at the time. Living in downtown Gloucester, she didn't have a yard of

her own, so Burnham's Field became the default space to expend the excess energy that two young kids build up while confined to the house. With this green space also came the unexpected blessing of a garden bed in Burnham's Field Community Garden. The garden provided a fertile ground for two budding minds and four busy hands, as well as for growing a community when social distancing made the act feel impossible. By using Backyard Growers' resources, Katie was able to grow a bountiful supply of fresh vegetables throughout her first summer as a brand new gardener.

Katie is an invaluable member of Backyard Growers' volunteer crew, pitching in at spring seedling sales, more than her share of community garden work days, and our huge fall fundraiser, the Great Gloucester GrowDown.

TAKE ACTION!

Want to help sustain and support Backyard Growers in the community? Some of the ways to take action are...

DONATE. Visit backyardgrowers.org to give online or mail in.

VOLUNTEER. We've streamlined the volunteer application. Visit backyardgrower.org/volunteer-with-us to learn more and apply.

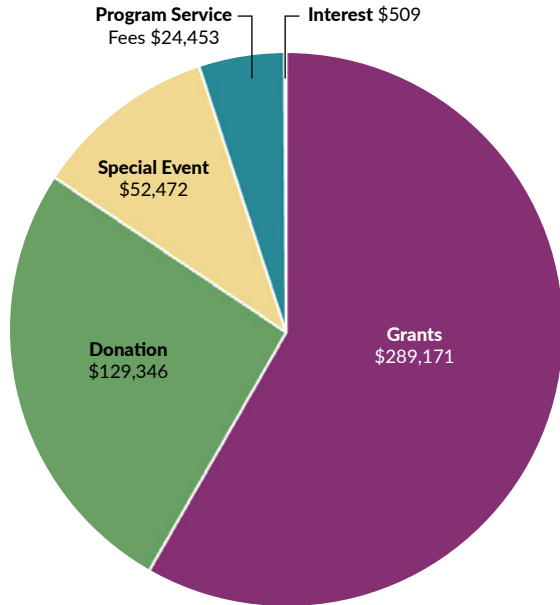
JOIN. Subscribe to our newsletter by online form at backyardgrowers.org or drop us a line community@backyardgrowers.org.

ENGAGE. Keep up on the latest by following us on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

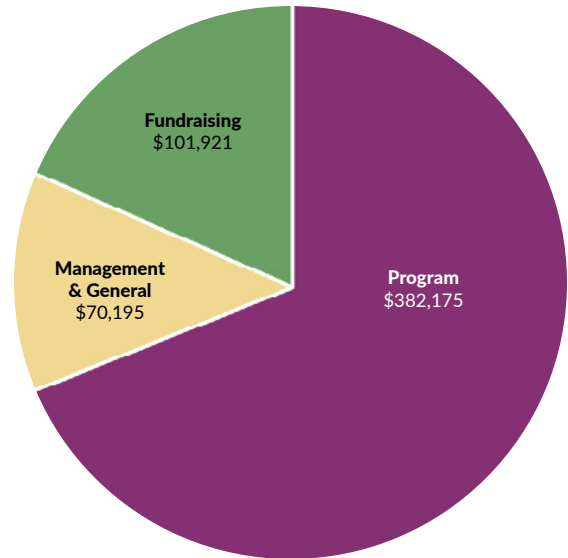
2022 REVENUE & EXPENSES

Fiscal Year: 1/1-12/31/2022

REVENUE



EXPENSES





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