

GARDEN NEWSLETTER

November 2025

Hello Green & Gold Community Garden Supporters

We are very pleased to send you our newsletter/annual report for 2025. Many thanks for your continued support of the Garden and the women of Tubahumurize.

Message from the Chair of the Garden Advisory Committee

Another season at the garden seems to have flown by. For the count, it was our seventeenth.

In the spring we had a successful new volunteer orientation. As expected, we now have a few more people who've become regular volunteers. At the front of the house we've had the luxury of enjoying our new gazebos which provide us with both shade and shelter from the rain. They also give us and our customers a sense of place and identity. The timing was serendipitous as the old kiosk was severely battered in a freak spring windstorm. In its repaired state it now provides a place for our flower people. A special thank you to Dave for repairing the kiosk.

Most notably we were able to start our sales of salad greens by mid June this year, thanks to our new planting methods.

As always, a special thank you to all our volunteers! If you're just hearing about us for the first time feel free to contact us and give us a try. We'd be thrilled if you come out to volunteer. You never know, you just might become a regular.



Upcoming craft sales

We will be selling the Rwandan handicrafts from Tubahumurize at the **Belgravia Holiday Market on Wednesday, December 3 from 4:30pm-8pm at the [Belgravia Community League Hall](#), 11540 73 Ave NW.**



Funds Raised for Tubahumurize

To date, our garden produce sales this year totalled \$33,970. In addition, we raised \$2,866.00 in handicrafts sales with one more holiday sale still to come.

Our website shows [a year-by-year graph of funds raised for Tubahumurize since the Garden began in 2009](#) – this year's sales will put us at just over \$600,000 raised. We sent \$22,000 USD to Tubahumurize over the past year.

Donations to Tubahumurize totalled \$2,916. We also had a very generous donation of \$2,000, from a longtime volunteer. This allowed us to purchase the secondhand trailer we now use weekly throughout the year to transport compost from Strathcona Microgreens, as well as to move other garden supplies.



Handicraft Sales

Customers continue to support the sales of Rwandan crafts on sunny Saturdays at the Garden. We received a new shipment of handicrafts from the Tubahumurize sewing students and cooperative.

Shipping costs have increased substantially, but we were able to use the funds from our West Coast Seeds seed sale to cover this cost. All of the funds raised from the handicraft sales are returned to Tubahumurize to support their sewing and educational programs.

During the 2025 garden season \$981.00 was raised selling crafts at the Garden. This year we were also invited to take part in a presentation at Our Parent's Home (a senior's living space) and have some of our crafts there for display and sale. This yielded us an additional \$650 in craft sales. Our main craft sales happen post garden season. At the **Just One World** sale, on November 15 we made \$1,235.00. Bringing total craft sales (as of November) to \$2,866.00. Our final craft sale for the year will be the **Belgravia Holiday Market**, at the Belgravia Community League hall, on December 3, from 4:30-8:00pm.



Grants

We received another very welcome grant of \$7,500 from the **TD Friends of the Environment** program. We have been receiving this grant for over a decade and without this support the garden would not be able to operate to its current capacity.



In addition, we received a welcome \$1,000 grant from the **World Wildlife Fund Canada (WWF) Living Planet@Campus**. The funding was earmarked to purchase native perennials, in particular Saskatoons

and haskaps. These will provide a multifunctional addition to the Garden in future – producing berries, creating a protective windbreak for garden beds, and providing a shelter for birds, wildlife and pollinating insects.

Unfortunately, due to City of Edmonton funding cuts to [Sustainable Food Edmonton](#), our \$1,000 grant to improve ventilation and replace the hoop house plastic was withdrawn. We are exploring other ways to fundraise for these much needed repairs.

Garden update

One definition of community is: *A group of interdependent organisms of different species growing or living together in a specified habitat.*

The Green and Gold Community Garden certainly fits this definition. It's a place where humans from all walks of life, with different needs and different skills come together to grow food and build life together. As a community we work at the interface between the sun and the soil, helping to create the conditions for the sun's mighty energy to merge with the miraculous but unseen life in the soil by way of photosynthesis. All the while bringing us closer to each other through mutually supportive and intergenerational relationships. This community carries the soul of our behind the mortal scenes and forever leader, Shirley Ross, who demonstrated through action the skills it takes to make space for the diversity of life to coalesce into a great whole.

The 2025 season was another great success in the plots of the Green & Gold Community Garden. A dry spring, followed by a cool and fairly wet summer created great growing conditions for some crops, like our carrots and lettuce, but other crops that love the heat, like the tomatoes and squash didn't get the warm embrace of summer required to flourish. Such is agriculture, the conditions that are a boon for some crops are a bust for others.

Our newish, minimal-till methods, which rely on minimal soil disturbance, keeping living roots in the soil as much as possible and covering the soil as much as possible have allowed us to moderate the potent and unpredictable ways of mother nature.

We grew a great abundance of produce and raised a lot of money for Tubahumurize. What a year in the field!

Crop stats

- 26,000 carrots
- 200 kale plants
- 100 Swiss chard
- 2,600 hills of potatoes
- 50 broccoli
- 300 robust cabbage
- 1,000 linear feet of northern extra super sweet corn
- A hoop house full of the most fragrant, juicy cucumbers
- 100 tomato plants that were small but still so tasty
- hundreds and hundreds of heads of lettuce, beautiful, colourful and so photogenic
- thousands of onions
- 3600 potent garlic
- a sea of stunning cut flowers
- and soooooo much more!



Orchard update

Our orchard production is wholly dependent on weather and this year was no different. We enjoyed mostly positive results regarding the fruits of our labours as follows.

The reliable old orchard plants rewarded us well – we harvested a good crop of Saskatoons and Haskaps, and our apple and pear trees were loaded with fruit. Due to a colder spring, the sensitive apricot trees suffered at pollination time and did not produce a single fruit. There is always Next Year...

This year we added a couple of new fruit trees - a sturdy Mount Royal Plum dedicated to the memory of Sam's wife, Bev, and an experimental later fruiting Russian Pear seedling from Doc Evans called "Winter Glaskov" (said to have the largest pears of all the Late Russians...we shall see).

Volunteer Events: Our famous annual Apple Juice pressing session was enjoyed by our volunteers on the last day of September - exceptionally delicious nectar, as always, and blessedly wasp-free!

Our wise orchard mentor Gabor Botar came out to help us cut scions in the March snow as well as providing a couple of practical educational grafting and pruning summer sessions for the volunteers. Thank you, Gabe! The knowledge and experience of Gabor Botar is invaluable - all volunteers interested in fruit growing are strongly encouraged to attend his free educational sessions next year!

And lest we forget - *The Rodent Riddance Report:* Garden Cat Rogue, our brave and fearless rodent eradicator, did his best to crush our enemies - last vole/mouse tally was well over 1,100. Well done, Ron and Rogue!



Hoop House

It was a good summer in the hoop house. We experimented with mixing plant types to reduce spider mites and saw far fewer pests this year. We also used shade cloth for the first time, during the extreme hot spell, and noted a real reduction in heat buildup. The cucumbers (and the volunteers) really preferred temperatures below 40 degrees!

Visitors were very impressed by the huge heritage tomatoes we grew. Most weighed more than 2 lbs and some broke their supporting stems before being turned into tasty tomato sandwiches. An increased vole population also enjoyed the tomatoes, much to our disappointment.

The irrigation system worked well again this year and was a boon during the hot weather. Many thanks to the willing volunteers who contributed so much to the bumper crops harvested this year.

Flowers

This year the flower garden was situated on the northwest corner plot, an ideal location for welcoming visitors, with borders of cheerful sunflowers and cosmos, as they made their way to the new market gazebo. Curious customers paused to admire the flowers, ask questions, take photos, or to simply chat with volunteers. Over the months, they had an opportunity to experience the changes in the ever-evolving garden, and to discover the magic of locally grown flowers.

Hundreds of freshly picked bouquets were produced this summer bringing beauty and joy to many. Even when blooms succumbed to frost by October, seed heads, corn tassels and grasses were foraged and paired with dried sunflowers to celebrate the season. Exquisite strawflower “everlasting” arrangements were a favourite with customers.

Every gardening season brings welcome surprises. A flower that we have not had great success with in the past, can unexpectedly flourish, producing a profusion of blooms. Rudbeckia, commonly known as Black Eyed Susan, was an exceptional performer this year. A native North American prairie species, it adapts to various soil types, thrives in challenging conditions, attracts pollinators, and blooms from August into fall, surviving mild frost. In addition to the typical yellow variety, there are new muted and variegated options worth exploring.

It takes incredible team effort to grow a thriving field of flowers. Heartfelt thanks to the many dedicated volunteers who patiently started seeds at the greenhouse in the depths of winter, prepared beds in spring, set out seedling transplants, tended the rows, repaired the kiosk, and harvested blooms.



Volunteers

Mild weather allowed us to work in the garden from April into November. Over 148 people volunteered at the Garden in 2025 and donated over 3,890 hours of work during regular garden hours. (In past years, we’ve had about 100 to 165 individuals annually, logging a total of 3,000 to 4,700 hours.) On average, 15 volunteers attended on Tuesday mornings, 16 on Tuesday evenings, 9 on Thursday mornings and 28 on Saturdays. This year 53 people came out to the garden at least 10 times. Of those, 6 are first time 2025 volunteers and 47 returned for yet another season. We enjoyed having people bring their visitors to volunteer for a session, and we had some enthusiastic family groups come out to the garden together.

Countless additional hours were donated towards areas of the garden (hoop house, orchard and composting), on infrastructure and equipment maintenance, tours, craft sales, communications, and on overall garden management, accounting and planning. Every donated hour by all, young and old, is appreciated. Thank you to all new and returning volunteers for making 2025 a success.

Garden Communications

We continue to connect with local communities by sending updates to a variety of Community League newsletters and attending Sustainable Food Edmonton events and monthly Community Garden meetings. The University of Alberta featured the garden as part of the south campus virtual experience on their website. We are grateful to Mary Bailey for her regular spots in *The Tomato and Bite* and to Kaelin Whittaker from *Awn Kitchen* for posts on Instagram. Instagram and email are our two primary sources of connecting with our volunteers and customers - a shout out to Jessica Musselwhite for her amazing photography and weekly Instagram updates.

Many new customers and volunteers have told us they found out about the garden from seeing and following the feather banners we had made last year that we place on Saturday Market Garden days.

As always, our garden volunteer orientations in April were a huge success, in large part due to the fabulous volunteers who give their time each year to teach others about our garden activities. Garden tours through the Edmonton Horticultural Society, Jane's Walk, Awn Kitchen cooking classes and school visits have brought many new faces to the garden this year. We also conducted garden tours on Saturdays in July, August and September, along with other garden events such as chair yoga, the annual apple press and Gabe's grafting workshops in the orchard.



School Visits

We regularly interact with students and children throughout the garden season. Two volunteers visited grade 5 students at Gobind Savar School for their climate change science fair in June to talk about sustainable gardening practices at the Garden. The students also fundraised and made a generous donation to the Garden.

Grade 5/6 students from Garneau School made their annual September trek to the garden - always a highlight for us as the students simply love harvesting and getting their hands dirty digging potatoes and carrots.

News from Tubahumurize

Tubahumurize's latest report, on activities from January to June 2025, notes that their work continues to focus on group and individual trauma counselling, micro-credit loans, small business skills development, health education, and the sewing school - all of which are offered to marginalized women in Rwanda. This year the 18th cohort of students graduated from the sewing school.

Donations to Tubahumurize

We can accept donations earmarked for the Tubahumurize Association. Please make cheques payable to the Green & Gold Community Garden, with a note on the cheque indicating it is for Tubahumurize. Donations are included in our twice annual wire transfers to Tubahumurize. To make a donation please email us at: gggarden@ualberta.ca. (Sorry, as we are not a registered charity we can't provide tax receipts.)

A Taste of Home

We were so pleased to be able to share space at the Garden with Dr. Elizabeth Onyango, from the School of Public Health, at the University of Alberta, and her students. A Taste of Home is a Heroes 4 Health project that gives international students the opportunity to grow vegetables from their home countries to “grow a sense of belonging” in their new environment. It is amazing the variety of traditional vegetables that can be grown in a small prairie garden where they may not be locally available elsewhere.



It has been wonderful to learn from each other and to grow together! This year members of the Taste of Home project joined us for our year end pot luck at the Garden where we shared a potpourri of culturally diverse food with one another. Our community has grown in significant ways with the addition of Elizabeth's volunteers.



Walking tractor

We are in need of a small, walking tractor that would allow us to: minimize soil compaction, reduce emissions and fuel costs, improve spreading cover crops, mulch and compost, and make work in the Garden much easier on the volunteers' backs (many of our regular volunteers are seniors).

Walking tractors are big ticket items and we are looking for grants or other fundraising avenues to raise approximately \$30,000 to cover this. If any of our wonderful garden supporters have ideas on how we could raise funds for the walking tractor please let us know.





Garden Seeds Fundraiser

Thank you to everyone who supported the Garden by ordering seeds from our West Coast Seeds fundraiser this year. The 2025 fundraiser raised \$2,196.93. Because all of the funds raised through sales of Garden produce are sent to support Tubahumurize's work in Rwanda, the seeds fundraiser allows us to buy garden supplies each season, and to cover the shipping costs for bringing in new handicrafts from Tubahumurize.

We are so grateful to [West Coast Seeds](#) for their longtime support to the Garden through this fundraiser and through their donated seeds program which gives us many of the vegetable, herb and flower seeds we grow each year.

**Stay tuned for information on
our 2026 West Coast Seeds
sale fundraiser in January.**

Want to volunteer with us?

We always need more help at the Garden. No gardening experience is needed and we have all the gardening tools on hand. If you would like to volunteer please email us at:
gkgarden@ualberta.ca.

If you are not already on our email list to receive the weekly market produce emails during the growing season please sign up at:
www.mailman.srv.ualberta.ca/mailman/listinfo/gkgarden

Special Thanks to our 2025 Donors

Many thanks to the donors who gave us seeds, plants, flowers, gardening supplies, graphic design and website help, grant funding, and all kinds of other support this year. And, thank you to our generous customers who often top up their produce purchases with extra donations for [Tubahumurize](#). Along with many donors who wished to remain anonymous, these local businesses, agencies and individuals supported the Garden in various ways. Please support them as well when you can:

- [Awn Kitchen](#)
- [BC Eco Seed Co-op](#)
- [Edmonton Potato Growers](#)
- [Government of Canada – New Horizons for Seniors Program](#)
- Lisa Workman, [Why I Move Project](#)
- Marian Jenkins
- Mireille (creator of the hand balm)
- [Mojo Jojo Pickles](#)
- Gobind Sarvar School - Ms Savi's Grade 5 Class
- [Strathcona Microgreens](#)
- [Sustainable Food Edmonton](#)
- [20/20 Seed Labs Inc.](#)
- [TD Friends of the Environment](#)
- [University of Alberta, Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences](#)
- [West Coast Seeds](#)
- [World Wildlife Fund Canada](#)
- And, many thanks to Sheila Luther, Nancy Finlayson, & Riley Sheppard for once again donating the proceeds of their heritage tomatoes sale at Montrose Environmental.

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