



syracuse  
grows

# 2020-21 annual report

*With spring on the brink, we look back on the past two years and reflect on the changes we've seen as an organization. Join us in reviewing the 2020 and 2021 year in this Annual Report.*



*LibraryFarm at NOPL Cicero*



# STRATEGIC PLANNING

From September 2020 until March 2021, Syracuse Grows advisory board members participated in a strategic planning process with Still Water Consulting Group. The process included a Nonprofit Lifecycles Assessment, a Member Garden survey, interviews with community partners, a board retreat, and drafting a strategic plan. The advisory board prioritized several activities in the strategic plan to strengthen Syracuse Grows governance, build capacity among community gardeners, and expand access to resources among community gardeners in the Greater Syracuse area. Some of the priorities identified in the strategic plan include:

- **Expanding advisory board membership** – Over the past few years, advisory board membership has declined. Syracuse Grows recently welcomed three new advisory board members and is seeking to recruit at least five additional board members in 2022.
- **Growing the volunteer base** – As an all-volunteer organization, Syracuse Grows relies heavily on community volunteers to support programming (e.g. the annual resource drive). Syracuse Grows advisory board members are creating new opportunities for volunteers to engage with Syracuse Grows, including launching a mentoring program for new community gardeners.
- **Reintroducing educational programming** – Syracuse Grows is exploring community partnerships to create educational opportunities for community gardeners. In partnership with Master Gardeners from Cornell Cooperative Extension, a workshop series will launch this spring.
- **Promoting networking opportunities among Member Gardens** – Several community gardeners expressed an interest in connecting with other gardeners through events and knowledge sharing opportunities. In 2022, the member garden meeting, workshops, and harvest dinner will provide opportunities for gardeners to network.
- **Sustaining resources for community gardens** – As community gardening expands in Syracuse, so too does the need for critical resources such as land, soil testing, water access, seeds, and clean soil. Syracuse Grows is working with its community partners to provide resources to a growing number of community gardens.

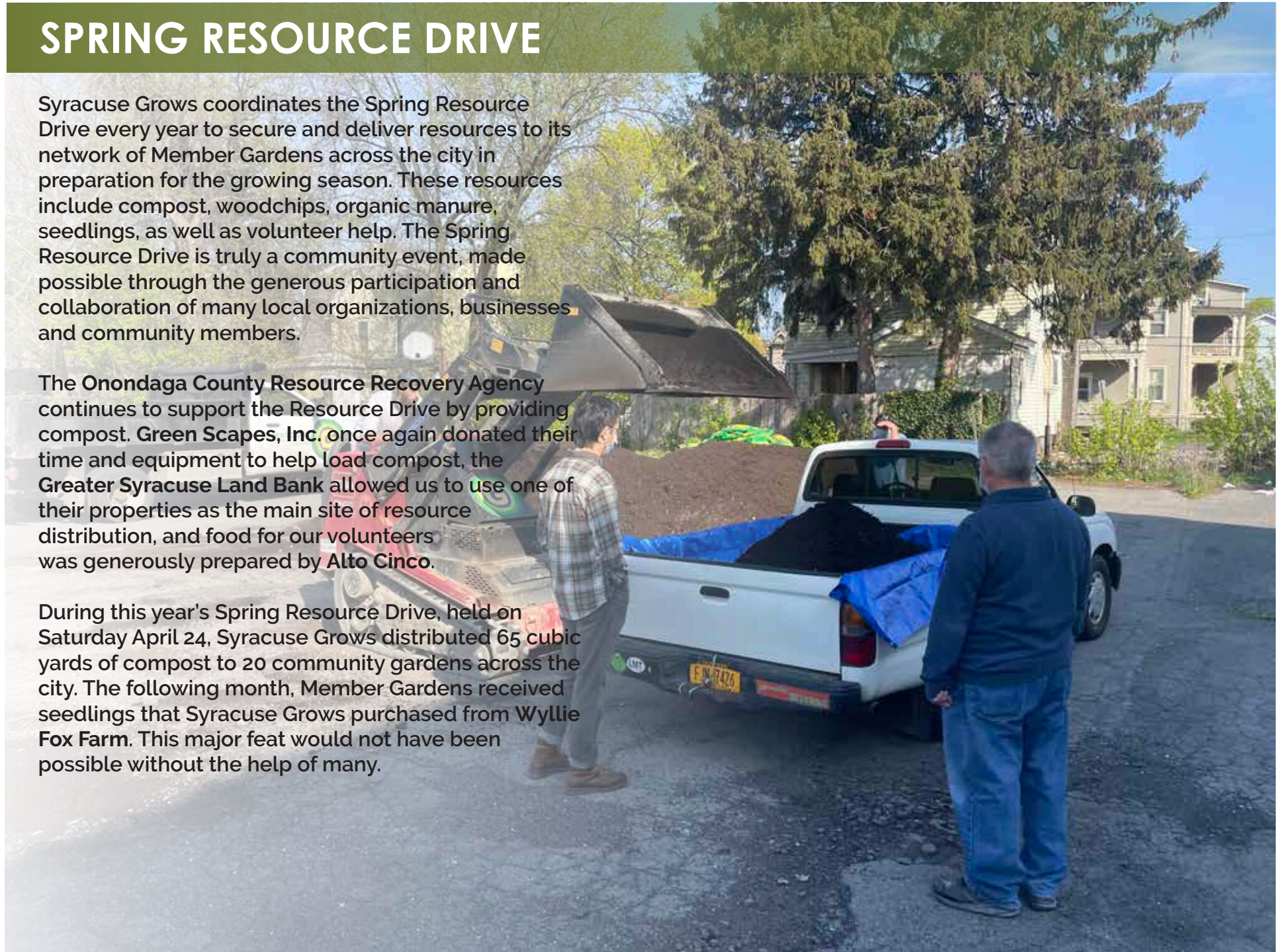


# SPRING RESOURCE DRIVE

Syracuse Grows coordinates the Spring Resource Drive every year to secure and deliver resources to its network of Member Gardens across the city in preparation for the growing season. These resources include compost, woodchips, organic manure, seedlings, as well as volunteer help. The Spring Resource Drive is truly a community event, made possible through the generous participation and collaboration of many local organizations, businesses and community members.

The Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency continues to support the Resource Drive by providing compost. **Green Scapes, Inc.** once again donated their time and equipment to help load compost, the **Greater Syracuse Land Bank** allowed us to use one of their properties as the main site of resource distribution, and food for our volunteers was generously prepared by **Alto Cinco**.

During this year's Spring Resource Drive, held on Saturday April 24, Syracuse Grows distributed 65 cubic yards of compost to 20 community gardens across the city. The following month, Member Gardens received seedlings that Syracuse Grows purchased from **Wyllie Fox Farm**. This major feat would not have been possible without the help of many.





# SYRACUSE GROWS MEMBER GARDENS

*Stone Soup Community Education Garden*

Syracuse Grows provides support and resources to member gardens and farms in the Syracuse area in the form of physical materials, soil testing, education, capacity building, fundraising, fiscal sponsorship, and advocacy. Community gardens throughout the Greater Syracuse area are encouraged to become member gardens in an effort to strengthen the network of community gardens and increase gardeners' collective ability to leverage resources. Please contact us if you're interested to become a member garden.

315 Community Garden  
341 Midland Ave. Community Garden  
610 Gifford St. Community Garden  
Brady Farm  
Community Garden at 210 Glenwood Ave.  
Eastwood Community Garden  
Ed Smith PreK-8 School Garden  
Erie Canal Museum Locktender's Garden  
Hawley Green Veteran's Garden  
Isabella Tapestry Garden  
Karibu Community Garden  
Kwanzaa Village Community Garden  
LibraryFarm @ NOPL Cicero  
Northside Hadiqat Wafira (Plentiful Garden)  
Northside Sprouters' Community Garden  
Pioneer Homes Community Garden  
Rahma Edible Food Forest  
RISE Lodi St. Garden  
RISE Seward St. Garden  
Rockland Ave. Community Garden  
Root to Rise Farm  
Southwest Community Learning Farm  
Stone Soup Community Education Garden  
Syracuse Northeast Community Center Garden  
Upstate Community and Wellness Garden  
West Colvin St. Community Garden  
Westcott Community Garden  
West Newell St. Community Garden

CARROTS

Tomatoes





# FALL HARVEST DINNER

Syracuse Grows was thrilled to be able to bring back the Fall Harvest Dinner on Sunday October 3, 2021 for the first time since 2018! The Harvest Dinner is an opportunity for our network of community gardeners, farmers, community members, and organizational partners to connect, commune, and celebrate the bounty of the growing season over a shared potluck-style dinner. Attendees are encouraged to bring a dish to share, prepared using local ingredients from their garden, farm, local farmers' market, or CSA, if possible.

The Southwest Community Learning Farm partnered to host the event outdoors on their farm and coordinated a Community Work Day on the day of as well. Volunteers gathered in the morning to harvest herbs and greens, weed, and put some of the garden to bed to help prepare for the end of the season. The tent, tables, and chairs arrived mid-day, and by late afternoon, gardeners, friends, and neighbors began arriving with their home-cooked dishes to share. We enjoyed roasted butternut squash soup, kale salad, and squash cookies, among many other yummy dishes. Turkey and mashed potatoes with gravy catered by Brady Market helped to round out the meal. We were also fortunate enough to receive apples, generously donated by the Salt City Harvest Farm from their orchard, and small pumpkins from Pumpkin Hollow for the kids' activities.

It was wonderful to be able to bring back this community event in a way that allowed us to gather together safely outdoors, especially after more than two years of no in-person events for Syracuse Grows and Member Gardeners.

Southwest Community Learning Farm



# SYRACUSE GROWS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Syracuse Grows Board of Directors is composed of eight individuals who have a diverse range of skills, interests and backgrounds. We are fortunate to have a knowledgeable and committed group of board members who are passionate about Syracuse Grows' mission and the work that we do to cultivate a just food system.

In 2021 we said farewell to board member Jen Pauley. We thank Jen for sharing her passion and many years of dedication and service with us! In April and August of 2021 we welcomed four new board members to Syracuse Grows:

**Alicia Blanding** has a degree in Finance and Operations from Drexel University and a Masters of Business Administration from Villanova University. She is currently a Project Manager at Hill-Rom and has expertise in financial management and project management.

**Amy Grover** is the Sports Medicine and Wellness Program Coordinator for Syracuse Orthopedic Specialists (SOS). She has extensive experience working with volunteers and community organizations to create volunteer opportunities at local organizations including the Food Bank of CNY, the Samaritan Center, The Salvation Army, and more.

**Tysha Martin** is the Director of Housing and Property Development for the Northeast Hawley Development Association, a neighborhood based organization located in an area with several community gardens.

**Phil Wong** is an environmental engineer with experience in design and community engagement. He is a former farm hand at Bed-Stuy Farm and he volunteers with Engineers Without Borders. He is a member of the 315 Community Garden in Syracuse.

## Expanding the Board

We're actively seeking additional board members as we look to rebuild Committees that will allow Syracuse Grows to re-engage fully with our member gardens and the community at-large. To learn more, please contact [syracusegrows@gmail.com](mailto:syracusegrows@gmail.com).

## Current Board of Directors

Sarah Brown, Chair  
Jonnell Robinson, Vice Chair  
Dennis Brady, Treasurer  
Rose Tardiff, Secretary  
Alicia Blanding  
Amy Grover  
Tysha Martin  
Philip Wong

341 Midland Ave. Community Garden



# FINANCIAL REPORT

Revenue	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>
Donations	2,129.71	3,640.44
Memorials	20.00	300.00
Member Garden Fees	405.00	585.00
Fiscal Agent Compensation		35.00
Grants	7,360.00	100.00
Total Revenue	9,914.71	4,660.44
Expenditures		
Bank Charges	94.98	92.78
Mini Grants		115.38
Consultant	3,960.00	3,000.00
Postal Box Rental		162.00
Insurance	534.25	549.00
Harvest Dinner		1,338.78
State Filing Fees		25.00
Internet Support	782.10	500.00
Supplies		
Event Supplies	88.69	225.00
Resource Drive	100.00	1,571.28
Total Supplies	188.69	1,796.28
Total Expenditures	\$5,560.02	\$7,579.22
Net Operating Revenue		
Interest Earned	0.11	0.33
Net Revenue	\$4,354.80	\$ (2,918.45)



# SUPPORTERS

Syracuse Grows relies on the support and generosity of a diverse network of organizations, businesses and individuals. From compost, seedlings, lumber and volunteers, to education, meeting space and monetary donations, it truly does take a community to support community gardening. Our partners are integral to the success of Syracuse Grows' efforts:


Alto Cinco  
Burpee Seeds  
CenterState CEO  
Central New York Community Foundation  
City of Syracuse, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability  
City of Syracuse, Department of Parks and Recreation  
City of Syracuse, Department of Neighborhood and Business Development  
City of Syracuse, Department of Water  
Cooperative Federal Credit Union  
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County  
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County Master Gardener Program  
Greater Syracuse Land Bank  
Green Scapes  
Steve Harris, City Arborist  
Johnny's Selected Seeds  
Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency (OCRRA)  
Onondaga Earth Corps  
Sow True Seed  
Syracuse Northeast Community Center  
Syracuse University Community Geography Program  
Syracuse University Department of Geography and the Environment  
Syracuse University Lender Center for Social Justice  
Syracuse University Falk College  
Syracuse University Sustainability Management  
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF)  
Tops Friendly Markets  
Wyllie Fox Farm

Syracuse Grows would especially like to thank all of our individual donors who have made monthly or one-time contributions, purchases via Amazon Smile and Goodshop, as well as those who have donated to our year-end campaign on Facebook! Your support is appreciated! If you, your group or organization would like to lend support to Syracuse Grows' mission, please contact us to learn about opportunities.

341 Midland Ave. Community Garden



# REMEMBERING EVAN WEISSMAN



When we reflect on the tremendous impact that Evan Weissman made on Syracuse Grows, our most enduring memories come from the annual "Resource Drive." Syracuse Grows, an all-volunteer nonprofit organization dedicated to food justice in Syracuse, New York, hosts an annual one-day event when we mobilize the resources of our entire Syracuse community to support the city's community gardens and urban farms. The event is held each year in April when, as anyone familiar with Syracuse weather will tell you, it could be raining, sleeting, hailing, snowing, or all of the above! Regardless of the weather, it's the perfect time to ready our city's community gardens and farms for spring planting. On this day, borrowed and rented pickup trucks haul compost, mulch, and manure across the city in ragtag caravans, serving what has blossomed into a network of more than 25 gardens and 3 urban farms. Gardeners stand at the ready to receive the black gold that is critical to growing healthy foods in a city where food insecurity is ubiquitous. Volunteers—young, old, Black, white, Syracuse-born, and New Americans—work side-by-side to transform previously vacant lots into spaces that provide nourishment and camaraderie. When it's time to break for lunch, volunteers with dirt-stained hands share in a meal, donated by local restaurants, and assess the day's progress. It's community building at its most authentic, and an event of which we are proud.

Evan relished the Syracuse Grows annual Resource Drive. Grinning widely, he dutifully reported to the volunteer assignment table each year, joyful to take on whichever task needed doing. During our organization's first Resource Drive, in 2008, Evan designed and led construction for the Westcott Community Garden, where he and his family now have gardened with friends and neighbors for over a decade. Some years he would tirelessly shovel compost into trucks at the Southwest Community Farm. In 2015, he enlisted his Food Studies students to help the Northeast Community Center build a new garden. He certainly was at home with a pitchfork or a hammer in hand. On many occasions, his three children were in tow. His kids are no strangers to Syracuse Grows harvest dinners, workshops, and fundraisers, each having participated nearly since their birth.

Although he reveled in the Resource Drive, as a founder and board member Evan understood that much of the work that goes into building a grassroots movement is thankless but essential. Whether he was facilitating a neighborhood meeting, registering Syracuse Grows with the IRS, or manning the barbecue at a community harvest dinner, Evan was willing to do the real work behind food activism. As a research professor at a private institution, he readily acknowledged his privilege—and then set about leveraging that privilege on behalf of the wider community. He finagled food preservation workshops in the university teaching kitchens and encouraged scores of students to connect food justice theory to practice. For Evan, food was the medium by which he brought people together to tackle injustice; develop reciprocal relationships and mutual respect between community and university; and live out his own moral obligation to engage critically and deferentially in the intractable challenges of his community.

Syracuse is a more just and verdant city because of Evan. We will miss him each spring as we prepare for the growing season ahead. On behalf of our member gardeners and farmers, partners, supporters, and the board of directors, we wish to express our deep gratitude to Evan—for growing community with us, one Resource Drive at a time.



# LOOKING AHEAD + GETTING INVOLVED



With the completion of the Strategic Planning process, Board Members are working hard to execute towards three organizational goals over the next few years:

1. Refine and/or design equitable programs that support community gardens and urban agriculture
2. Build organizational effectiveness by strengthening board and administrative systems
3. Ensure organizational sustainability through resource development and increased awareness

A few highlights in working towards these goals include partnering with CCE Master Gardener program to start up a garden mentoring program, developing campaigns around the benefits of community gardens, working with local grantmakers for support of current and new programs, using community awareness and outreach to build volunteer involvement, and growing our network to increase knowledge sharing between gardeners who are part of our Member Garden network.

## How to Get Involved

Not sure if you can commit to the Board of Directors, but still want to be involved with Syracuse Grows? Join a committee! See below for responsibilities of each. The expected time commitment is attending one monthly meeting, with additional time as needed for community events:

### Community Outreach + Education

- Event coordination (including the Annual Meeting, Resource Drive, and Harvest Dinner)
- Coordinating volunteers for events
- Educational events for both member gardens and the community
- Social media updates

### Finance Committee

- Fundraising

### Membership + Governance Committee

- Partner relations
- Board development
- Communications to Member Gardens