



Q1 2023

QUARTERLY UPDATE

Dear Friends,

We've wrapped up the first quarter of 2023, we at Urban Growers Collective (UGC) are eager to share our progress and growth with you. We also want to thank you for your support; because of your generosity, we have been able to continue our mission of empowering individuals and communities through sustainable agriculture, education, and community development.

UGC is deeply committed to growth; we are proud to report that we continue to develop and strengthen our programs and impact in significant ways. For example, we've welcomed the second cohorts to both the Growers and Herbalism Apprenticeship programs, increasing the number of aspiring green thumbs committed to learning their craft. These programs not only help individuals develop confidence, new skills and career paths, but they also contribute to the growth of our local food system by creating a pipeline of talented and passionate farmers and gardeners.

In the next quarter, our team will be enjoying the warmth of the growing season: we'll be deepening our on-farm growing operations, and sharing moments with our program participants and you all across our farm sites and markets. Until then, we hope that you find this report to be informative and inspiring, and that it reaffirms your belief in the importance of our work and how we put your contributions to action. We want to express our heartfelt appreciation for your continued support of UGC. Without your generosity, we could not continue to grow and expand our impact in the Chicago community.

Thank you for your partnership in creating a more just, equitable, and sustainable future for all.

Sincerely,



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Erika'.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Laurell Sims'.

Erika Allen (she/her) and Laurell Sims (she/her)

Urban Growers Collective Co-Executive Directors

Q1 BY THE NUMBERS

9

MONTHLY
RECURRING
DONORS
ADDED

211

POUNDS
OF CROPS
HARVESTED

19

GROWERS
APPRENTICESHIP
COHORT
PARTICIPANTS

24

YOUTH CORPS
PARTICIPANTS
EMPLOYED
AND EDUCATED

29

HERBALISM
APPRENTICESHIP
CONSTELLATION
PARTICIPANTS

57

COMMUNITY
GARDENERS

139

COMMUNITY
GARDEN PLOTS
ACTIVATED



309

NEW NEWSLETTER
SUBSCRIBERS

6,273

FRESH MOVES CUSTOMERS SERVED



FARM UPDATES

The farms are buzzing with excitement as we prepare for the upcoming season. This time of year we get a peek at warmer weather, but have to keep an eye out for freeze warnings to keep plants covered and insulated. We're focused on building new garden beds to accommodate more plants, and have welcomed back our seasonal farm team to support farm operations. From January to March this year UGC was able to continue growing greens within our hoop houses and some early covered rows. This year, we experimented with seasonal extension of root crops and inoculating bales of straw with mushrooms!

What's growing on? Currently we have:

Spinach	Cabbage
Lettuces	Peas
Bok Choy	Turnips
Pak Choy	Beets
Arugula	Radish
Mustard	Onions
Greens	Garlic
Collard Greens	Tulips
Kale	



JOB & EDUCATION TRAINING

YOUTH CORPS (YC)

YC Spring season is now in session! Kenesha Reed has started a new role as Youth Program Coordinator at UGC, and oversees the YC Teen Education and Employment program via curriculum development, coordinating our team of YC Instructors, and hands-on time with our YC teens. Previously Kenesha worked as a professional dancer with Red Clay Dance Company, and UGC's collaboration with Red Clay Dance for the Barilla Cook-Along event in Fall 2020 led to her love for urban agriculture, ancestral connection, and the healing it all brings.

We currently have programs at our South Chicago and Roosevelt Square Farms. Darion Crawford, Urban Farmer and Compost Coordinator at UGC and YC alumnus, gave a lesson in composting to our South Chicago YC teen job training program, teaching them the science behind creating good soil. They also learned about fungi, and how their underground root-like network (mycelium!) will grow wine cap mushrooms that we can "seed" as a secondary crop to grow under greens like collards. These young farmers are eager to learn, and always willing to get their hands dirty.

GROWERS APPRENTICESHIP (GA)

This is the second year of UGC's GA program, meaning this is the first season with two different cohorts! UGC welcomes our second cohort to the GA program, as well as returning cohort members from 2022's inaugural class. The 3-year farming and farm business training program teaches the foundations of farming, while working toward financially, environmentally, and socially sustainable farming operations. Returning cohort members from the 2022 inaugural class will have the opportunity to apply the lessons they learned from last year's growing season this year as they continue their apprenticeship. For the first quarter our apprentices focused on building garden beds and laying compost, prepping to transplant and transform their growing spaces, a necessary step of every season for all growers!



HERBALISM APPRENTICESHIP (HA)

UGC welcomes Reverend Kim Crutcher as Lead Conductor of our HA Program. Kim brings a lifetime of passion and curiosity about plants, nature and the impulse to heal. An Interfaith Minister, educator and licensed mental health counselor (MAPC, LCPC), Kim uses the term 'Conductor' as a reminder to support and guide apprentices and community members in their personal journeys with herbalism. For over twenty years she's shared insight, and the creative process as an artist and as a folk healer for those seeking change on multiple levels. Using evidence-based therapies, a trauma-informed approach, and culturally sensitive frameworks Kim offers supportive care for individuals, groups, organizations and communities.

UGC welcomed our second cohort (or "Constellation," as we refer to them) of members to the HA Program this year. This was a larger Constellation than the last, with a vision of growing our community practice. Last year's apprentices will demonstrate their knowledge of the craft as they lead upcoming herb walks for anyone interested in learning more. Apprenticeship workshops are held at the South Chicago Farm, and consist of three phases of learning: self-healing, family healing and communal healing.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



UGC welcomes Levi Welbourn as our Community and Volunteer Coordinator. Levi is passionate about creating space for everyone to collaborate, share knowledge, and find joy within their community, and his experience aims to serve BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and Disabled communities through educating on health disparities and resources.

Popularity continues for one of UGC's exciting offerings: our Community Gardens. With so many having interest in participation, our

plots are at capacity for the season. Orientation has started, and our local gardening enthusiasts are well on their way to a bountiful year.

As we wait for public volunteer opportunities for our farms to open in May, we welcomed small groups of volunteers from our network to support seeding and bed building in the first quarter. In addition to volunteers, UGC will offer several internship opportunities in 2023—visit our website for updates.

FOOD ACCESS & FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Fresh Moves Mobile Market and Collective Supported Agriculture (CSA) did not officially begin their operations until April; however, in the first quarter we focused on preparing for the year ahead while dropping off produce at partner sites to support food access.

Our CSA program is a subscription that allows members to receive weekly shares of fresh, local produce grown by UGC and our partners. For more information and to sign up for the 2023 season which includes delivery (from our new collaborator Dion's Dream!) and pick up options, visit our website.

DEFINING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY:

Our partners at the Community Food Navigator define Food Sovereignty as “a food system in which the people who produce, distribute, and consume food also control its production, distribution, and governance. This stands in contrast to the present-day corporate food system, in which corporations and market institutions dominate the global food system. Food sovereignty can be achieved through equitable and just decentralization and deprivatization of wealth and resources; decommodification of food; localization of food systems; greater autonomy for Black, Brown, and Indigenous decision-making.”

—From Community Food Navigator Resources page



GREEN ERA & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

UGC welcomes Evolve Giving Group and Lebec Consulting to support our Capital Campaign, which is raising funds for the construction of the Community Programming Spaces at the Green Era Campus, including the Community Education Center and UGC office spaces, growing spaces for training and education, and food retail spaces. For more information about the Green Era Campus, please visit greenerachicago.com.

Construction and commissioning of the Anaerobic Digester (AD) is complete! The commissioning process allows the microbes within the AD to become acclimated to incoming organic waste, similar to how a baby is first introduced from liquid to solid foods. This process provides an opportunity for Green Era AD operators to check the composition and recovery of the digestates' gas, solids, and liquids. The large digester tanks are now sealed for AD operations since commissioning began—if you missed your chance to check out the tank interiors don't worry! We took some pictures throughout our last tours:



PARTNER FEATURE: DION'S CHICAGO DREAM



Credit: Colin Boyle/Block Club Chicago. Dion Dawson stands outside of his dream fridge that he stocks daily with food for community members in Englewood at 5659 S. Racine Ave., on Jan. 13, 2022.

UGC is now collaborating with Dion's Chicago Dream for our Collective Supported Agriculture delivery.

Dion's Chicago Dream is to create financial, physical, and emotional stability for Chicago's residents by combating food insecurity while addressing food deserts in neighborhoods across the city.

"My family—we, you know, didn't have anything. We struggled a lot of years," said executive director Dion Dawson. "I've been food insecure, so I know what it feels like."

Dion's Dream is to use nutritional philanthropy as a catalyst to build community and transform lives. As an idea born in the heart of Englewood to give back to the community that raised him, Dion's initiative has expanded to assist residents in need in every Chicago neighborhood through the power of fresh, healthy food.

**An idea born
in the heart
of Englewood
to give back to
the community
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Urban Growers Collective cultivates nourishing environments in Chicago's historically disinvested communities, seeding pathways to freedom while supporting residents' health, economic development, healing and creativity through urban agriculture.

Tackling food systems change is no small task, and our work would not be possible without our collective. To support our work and continue providing land, training, and food access to new BIPOC farmers and community members, please visit urbangrowerscollective.org/make-a-donation.

While monetary donations are one form of tangible support, we want to affirm that the many different ways in which our collective shows support—volunteering, participating in programming, providing ideas and input, donating, etc—are all of equal importance. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Community is essential, and we are so grateful to be able to have you as a part of the UGC community!

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