

# IMPACT REPORT

2020



# To Our COMMUNITY

Creating opportunities for kids to play, learn, and grow through gardening, engaging their natural curiosity and wonder.

Can you imagine having a family with 2.6 million kids? That's how many children KidsGardening reached in 2020, through our grants for school and community gardens, our schoolroom curricula, and our resources for teachers, families, and other educators! At a time when kids are quietly suffering the hidden consequences of the pandemic — such as education gaps, social isolation, and nature deficit — the work of KidsGardening promoting school gardens and garden-based education and community is more important than ever.

At KidsGardening we measure our success not only by *what* we do; we also focus on *how* we accomplish our goals. Offered in print and digital formats, our educational assets are available to school-based educators, community garden leaders, home schoolers, and all parents. For the first time ever some of our most popular content is now multilingual, to better serve everyone we reach. We have a renewed focus on diversity and inclusion, welcoming all into the garden. This includes ongoing work with our staff, adding greater diversity of experience to our Board, and broadening the reach of our community work. And we have stepped up to convene and coordinate the efforts of the many other organizations across the country supporting garden-based education. When we work together, our “family” is stronger.

We could not have accomplished all of this without your support. We thank you, and the kids thank you.

With Gratitude,



Jim Feinson  
Board Chair



## OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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# happier, healthier kids *learning* in the garden and *connecting* to nature

In 2020, many of this country's youth bore hidden costs due to the pandemic: a loss of hope and a sense of control over their lives. Gardening was a bright light amid the darkness that grew hope and empowerment.

Despite shut-downs, quarantines, and social distancing, youth garden programs thrived in 2020. Not only did they get kids outdoors and active, they also fostered much-needed connections. In 2020, youth gardens brought communities together and inspired young gardeners to take action to help one another.

With so many schools turning to remote learning models, caregivers and educators scrambled to radically adapt teaching practices. Finding ways to keep kids engaged in learning proved difficult — but not impossible. In this report you'll find beautiful examples of how several programs adapted.

Many youth garden programs donated garden-grown produce to those in need in their communities. For some, this was a new direction; for others, it was an opportunity to deepen pre-existing relationships and expand community-minded efforts.

Garden-based programs focused on fostering hope and empowerment and made adjustments to ensure that youth could continue to participate in leadership and learning initiatives.

Please read on to find out how we will foster more connection among the youth garden community in 2021. On page thirteen you can read about our new web-based Kids Garden Community where educators, parents, and youth leaders can inform and inspire each other, creating a vital network of support.

Join us as we accelerate the youth gardening movement, and in doing so, grow healthier, happier kids.

With Gratitude,



Em Shipman  
Executive Director



# New Program!

## LESSONS TO GROW BY

In response to COVID-19 and growing demand from educators and families for garden-related lesson modules that could easily be adapted for in-person, remote, and hybrid school settings, KidsGardening launched a free, subscription-based program titled *Lessons to Grow By* in September of 2020. A total of 2,815 formal and informal educators and guardians participated in the pilot, which included 15 weeks of lesson plans focused on three foundational science themes: pollinators, plant parts, and plant needs.



Each lesson included background information for the educator along with three hands-on activities that relied as much as possible on common household supplies. The lessons also included student worksheets and links to additional resources for further investigation. The target audience for the program was 3rd through 5th grade; however, the lessons could easily be adapted for younger and older youth.

In addition to the thanks and overwhelmingly positive feedback, we also received funding from some very generous donors, allowing us to translate all 15 lessons into Spanish. We are offering the series again in English and Spanish to a new cohort of participants in spring of 2021.



### 89%

of survey respondents  
found the Lessons to  
Grow By series “extremely  
useful/valuable”

**“All of the lessons had something of value;  
appreciate so much that they are comprehensive  
and contained hands-on projects, ready-made  
forms and references!”** - Lessons to Grow By User



# Program SPOTLIGHTS

“Being able to just get outside and be in the garden, to have safe face-to-face time with peers, it was so important this year. Those were feel-good moments, it’s why we garden. No matter what’s going on in the world, gardening is always going to deliver those feel-good moments.”

– Philip Hewitt, St. Clair Superior Development Corporation, Youth Garden Grant Winner



RestoreOKC, GroMoreGood  
Grassroots Grant Awardee



## CARTON 2 GARDEN



In the sixth annual Carton 2 Garden Contest, sponsored by Evergreen Packaging, over 50 public and private schools implemented innovative garden projects by using repurposed milk and juice cartons. In addition to a grand prize of \$5,000, four specialty prizes were awarded in the following categories: Carton Art in the Garden, Environmental Stewardship, Health & Nutrition, and STEM, as well as ten grade-level prize winners.

This year we recognized the Project Climate Club at Heritage High School as a special honorable mention. A completely student-led effort, the club used milk cartons to grow native oak trees to help replenish forests destroyed by the recent California wildfires. Dedicated to only using existing resources throughout the process, they engineered creative ways to grow their seedlings using a wide variety of repurposed materials. In addition to their planting project, the 20 active club members led virtual educational sessions about climate change for local elementary school students.

“There are big environmental and social justice issues in the world and young people may feel like they don’t have power to do anything about that,” says club leader Alexi Lindeman. “I’m hoping we can show kids from a younger age that instead of being scared of a problem or feeling pessimistic, that they can feel like they can make changes right now.”



Project Climate Club,  
Carton 2 Garden Contest Awardee





Promise of Peace Gardens,  
GroMoreGood Grassroots Grant Awardee

## GROMOREGOOD GRASSROOTS GRANT



In 2020, KidsGardening and the Scotts MiracleGro Foundation partnered once again to offer the GroMoreGood Grassroots Grant. A collective total of \$100,000 was awarded to 175 programs that are bringing the life-enhancing benefits of gardens and greenspaces to communities across the United States.

With support from a GroMoreGood Grassroots Grant, Promise of Peace Gardens in Dallas, TX, built five new raised beds to grow additional produce for their Soup it Forward program which promotes community engagement and provides culinary education for youth and their families.

Soup it Forward participants receive monthly meal kits containing recipes, family eating/cooking guides, ingredients grown by Promise of Peace Gardens, and an empty jar that can be filled with cooked soup and given to a friend, neighbor, or anyone in need. Director Elizabeth Dry notes that “a big component of our Soup it Forward program is sharing and caring—a lot of people think that’s soft and sweet, but really, above all else, it’s powerful. Sharing and caring is what changes everything; it’s humanity.”

**175**  
programs  
awarded

**\$100K**  
in total  
awards

**75K+**  
kids  
impacted



## BUDDING BOTANIST



For the third year in a row, KidsGardening was thrilled to partner with the Klorane Botanical Foundation to offer the Budding Botanist Grant. In 2020, twelve schools were selected to receive \$1,250–\$2,250 in funding to support garden-based initiatives that encourage our youngest citizens to learn about biodiversity and explore their local ecosystems.

The Imago Dei Middle Schools in Tucson, AZ, used a Budding Botanist grant to expand their school garden through the installation of a new aquaponics system intended to better educate students on the myriad of ways to grow food in a challenging urban, desert environment. While remote learning made it impossible for classes to interact with the new aquaponic unit in-person this past year, students were able to virtually collect data and track the system's progress during weekly Zoom meetings. Students also received their own individual mini-aquaponic units to care for at home.



*Imago Dei Middle Schools,  
Budding Botanist Awardee*



**“We’ve done our best to keep the experience authentic. This has given students the chance to keep the hands-on learning alive and thriving!”**

*- Frank DiPietrapaul, Enrichment and  
Farm to School Coordinator*





*St. Clair Superior Development Corporation,  
Youth Garden Grant Awardee*

## YOUTH GARDEN GRANT



Since 1982, the Youth Garden Grant has supported school and youth educational garden projects that enhance the quality of life for students and their communities. This past year, thirty programs were chosen from nearly 800 applicants to receive award packages intended to help start new garden programs or expand existing ones.

St. Clair Superior Development Corporation was one of our top five Youth Garden Grant winners in 2020. For over a decade this nonprofit community agency has spearheaded a local youth development initiative in Cleveland, OH. What started as a straightforward leadership council of teenagers has evolved into a series of teen-created programs that promote empowerment and creativity through cooking and

gardening. “Our programs are for teens by teens,” says Youth Development Manager Philip Hewitt. Youth who participate in SCSDC’s after-school workshops and summertime workforce development program, have been using their grant award to improve their garden space and increase their production capacity. “It’s the first year we’ve been able to plant in the earth,” remarks Philip. “Our hope for the land is that we can grow things that take up lots of space. In the past we’ve just been so limited, but now we can do rows of corn or have a pumpkin patch or let the zucchinis take over!”



*Lavonia Elementary School,  
Youth Garden Grant Awardee*



# Curriculum & PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHTS

## NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION GROMOREGOOD GARDEN GRANT

In 2020, KidsGardening continued our partnership with the National Head Start Association and the Scotts MiracleGro Foundation to bring the magic of gardens to Head Start classrooms across the country. Serving some of the most vulnerable children in the United States, Head Start programs are in a unique position to lay a strong educational foundation for youth while also providing support for their families. Inspiring and supporting the development of gardens for this audience is an amazing opportunity to impact under-resourced communities in a meaningful way. KidsGardening offered our gardening expertise to their efforts through digital resources, quarterly webinars, and garden-focused sessions at their national conferences.



## EXPLORING HYDROPONICS

KidsGardening had the honor of partnering with The National Farm to School Network and the Scotts MiracleGro Foundation to publish a new electronic publication titled Exploring Hydroponics: A Classroom Lesson Guide. Tested by 15 pilot schools in California, New York City, and Washington, DC, the guide is designed to help educators teaching 3rd through 5th grades to introduce their students to hydroponics and explore how it might be used to shape our food systems in the future. You can [download a copy](#) of the guide, complete with activities in Spanish, on the KidsGardening website.



# Our IMPACT

Gardening improves kids' lives, their communities, and the planet. Since 1982, we have been supporting a community of educators and caregivers to bring the life-changing benefits of gardening to kids through our grant programs, contests, curricula, and educational activities.



**2.6 million+**  
kids reached in 2020



**\$160K awarded**  
to 227 programs



87K reached through  
curriculum publications



88K reached through  
grants and contests



1.6 million reached  
through lesson plans



920K reached  
through activities

**What amazing things do the educators we  
work with see in their students?**

**90%**

see increased  
**environmental**  
stewardship

**90%**

see increased  
**social skills**

**81%**

see increased  
**community**  
building

**75%**

see increased  
**leadership**

**70%**

see improved  
**nutritional**  
attitudes



# Our RESOURCES

## Design a Sensory Garden

**Overview:** With the right design, plants, and accessories, you can plant an engaging garden that will delight all your senses!

- Materials:**
- Paper and pencils to write down your ideas
  - Your imagination!

**Approximate Time to Complete:** 1 to 2 hours

**Location:** Indoor or outdoor

**Ages:** All ages

**Season:** All seasons

### Instructions:

With their incredible diversity of shapes, sizes, colors, scents, and textures, plants offer limitless options for designing a garden to engage the all the senses. Here are some tips for creating a special garden space that will allow you and your young gardeners to explore through sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing.

#### 1. Choose appropriate plant beds and containers.

The first thing to consider is how to ensure the garden is easily accessible to provide multiple opportunities to engage with the space. Raised beds, containers set on tables, or even hanging baskets or vertical gardens, bring plants up from the ground to waist- or face-level for children, allowing them to get up close and personal with plants. Sensory gardens be any shape or size, so don't forget that indoor gardens under grow lights or in bright window light are an option, too.

If you choose to use in-ground or raised beds, make sure they are not too wide or else children may not be able to reach the plants in the middle. If you have spaces that are hard to reach, consider adding pathways to help your younger gardeners explore.

#### 2. Pick a theme.

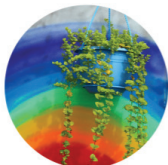
You can choose to focus broadly on sensory plants and select materials that will delight all the senses (and many plants naturally attract more than one sense anyway, for instance, a mint smells and taste great and it also has an interesting texture) or you can hone in on one sense, like creating a rainbow garden that would primarily be visually appealing.

#### 3. Select sense-engaging plants.

Check out our list of recommended [senses](#), their sense attracting properties, also look at conditions (such as light and water availability) possible.

#### 4. Dress up the garden with 'sense' stations

Add sound by raising your own wind chime fountain. Add texture with different types of and man-made materials. Add visual appeal signs and sculptures.



Nowhere else online is there such a vast collection of *free, high-quality, original* educational materials to get kids learning through the garden!



Nearly 300 original resources on our site



Nearly 350K views of our resources in 2020



Nearly 60K downloads of our resources in 2020

## Exploring Buds in the Winter

**Overview:** Children can observe and learn about the life cycle of a plant by observing buds in the winter.

**Materials:** A collection of age-appropriate garden-related books. Looking for ideas? Check out the [American Horticultural Society and National Junior Master Gardener Program's Growing Good Kids - Gardening in Children's Literature](#) website.

**Approximate Time to Complete:** 15 minutes +

**Location:** Indoor or Outdoor

**Ages:** All Ages

**Season:** All seasons

### Instructions

Setting kids excited about reading and writing provides them with many long-term benefits, but is not always an easy task. Why not use their love for garden activities to generate enthusiasm for literacy? Here are some ideas for bringing books to life through the garden and garden activities.

**Design a theme garden around a book:** For example, create a Peter Rabbit Garden using some of the vegetables mentioned in "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" by Beatrix Potter and include a few little rabbit statues or doll jacket scarecrows. Who knows, you might even end up with a real-life bunny (and learn how farmer McGee kept him) as well as additional suggestions of cool books that are easy to incorporate into a fun garden design!

**Top and Bottom by Janet Stevens** - Grow your own tops (bellies, bottoms (carrots and radishes) and middles (pots).

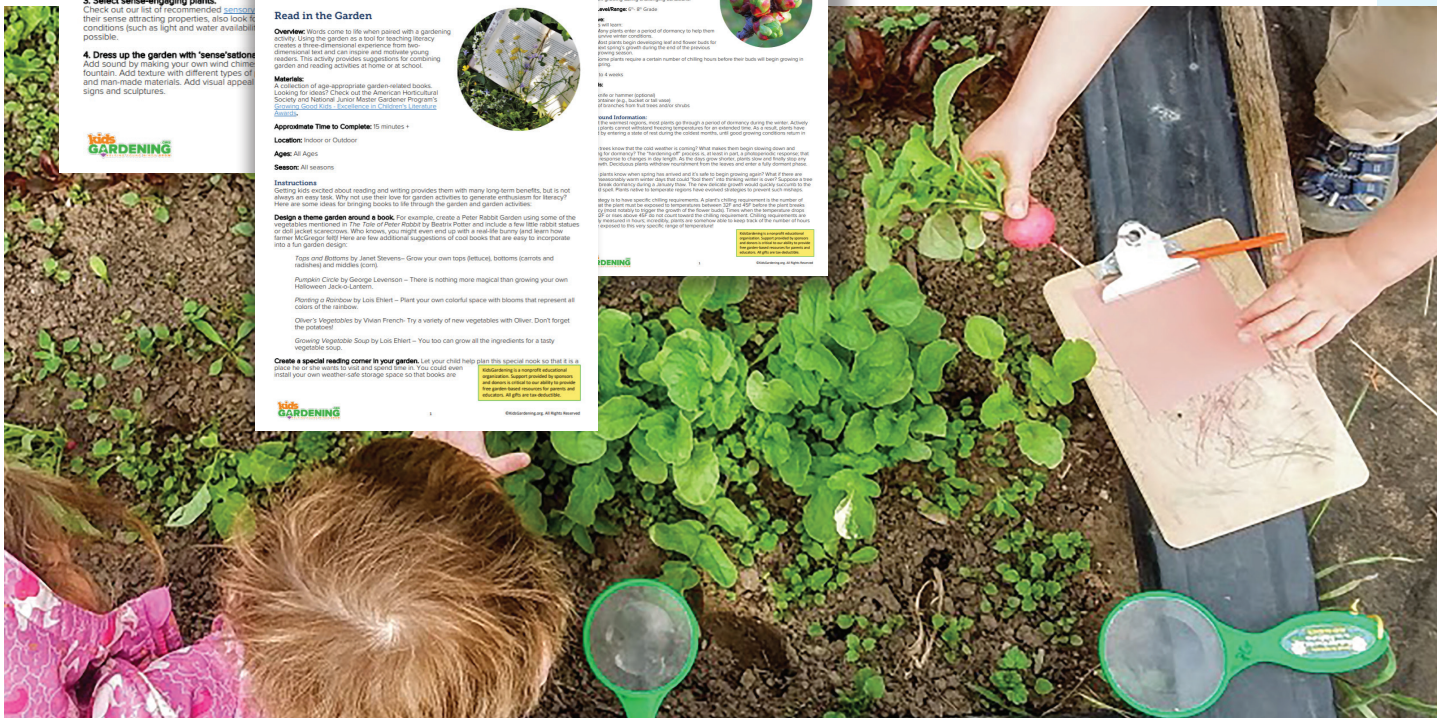
**Pumpkin Circle by George Levenson** - There is nothing more magical than growing your own Halloween Jack-o-Lanterns.

**Planting a Rainbow by Lois Ehlert** - Plant your own colorful space with blooms that represent all colors of the rainbow.

**Oliver's Vegetables by Shanon French** - Try a variety of new vegetables with Oliver. Don't forget the potatoes!

**Growing Vegetable Soup by Lois Ehlert** - You too can grow all the ingredients for a tasty vegetable soup.

**Create a special reading corner in your garden.** Let your child help plan this special nook so that it is a place he or she wants to sit and read often. You could even install your own weather-safe storage space so that books are



“From an educator’s perspective your materials are creative, age-appropriate, interesting and provide all the materials, worksheets, instructions, etc. to complete the lesson. Your lessons are an excellent resource for homeschoolers, classroom teachers, and interpreters at nature centers and parks.”

- Thea Powell, donor



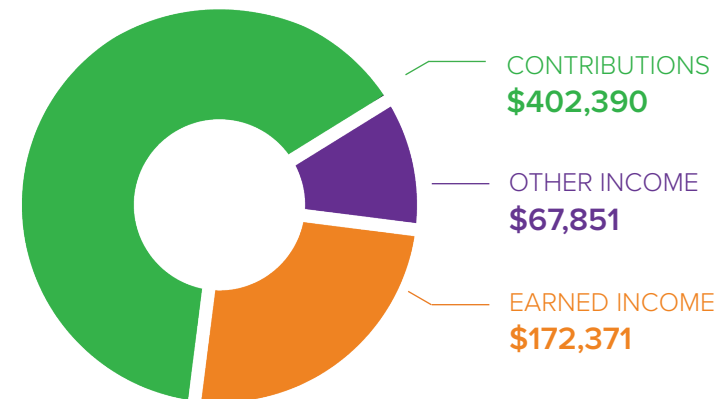
# Financial SNAPSHOT

For every dollar donated to KidsGardening, we are able to reach six more kids with access to garden-based learning resources.



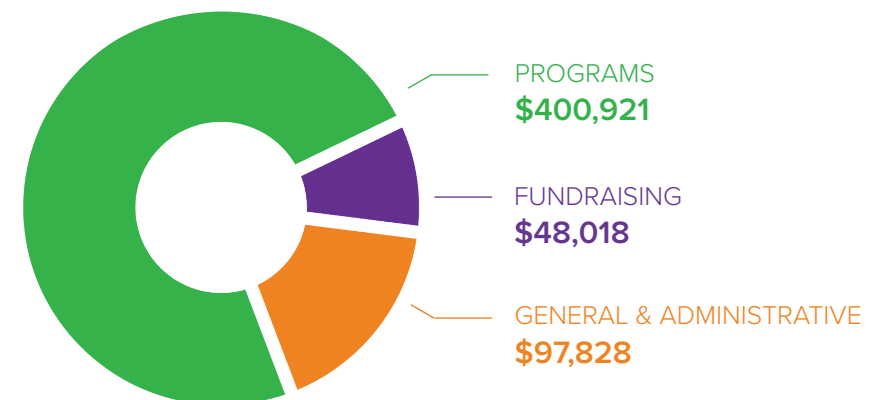
## REVENUE

\$626,242



## EXPENSES

\$546,767





KidsGardening is fortunate to be part of a generous, mission-driven, and collaborative community of educators and caregivers all dedicated to growing the youth gardening movement. In 2021 we are accelerating the movement by connecting these youth garden leaders through our Kids Garden Community.

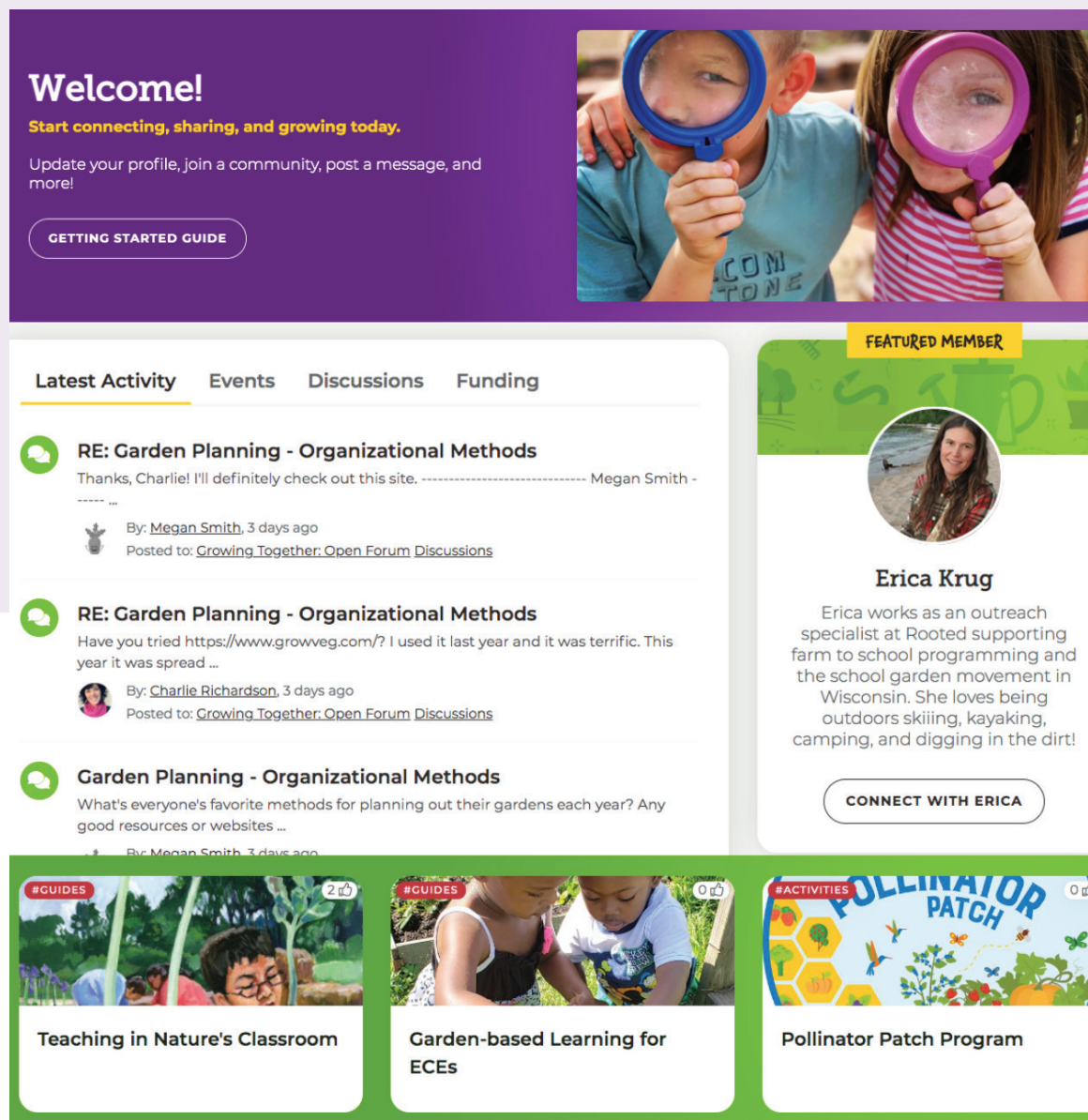
The Kids Garden Community is a free online community for everyone gardening with kids. From garden ideas to do with grandkids to advice for starting a garden program at the local school — and everything in between — the Kids Garden Community is the place to ask questions, explore resources, inspire, and be inspired.

**BY 2025...**



We expect to have 5K+ members from school, community, and home gardens

Reaching 750K youth with high-quality garden-based learning programming



The screenshot shows the Kids Garden Community website. At the top, there's a purple header with the 'Welcome!' message and a 'GETTING STARTED GUIDE' button. Below this is a navigation bar with tabs for 'Latest Activity', 'Events', 'Discussions', and 'Funding'. The 'Latest Activity' tab is selected, showing a list of posts under the heading 'RE: Garden Planning - Organizational Methods'. The posts include comments from Megan Smith and Charlie Richardson. On the right side, there's a 'FEATURED MEMBER' section for Erica Krug, with a circular profile picture and a bio. Below the bio is a 'CONNECT WITH ERICA' button. At the bottom, there are three featured activity cards: 'Teaching in Nature's Classroom', 'Garden-based Learning for ECEs', and 'Pollinator Patch Program'.



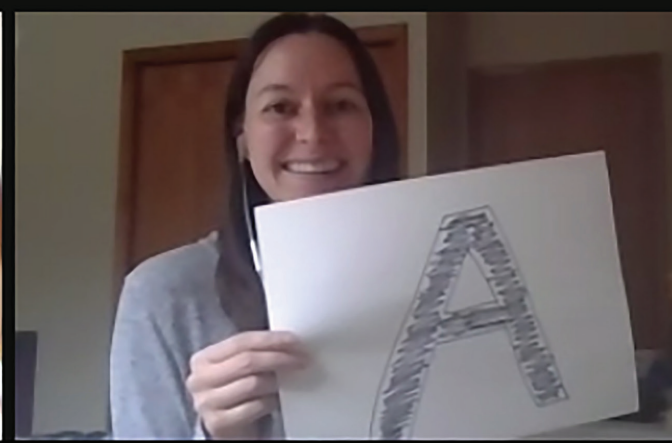
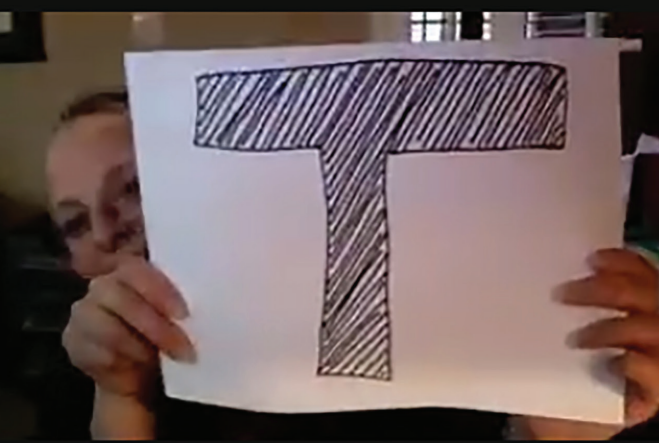
# Our SUPPORTERS



Thank you to the hundreds of generous partners and supporters across the country who made our mission possible in 2020. Together, we're growing a generation of happier, healthier kids!







2020 KidsGardening Team

### SUPPORT OUR WORK

Recurring donations, planned giving, gifts of stock, gifts in memory, or even a vehicle donation — every gift matters. No matter the size.

[kidsgardening.org/donate](https://kidsgardening.org/donate)

### SUBSCRIBE

Don't miss out! Monthly resources and announcements straight to your inbox.

[kidsgardening.org/subscribe](https://kidsgardening.org/subscribe)

### CONNECT WITH US

Follow along with a growing community and share the great things happening in your gardens.



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