



 intersectional
environmentalist



How Organic Can Save the Planet

In this toolkit, we'll be diving into the ways organic agriculture can serve as a solution for repairing our planet's soil. We'll also look into the ways our broken food systems are leading climate-impacted communities to mobilize around organic community gardening, food justice, and mutual aid.

TOOLKIT RESEARCH BY NATURE'S PATH ORGANIC FOODS + IE

JULY 2023

table of contents

Key Summary and Definitions.....	3
<u>Part 1: Organic + Climate Mitigation 101</u>	
Introduction.....	4
Conventional vs Organic Agriculture.....	5
How These Agricultural Systems Impact Climate Change.....	8
<u>Part 2: Intersectionality of Organic Farming + Environmental Justice</u>	
How Organic Agriculture Affects People + Planet.....	9
What is Mutual Aid.....	10
Organic Community Gardens.....	12
<u>Part 3: Seeing It in Practice</u>	
Intro: Nature's Path's Gardens for Good Program.....	14
Case Study: Project Sweetie Pie.....	15
Case Study: Indigenous Roots Forever.....	17
Action Steps.....	19
Resources and Further Reading.....	21
References.....	22
About IE.....	24

Table of Contents

key summary

Food and agricultural systems are critical tools for building a just and equitable future for both people + planet. However, the climate crisis is disrupting and destabilizing how these systems work and exposing many communities to issues of food insecurity—undermining their access to sufficient and healthy foods.

The way we're treating the planet is seriously messing with our soils. In this toolkit, we'll be diving into the ways organic agriculture can serve as a solution for repairing our planet's soil and restoring vital ecosystem functions necessary for climate mitigation. We'll also look into the ways our broken food and agricultural systems are leading climate-impacted communities to mobilize around organic community gardening, food justice, and mutual aid.

To help us talk about this subject, IE has partnered with Nature's Path Organic Foods (Nature's Path), North America's largest organic breakfast and snack food company, who has been a pioneer and leader in the organic movement for the last 40 years. Nature's Path produces USDA and CFIA Certified Organic and Non-GMO Project Verified breakfast and snack foods sold in grocery and natural food stores in over 50 countries around the world. Committed to the triple bottom line—socially responsible, environmentally sustainable, and financially viable—they work diligently to support communities and champion the cause of people + planet.

definitions

organic agriculture noun

an agricultural system utilizing specific farming methods that are designed to protect natural resources, promote ecological balance, steward healthy soils, counteract climate change, and preserve biodiversity. Organic practices prohibit the use of harmful synthetic pesticides, chemical fertilizers and GMOs, and prioritize long-term human + environmental health over short-term productivity and financial gain.

soil health noun

the continued capacity of healthy and resilient soil to function as a vital living ecosystem so that it sustains abundant life both below and above ground.

mutual aid noun

a practice rooted in the understanding that the current unjust political and economic systems of power are not meeting the needs of historically marginalized communities, and that those needs can instead be met through mutual reliance on community.

community garden noun

shared spaces created by community members where individuals or collectives of people grow plants and produce and maintain land for the benefit of the broader local community. When structured intentionally, community gardens can function as a form of mutual aid.

food justice noun

a multidisciplinary and grassroots perspective of the food system that views healthy, nutritious, and culturally competent foods as a human right while addressing the structural barriers and food insecurities to that right.

food security noun

the ability to access enough food at all times in order to live a meaningful, active and healthy life.

food sovereignty noun

the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.

urban agriculture noun

an agricultural system rooted in cities, metropolitan, and suburban areas whose core focuses on distributing their agricultural products towards supporting the environmental, economic, and social needs of the surrounding communities (e.g. rooftop farms, community gardens and farms, indoor hydroponic garden facilities, etc.).

Introduction

“One of the most important solutions to the global challenge posed by climate change lies right under our foot every day. It’s soil.”

—DR. ASMERET ASEFAW BERHE, SOIL BIOGEOCHEMIST AND POLITICAL ECOLOGIST

Before we dig into how people are taking action towards food system justice and health, we need to talk soil. Our soil serves as the foundation through which we can address food injustice and its many causes and effects. Food justice initiatives such as community fridges and farmers’ markets are well-known to the general public—they are what we most easily see (literally!) because they are above-ground efforts. But our favorite fruits and vegetables all come from somewhere and their existence all are inextricably dependent on how we decide to take care of soil.

Our food system is one of many facing new challenges as a result of the climate emergency. You can think of our soil as a living ecosystem, because it is! Soil is the foundation of life. It provides critical ecosystem services—a clean water source, food, and medicine, ensuring planetary balance and combating climate change.



IMAGE BY SIMRAH FARRUKH

THE KEY TO SOIL HEALTH + PLANETARY HEALTH IS ORGANIC MATTER

ORGANIC MATTER CONTAINS ORGANIC CARBON AND NITROGEN

CARBON IS A SOURCE OF ENERGY

NITROGEN IS A SOURCE OF PROTEIN FOR MICROORGANISMS IN THE SOIL

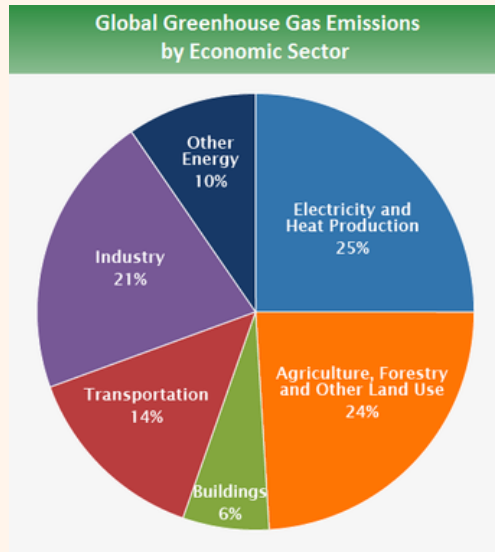
ORGANIC, NUTRIENT-DENSE SOIL SEQUESTERS EXCESS CARBON IN THE ATMOSPHERE AND SLOWS CLIMATE CHANGE

Conventional vs Organic Agriculture

Greenhouse gases (GHG), like carbon dioxide, trap the sun's heat in the atmosphere and warm the planet. The largest source of GHG emissions comes from human activities; through the burning of fossil fuels (like oil, coal, and gas) for electricity, agriculture, and transportation. The U.S. agricultural industry releases around 574 million metric tons of CO₂ into the environment each year.

IMAGE DESCRIPTION: IPCC'S AR5 CLIMATE CHANGE 2014: MITIGATION OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

THIS CHART SHOWS THE BREAKDOWN OF GLOBAL GHG EMISSIONS BY ECONOMIC SECTOR. AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND OTHER LAND USE ACCOUNTS FOR ALMOST A QUARTER OF ALL GLOBAL EMISSIONS.



Excessive Tilling

Tilling is a practice of turning soil to control for weeds and pests and to prepare for seeding, and, when done appropriately, leads to organic carbon accumulating in the soil to improve soil health. However, excessive tillage performed by conventional agriculture disturbs bacteria, fungi, and animals that make soils naturally fertile, and releases carbon stored in soil organic matter to the atmosphere as carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas. This practice also raises risk of erosion, which moves fertile farm soil into bodies of water.

What Are Conventional Agriculture Practices?

Conventional agriculture - the opposite of organic farming - dominates our food system today. Conventional agriculture contributes to GHG emissions through its reliance on synthetic, fossil fuel-intensive chemicals like pesticides and fertilizers rather than stewarding natural resources + protecting soil health. Exposure to these chemicals is detrimental to human health, harming farm workers and neighboring communities, while also polluting our air, water, and soil. Synthetic pesticides and fertilizers are used as a "quick fix" to obtain short-term yields and reduce labor costs.

Conventional agriculture is an extractive process; it depletes and degrades soil rather than stewarding it. And because of its dependence on fossil fuels and unsustainable land management practices, it will continue to negatively fuel the climate crisis which impacts both people + planet.

Practices such as excessive tilling, mono-cropping, removing crop residue, excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides, and over-grazing are all practices that over-expose the carbon in the soil to oxygen, allowing excess greenhouse gases to burn off into the atmosphere. This is the opposite of using practices that sequester, or store, carbon in the soil to help restore degraded soils and improve agricultural productivity.

Mono-Cropping

Mono-cropping is the practice of growing a single crop year after year on the same land. This practice depletes the soil of nutrients that would otherwise be gained by diversifying or rotating crops, making the soil less productive over time. This practice also reduces organic matter in soil and can cause significant erosion. Some of the most common mono-crops in the U.S. include corn, soybeans, and wheat.

Excessive Tilling



IMAGE BY UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

Mono-Cropping



PHOTO BY ALF RIBEIRO

Over-Grazing



IMAGE BY LOS PADRES FORREST WATCH

Conventional vs Organic Agriculture

What Are Organic Agriculture Practices?

Organic agriculture is a system that uses farming methods specifically designed to protect natural resources, promote ecological balance, steward healthy soils, counteract climate change, and preserve biodiversity. Organic practices prohibit the use of harmful synthetic pesticides, chemical fertilizers and GMOs, and prioritize long-term human + environmental health over short-term productivity and financial gain. This agricultural system is structured around the primary goal of building and improving soil.

“What organic farming is really about is building up soil. We need to take care of it. We were placed here as stewards, not as masters.”



-ARRAN STEPHENS, CO-FOUNDER + CHAIR OF NATURE'S PATH ORGANIC FOODS

Organic agriculture today adheres to a higher standard of land management that:

- Minimizes soil disturbance by avoiding deforestation + over-tillage. It maximizes on-farm biodiversity through natural resource stewardship best practices like alley cropping, riparian zone restoration, hedgerows, and pollinator planting.
- Keeps the soil covered + increases soil organic matter through cover cropping, green manures, and forage + successional planting.
- Builds healthy soil through heavy use of compost, natural amendments, and crop rotation.

Riparian Zone Restoration



IMAGE FROM EPA ARCHIVES

Compost



IMAGE FROM SOIL ASSOCIATION

Crop Rotation



IMAGE BY UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER



Riparian Zone Restoration

A riparian zone, or riparian area, is an area of land and a river or stream that meet. Restoring these areas can look like removing levees, drainage tiles, filling ditches, controlling invasive plant and animal species, and more – all with the goal of repairing the natural processes and dynamics this area once had.

Crop Rotation

Crop rotation is defined as the practice of growing different types of crops in the same area across sequences of growing seasons, to promote diverse nutrients in the soil, rather than depleting it through mono-cropping.

Conventional vs Organic Agriculture

Though we cannot change our agricultural systems overnight, being aware of the food system we support (conventional vs. organic) through our food choices and its impacts on the environment + our communities is the key to becoming better planetary stewards.

Time to test your knowledge! Use the practices you've learned about, find your inner soil steward by matching the below words to either conventional or organic practices. Draw a line from each word to its corresponding image to separate organic from conventional practices.

Organic Agriculture

Conventional Agriculture



COMPOST



OVER-GRAZING



CROP ROTATION



MONO-CROPPING



RIPARIAN ZONE RESTORATION



EXCESSIVE TILLING

How These Agricultural Systems Impact Climate Change

The depletion and degradation of the Earth's soil has led to a decrease in its biological activity and organic matter levels. That activity is what we so desperately need to effectively sequester carbon.

According to the Organic Farming Research Foundation, sequestration means 'stored for safekeeping'. Sequestering carbon captures and stores CO₂ and other GHGs for the long-term - taking them out of our atmosphere. Using nature's solutions, scientists and farmers are finding innovative ways to sequester carbon: from agricultural land-use, to reforestation and land conservation, we can use organic matter to help regulate and reduce CO₂ emissions in the atmosphere.

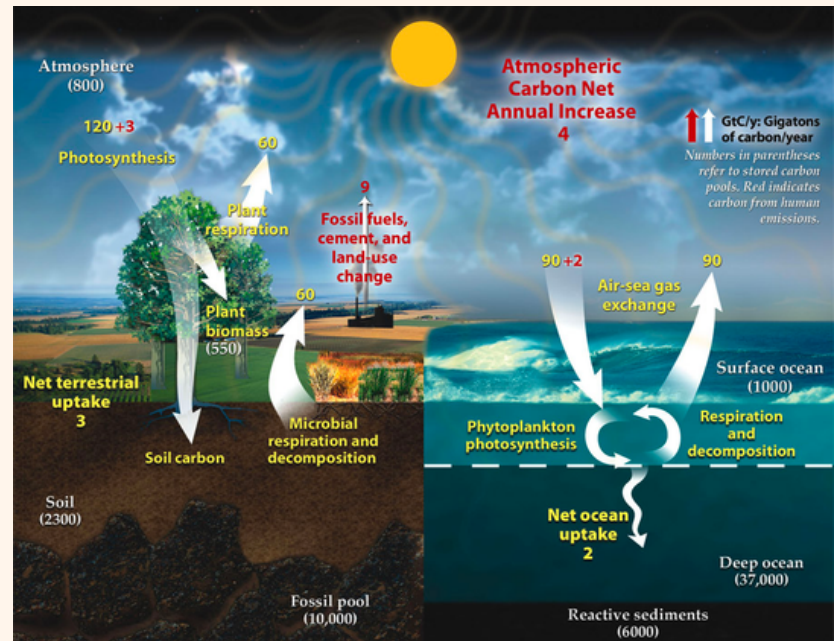
Here's how soil health impacts carbon sequestration →

Soil is constantly and naturally releasing carbon, but because of the harmful land management and soil degradation humans have adopted and caused, carbon is being released at rates that the environment cannot reabsorb. Conventional agricultural practices such as excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides, and over-grazing, expose the carbon in the soil to oxygen, allowing it to burn off into the atmosphere. If we invest in repairing soil health by adopting organic farming practices, our healthy soils will begin to store much of the excess CO₂ and other GHGs that have been released.

An estimated 24 billion tons of fertile soil is lost per year, largely due to unsustainable agriculture practices. If this trend continues, 95% of the Earth's land areas could become degraded by 2050.

IMAGE DESCRIPTION: THE CARBON CYCLE IS A CRITICAL NATURAL PROCESS THAT MOVES CARBON THROUGH OUR EARTH'S SPHERES.

IMAGE SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.CARBONCYCLE.ORG/WHY-CARBON/](https://www.carboncycle.org/why-carbon/)



How Organic Agriculture Affects People + Planet

There is a ripple effect that happens when our soils aren't healthy. When conventional farming practices, deforestation, and overgrazing degrade soil at an unsustainable rate, we see more frequent and intense cases of landslides, floods, and a decline in global food production. Soil isn't just important for growing our food. Soil health, its conservation, and its maintenance are essential to sustaining life on this planet. Organic agriculture is one of our best bets for investing in soil health, and therefore mitigating the impacts of the climate emergency.

So, what would it take to create a better future?

Organic agriculture is not new, but rather a time-tested agricultural system that is being used to help us to adapt to an ever-changing climate. Organic farmers build healthy soil using techniques that increase soil carbon stores like compost, cover crops, and animal manure, keeping the soil covered as much as possible. If organic standards were adopted globally, we could expect to save 2 billion tons of carbon a year! We encourage you to check out [The IPCC's Climate Change and Land Special Report](#) which shows that on both the supply- and demand-side of agriculture, climate change mitigation is possible. Healthy soil will help society feed the growing global population and be more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Check out some of the impacts of healthy soil on the right:

To learn more, visit the Resources and Further Reading section (page 21) on how organic agriculture inherently addresses climate mitigation.

As we continue championing soil health and organic agriculture to reduce CO2 emissions and other GHGs, we must work together to share knowledge and advocate for sustainable solutions. The rest of this toolkit will highlight one of our favorite solutions near and dear to Nature's Path's and IE's hearts: mutual aid + organic community gardens!



SOURCE: GETTY IMAGES SIGNATURE



Impact of Healthy Soil

Fertile soils produce more food + promote biodiversity.

Healthy soil holds moisture better, and is less susceptible to erosion, floods, nutrient loss, and desertification.

Healthy soil has more microbes in the soil, which enable plants to grow deeper root systems that better tolerate drought, and be more resistant to pests.

Healthy soil generates enhanced carbon, which improves soil and water quality.

What is Mutual Aid

Mutual aid is a practice rooted in the understanding that the current unjust political and economic systems of power are not meeting the needs of historically marginalized communities, and that those needs can instead be met through mutual reliance on community. One of the first mutual aid societies, the Free African Society, was rooted in the Black Philadelphian community in the late 1700s, and soon led the way to the emergence of more mutual aid societies across the country. The efforts of mutual aid societies can vary greatly depending on the needs of the community being served. Below is a timeline of examples of mutual aid societies with deep ties to social + food justice:

- 1787 • The Free African Society (Philadelphia)
- 1882 • The Chinese Six Companies/Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (San Francisco)
- 1886 • Colored Farmers' National Alliance and Cooperative Union (Houston)
- 1990 • The Sociedad Protección Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos (Antonito)
- 1969 • The Black Panthers' Free Breakfast for Children Program (Oakland)
- 1970 • Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (New York City)
- 1992 • Third Wave Fund (New York City)
- 2018 • The Okra Project (New York City)
- 2020 • Queer Food Foundation (Tucson)



THE BLACK PANTHERS' FREE BREAKFAST FOR CHILDREN PROGRAM (OAKLAND)



CHINESE MUTUAL AID ASSOCIATION (CHICAGO)



THE SOCIEDAD PROTECCIÓN MUTUA DE TRABAJADORES UNIDOS (ANTONITO)

What is Mutual Aid

“Mutual aid participants work together to figure out strategies and resources to meet each other’s needs, such as food, housing, medical care, and disaster relief while organizing themselves against the system that created the shortage in the first place.”

-DEAN SPADE, TRANS ACTIVIST AND WRITER

Mutual aid, as a form of grassroots political participation seeking to both care for community members and address the root of social injustice, involves everyone. It has served as a response to natural climate disasters and global pandemics but also addresses “...the daily routine, life-threatening disasters of capitalism and white supremacy” (Dean Spade). An intersectional approach to mutual aid is rooted in principles of anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism, racial justice, gender justice, and disability justice. In recognizing that BIPOC, LGBTQ+, low-income, disabled, migrant and other marginalized communities face the brunt of the impact of the climate crisis, mutual aid can serve as one of the best resources for getting individual and community needs met.



CHINESE MUTUAL AID ASSOCIATION IN CHICAGO PROVIDES SOCIAL SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY
SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.CHINESEMUTUALAID.ORG/SOCIAL-SERVICE](https://www.chinesemutualaid.org/social-service)

Organic Community Gardens

Why are we talking about food justice + community gardens in relation to environmental justice + the climate crisis?

“Food justice must be seen as an extension of the environmental justice movement in which marginalized communities have been systematically and actively denied the ability to fully participate and thrive within the environment. From farm labor work to land disputes to public policy, it must be reiterated how important it is to view food justice as a necessary approach to BIPOC liberation and freedom.”

-THEA GAY, IE PROGRAMMING FELLOW

Climate change is a social, political, and ethical issue, which means we need solutions that recognize the ways these issues compound on one another. It means that a food system that is healthy for both people and the planet can only be achieved through solutions that center justice. It is through the movements of community gardens and mutual aid collectives that climate-impacted communities seek to manifest that equitable food system.

These gardens are part of legacy building + community care in the neighborhoods they directly serve by changing the narrative of food apartheid through the integration of functional food and economic systems by way of the garden.



IMAGE SOURCE; PROJECTSWEETIEPIE.ORG

Organic Community Gardens

What are community gardens + how do they serve their local communities?

Community gardens are shared spaces created by community members, where people grow plants and produce, and maintain land for the benefit of the broader local community. These gardens can be established in urban neighborhoods, within rural communities, on school grounds, and even hospitals!

In the U.S., community gardens first originated during times of war. During both World Wars, the government encouraged Americans to plant "victory gardens" in order to meet the need for an expanded domestic supply of fresh fruits and vegetables. Today, there are more than 29,000 garden plots in city parks across the 100 largest U.S. cities alone (Trust for Public Land).

Not all community gardens are created equally. Many run by BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and low-income communities understand the importance of challenging oppressive dynamics and structural injustices (such as high barriers to access land). For many, growing food is an act of resistance and a tool for organizing. Often embedded in mutual community gardening is an understanding of reciprocity and sharing amongst other garden tenders. Many gardens even have programs set up for supporting the surrounding community by equitably distributing food.

Community gardens have transformed and emerged as a staple of urban agriculture. Urban agriculture and food sovereignty both align as a way to put the power of food production back into the hands of communities that have historically been denied the right to that power, all the way from production to distribution to consumption.

10 Benefits of Organic Community Gardens:

- 🌸 alleviates food insecurity
- 🌿 enhances ecological awareness + knowledge about food production and gardening
- ☀️ leads to reductions in grocery spending/budget
- 🌸 makes use of underutilized space in large cities such as vacant parking lots
- 🏠 cuts down on food waste through composting
- ☀️ improves soil + water quality
- 🌸 reduces the carbon footprint or "food miles" of transporting vegetables and fruits
- 🏠 increases local access to fresh food for community + garden residents
- ☀️ strengthens community engagement and sense of pride
- 🌸 increases biodiversity of plants and animals (including pollinators!)

Intro: Nature's Path's Gardens for Good Program



Since 2010, Nature's Path's Gardens for Good program has donated over \$615,000 to over 70 community gardens, investing in the organic movement and supporting local food systems across the U.S. and Canada. The brand is committed to investing \$1,000,000 in grant money to fight food insecurity via community gardens by 2028.

The Gardens for Good grant program ensures special consideration is given to gardens run by and serving BIPOC communities impacted by food apartheid. For example, in 2022, 44% of the Gardens for Good grant recipients in the U.S. were BIPOC-founded or serving gardens and 50% of the recipients in Canada were BIPOC-founded or serving gardens, exemplifying the need to challenge food injustices within marginalized communities.

To further amplify the impact of community gardens, Nature's Path encourages consumers to vote for their favorite gardens via the brand's digital platforms, strengthening the gardeners' chances of winning the grant money. By voting, consumers are putting money directly into the hands of deserving, organic gardeners, lowering household food security concerns and empowering positive community growth. To put the power of the consumers' vote into perspective, every \$1 invested in a community garden yields around \$6 worth of produce.

Below are two Gardens for Goods grant recipients who lead with innovation and creativity to further build their communities' resiliency to climate change, social injustice, and economic instability through organic gardening.



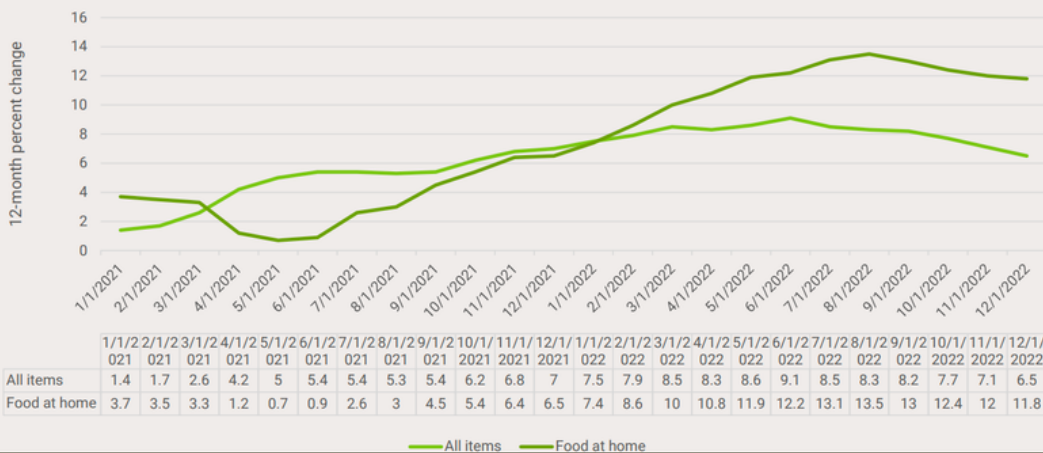
IMAGE SOURCE: NATURE'S PATH GARDNS FOR GOOD [HTTPS://NATURESPATH.COM/PAGES/GARDENS-FOR-GOOD](https://naturepath.com/pages/gardens-for-good)

Case Study #1 - Minneapolis, MN + Project Sweetie Pie

From grocery store co-ops to abundant community gardens, Minneapolis residents and urban farmers are stepping up to address the fact that according to Hunger Solutions Minnesota's latest report, Minnesotans made over 5.5 million visits to food shelves in 2022. Food shelves are similar to food pantries, in that both serve as distribution centers where those who are hungry can directly access food and groceries—including freshly-prepared hot meals, produce, meat, and dry pantry goods.

1 Food price inflation

12-month percentage change in consumer prices Jan. 2021-Dec. 2022



SOURCE: [HUNGER AND FOOD JUSTICE \(HUNGERSOLUTIONS.ORG\)](https://hungersolutions.org)

The report reveals that this is largely due to two reasons: a rapid state-wide rise in food prices and an overall loss in food support programs (e.g. stimulus payments and emergency SNAP); with both of these factors only anticipated to grow worse in 2023.

In Minnesota, Black farmers are emerging as land stewards with a clear vision for urban agriculture - despite the fact that there are only 55 Black farms, out of almost 70,000 in the entire state! Our first Gardens for Good honoree exemplifies the resilience of this city: Project Sweetie Pie.

2 Loss of food support programs

- Stimulus payments
- Child tax credit advance payments
- Expanded Unemployment Insurance
- Eviction moratorium
- Pandemic EBT
- Universal school meals
- Emergency SNAP

SOURCE: [HUNGER AND FOOD JUSTICE \(HUNGERSOLUTIONS.ORG\)](https://hungersolutions.org)

Case Study #1 - Minneapolis, MN + Project Sweetie Pie

Project Sweetie Pie is an all-volunteer-run nonprofit community farm. Based in North Minneapolis, the farm was started in 2010 by Michael Chaney, along with local businesswoman Rose McGee. The farm began as a pilot project to save North High School (which was under threat of closure). The educational focus of this farm encouraged collaboration with students and other local nonprofits. What started as five gardens on empty lots has now grown to twenty-five gardens spanning North Minneapolis.

Project Sweetie Pie's goal? According to Chaney, it's to create local solutions with global impact through urban agriculture. Project Sweetie Pie is advancing climate justice in North Minneapolis and providing environmental + public health benefits by addressing how the city is impacted by climate and food insecurity. Not only is Chaney's farm providing healthy organic food, but the growing organization is simultaneously creating youth leaders knowledgeable in sustainability, food sovereignty, community care, local economic systems, and entrepreneurship. And with Michael's long history in community organizing, youth advocacy, and encouraging food sovereignty efforts in local communities, he's just the farmer for the job!

“This gardening project is really where cultures take place. The only way we can dispel the stereotypes and misconceptions we have about each other is to bring each other into the same space so we can learn about each other.”

—MICHAEL CHANEY, FOUNDER OF PROJECT SWEETIE PIE



DOZENS OF LOCAL TEENS ARE EMPLOYED THROUGH PROJECT SWEETIE PIE, WITH THE PRODUCE THEY GROW BEING SOLD AT FARMERS' MARKETS AND DONATED TO LOCAL FOOD SHELVES.



ACTIVIST, ARTIST, AND FOUNDER OF PROJECT SWEETIE PIE—MICHAEL CHANEY



SOURCE: [NORTH MINNEAPOLIS TAKES BACK FOOD SYSTEMS, LAND THROUGH URBAN AGRICULTURE | TWIN CITIES DAILY PLANET \(TCDAILYPLANET.NET\)](https://www.tcdailyplanet.net)

Case Study #2 - Pawcatuck, CT + Indigenous Roots Forever

Traditional practices of Indigenous communities are rooted in a deep respect for the natural world and an understanding of its interconnectedness with all living things. As European settlers began to colonize the land, they often forced Indigenous communities to relocate or abandon their traditional ways of life.

This history and legacy of colonization and displacement from Indigenous land has been met with a concerted effort from Indigenous and tribal groups across the country advocating for food and land sovereignty. In Connecticut, this effort is strongly felt by the work being done at our second Gardens for Good honoree—Indigenous Roots Forever farm.

Indigenous Roots Forever is a tribal community micro-farming program run by Rocky Johnson. Developed by the Indigenous People's Network of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, the farm serves marginalized BIPOC communities across Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. The program is dedicated to expanding Indigenous foodways across the region by training farm community members in how to grow their own medicine through cultivating herbs, fruits and vegetables utilizing traditional Native American farming techniques.

"[Gardening] is all part of the recycling process of regenerating Mother Earth and keeping it healthy and one day we hope to get our lands back and we want to make sure that we have family that know how to use it, nurture it, and provide for the futures to come."

—ROCKY JOHNSON, MANAGER OF INDIGENOUS ROOTS FOREVER

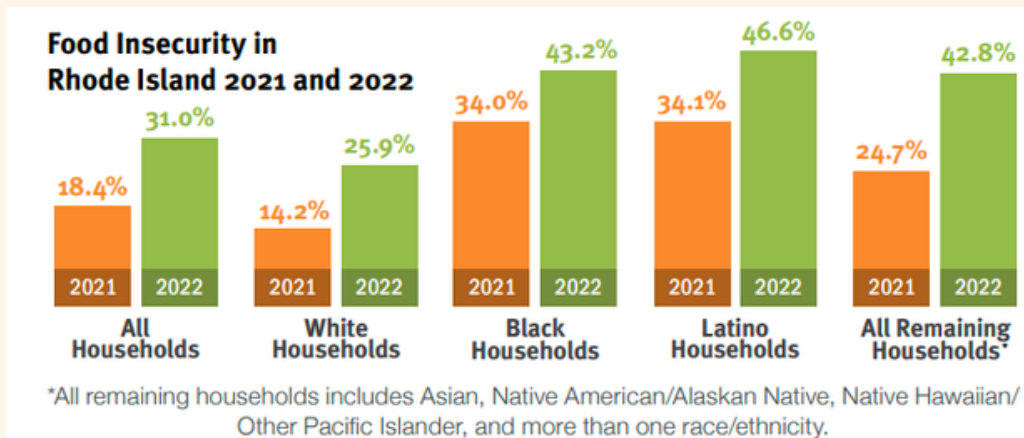


SOURCE: [INDIGENOUS ROOTS FOREVER - POCASSET POKANOKET LAND TRUST \(POCASSETLANDTRUST.ORG\)](https://www.pocassetlandtrust.org/)

Case Study #2 - Pawcatuck, CT + Indigenous Roots Forever

31% of Rhode Island households were facing food insecurity in 2021 and 2022, with 42.8% of those households identifying as Asian, Native American/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander. In addressing a pervasive community need, Indigenous Roots Forever made itself a space for healing and hope.

The presence of Indigenous Roots Forever is critical - in a 2022 report, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank calculated that food costs in the state increased 13% since 2021.



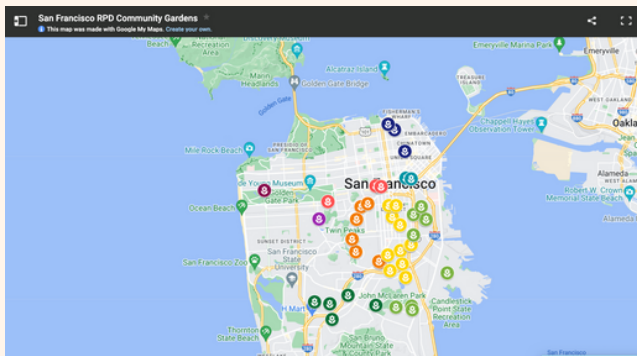
Implications Today

Conventional agriculture and big agribusiness rarely prioritize soil or planetary health. As we continue to advocate for soil-centered climate solutions like organic agriculture, we must also prioritize food justice and food sovereignty over profit-driven industrial farming and traditional models of agriculture. Mutual aid and organic community gardening initiatives will help us to reach that point. When working together, they put power and food directly into the hands of the communities most impacted by the climate crisis, with their needs being put first. When the climate crisis causes intersectional harm, we must call for intersectional healing. Organic agriculture and community gardens as a form of mutual aid offer a way towards that.

Action Steps

Map it out

- Community gardens are great, but they can be hard to locate or access depending on where you live. If this is something your area struggles with, start a mapping project! Producing sharable maps can be simply done through Google My Maps. For a more advanced project, try putting your GIS skills to the test with ArcGIS' StoryMaps feature. Examples below:
 - Google My Maps: [Community Gardens Interactive Map | San Francisco Recreation and Parks, CA \(sfrecpark.org\)](https://www.google.com/maps/@37.7749295,-122.4200942,15z) Create or open a map - Computer - My Maps Help (google.com)
 - ArcGIS StoryMaps: [Mapping Community Gardens in Los Angeles County \(arcgis.com\)](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/10000000000000000000000000000000)



Help community gardens

- Historically and still today, community gardens and other urban agriculture spaces have been politically contested spaces between city governments, garden residents, and private developers—all battling over private land use and management. Of course, we need as many growers taking on organic agriculture as possible, but they also need our support! Here are some ways you can help support your community gardens in your area:
 - Join + volunteer at a community garden
 - Not quite ready to get your hands dirty? Many farms and gardens might need help in other capacities, like social media, data or website management, fundraising, and so on.
 - Know someone in need of support in starting a community garden? It is a big undertaking. Consider lending your time and expertise throughout parts of the process of starting a community garden that best suit your skillsets



Action Steps

Support food justice

- Other opportunities to get involved in:
 - Apply for a CSA program from an organic farm
 - Support organic farmer's at your local farmer's market
 - Financially support local organic food justice initiatives
 - Support mutual aid organizations with a food justice initiative component
 - Reduce food waste at home
 - Research ways to get involved on a local, regional, or state government level



Use your purchasing power

- As a consumer, we have the opportunity to support the business models and practices we want. Buying organic is important, but not always accessible. Here are some tips to make better-informed buying decisions that are wallet-friendly as well:
 - Shop and Eat with the Seasons - as much as possible, eating and aligning with the local harvest season can be more affordable than buying food that must be shipped from out of your area.
 - Pick and Choose - your entire shopping cart does not need to be filled with only organic foods and products. Look at your grocery list and decide which foods or ingredients mean the most to you that can be purchased chemical and pesticide-free.
 - Farmers Markets - see if your local market accepts EBT or other forms of public assistance benefits in order to make buying organic more affordable and realistic based on your needs.



Resources

To Read

- [The Compassionate Diet: How What You Eat Can Change Your Life and Save the Planet \(2011\) by Arran Stephens with Eliot Jay Rosen](#)
- [Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity during this Crisis \(and the Next\) \(2020\) by Dean Spade](#)
- [Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice \(2014\) by Jessica Gordon Nembhard](#)
- [Freedom Farmers: Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement \(2019\) by Monica White](#)
- [The Color of Food: Stories of Race, Resilience, and Farming \(2015\) by Natasha Bowens](#)
- [Environmental Working Group's 2023 Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce](#)
- [The Queer Farmers Reimagining American Agriculture - Modern Farmer](#)

To Listen

- [In the New podcast "Nature's Path: Pioneers of the Organic Food Movement" episode](#)
- [Setting the Table podcast "Episode 3. The Resurgence of Black Farming"](#)
- [The Native Seed Podcast](#)

To Watch

- [Organic is About Soil Health — Nature's Path Organic Foods](#)
- [Activist and grassroots organizer Mariame Kaba presents an Introduction to Mutual Aid at the Janine Soleil Youth Abolitionist Institute](#)
- [A guerilla gardener in South Central LA | Ron Finley](#)
- [Farming for our Future — Regenerative Organic — Nature's Path](#)
- [The BIPOC Community Garden - Connecting Food and People through Gardening](#)
- [Food Sovereignty: What It Is and Why It's Important](#)
- [How we leave the Earth is our collective legacy | Arran Stephens | TEDxUW](#)

Resources

References

Organic Agriculture

[Rodale Institute Regenerative and the soil carbon solution report.pdf](#)

[The Original Principles of Regenerative Agriculture - Rodale Institute](#)

[Organic Farming Practices - Rodale Institute](#)

[Why Regenerative Organic? - Regenerative Organic Certified.\(regenorganic.org\)](#)

[How To Make Organic Accessible and Affordable For Everyone | Only Organic](#)

[NRDC: Grow Organic - The Climate, Health, and Economic Case for Expanding Organic Agriculture.\(PDF\)](#)

Soil Health

[Soil Health Assessment | Natural Resources Conservation Service.\(usda.gov\)](#)

[New Mexico State University | Tillage Management](#)

[Healthy Soil is Ground Zero for Environmental Justice in Farm Communities | Civil Eats](#)

[Soil Health - Rodale Institute](#)

[FST 40YearReport_RodaleInstitute-1.pdf](#)

[Why Carbon? | Carbon Cycle Institute](#)

[Soil Health | Natural Resources Conservation Service.\(usda.gov\)](#)

Mutual Aid

[A Visual History of Mutual Aid - Bloomberg](#)

[Mutual-Aid Societies: Americans Knit Their Safety Nets - The Atlantic](#)

[Op-ed: We Can Build a Better Food System Through Mutual Aid | Civil Eats](#)

[Black Communities Have Known about Mutual Aid All Along | The Walrus](#)

[We're All We've Got, We're All We Need: A Mutual Aid Explainer - Mutual Aid Disaster Relief](#)

Urban Agriculture

[Urban Agriculture | National Agricultural Library \(usda.gov\)](#)

[Land Revitalization Fact Sheet - Urban Agriculture.\(epa.gov\)](#)

[A “plan bee” for cities: Pollinator diversity and plant-pollinator interactions in urban green spaces | PLOS ONE](#)

[North Minneapolis takes back food systems, land through urban agriculture | Twin Cities Daily Planet.\(tcdailyplanet.net\)](#)

[2017 Census of Agriculture Minnesota.pdf \(usda.gov\)](#)

[‘Growing food is an act of resistance’ \(msn.com\)](#)

[Urban Farms Are Stepping Up Their Roles in Communities Nationwide | Civil Eats](#)

[Op-ed: How Urban Agriculture Can Fight Racism in the Food System | Civil Eats](#)

[Black Farmers Are Embracing Climate-Resilient Farming | Civil Eats](#)

[The history of urban agriculture should inspire its future | Grist](#)

[Urban Agriculture: A Necessary Step in the Fight for Environmental Justice | by Ohio Youth for Climate Justice | The Climate Chronicles | Medium](#)

References

Community Gardens

[Gardens for Good | Nature's Path \(naturespath.com\)](#)

[Nature's Path Supports 15 Community Gardens with more than \\$100,000 in \(naturespath.com\)](#)

[Indigenous Roots Forever - Farming Program Sponsored by PPLT \(pocassetlandtrust.org\)](#)

[\(1\) Rocky Johnson's Introduces Indigenous Roots Forever's Food Access Program - YouTube](#)

[Project Sweetie Pie – Planting the seeds of change](#)

[Project Sweetie Pie teaches north Minneapolis youth about gardening. | MinnPost](#)

[Project Sweetie Pie – Planting the seeds of change](#)

[Michael Chaney: Using Project Sweetie Pie to Address Food Deserts – A Call for Change: Minnesota Environmental Justice Heroes in Action \(pressbooks.pub\)](#)

[Community Garden Statistics in 2023 \(Latest U.S. Data\) | Garden Pals](#)

[Community-Gardening-Guide-2017.pdf \(publichealthlawcenter.org\)](#)

[Here's the dirt on park trends: community gardens are growing - Trust for Public Land \(tpl.org\)](#)

[What is a Community Garden? | GROW \(grow-ni.org\)](#)

[The Many Benefits of Community Gardens – Greenleaf Communities](#)

[Community Gardens Are Growing Health, Food, & Opportunity \(foodrevolution.org\)](#)

[Research & Benefits of Community Gardens | NC State Extension \(ncsu.edu\)](#)

[URBAN GARDENS AND FARMS: COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS \(ncharchive.org\)](#)

[The Role of Community Gardens During the COVID-19 Pandemic | Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health](#)

[Evidence on the contribution of community gardens to promote physical and mental health and well-being of non-institutionalized individuals: A systematic review | PLOS ONE](#)

[Here's the dirt on park trends: community gardens are growing - Trust for Public Land \(tpl.org\)](#)

Food Justice + Food Systems

[Reimagining Food Justice + Food Sovereignty Toolkit — Intersectional Environmentalist](#)

[From Food Security to Food Sovereignty \(earthisland.org\)](#)

[Towards Thriving: Building a Movement for Black Food Sovereignty - Non Profit News | Nonprofit Quarterly](#)

[Food Sovereignty, a Manifesto for the Future of Our Planet | La Via Campesina](#)

[2022-RICFB-StatusReport-final-web.pdf \(rifb.wpenginepowered.com\)](#)

[Hunger and Food Justice \(hungersolutions.org\)](#)

Climate Change

[AR5 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2014 — IPCC](#)

[Special Report on Climate Change and Land — IPCC site](#)

About Intersectional Environmentalist

Who We Are

Intersectional Environmentalist (IE) is a Black-founded and WOC-led environmental justice education and awareness organization founded in 2020, that has become a leading resource for content and programs that explore environment, culture and identity.

Our Mission

To increase awareness and education about intersectional environmentalism and drive support towards grassroots environmental justice efforts. We create educational media and programs that are accessible and reaching diverse audiences, while considering cultural competency at the front and center. We also create networks of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and disability led environmental organizations with our projects to collaborate together and coalition build.

Our Theory of Change

Environmental justice education is absent from many environmental science and STEM curriculums in the U.S. from primary education to universities and beyond; which we believe is a large factor in the lack of funding for grassroots environmental justice and for more action and support. We want to shift environmental education, movements and policy to center environmental justice and the importance of equity in these spaces, to ensure a better and safer future for all people, especially those most impacted by the climate crisis.

What We Do

With a growing community of over 500,000 people, and resources and events that reach millions of people around the globe each year, IE's core programming includes: hosting community-driven climate justice concerts, giving away free books written by authors of color, and producing hundreds of educational resources at the intersections of climate and culture, including student-created documentaries, zines, toolkits, and more. In the last two years since our founding, we've become a leading resource for diverse environmental education.

Our Community Programs

- [Check out our online IG Community](#)
- [Check out Earth Sessions](#)
- [Check out the Free Book Giveaway Program](#)
- [Check out our podcast The Joy Report](#)
- [Check out our educational media \(YT\)](#)
- [Check out our Speaking Engagements](#)

Meet The Team



Leah Thomas
FOUNDER +
VALUES OFFICER



Diandra Marizet
CO-FOUNDER +
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Kiana Kazemi
CO- DIRECTOR



Jarre Hamilton
RESEARCH LEAD



Eileen Tran
CREATIVE DIRECTOR



Sabs Katz
CO-FOUNDER +
PARTNERSHIPS LEAD

About IE

We're excited to bring together resources and grow this platform so that IE can serve everyone in the sustainability community.

We hope you 'll continue to follow along as we dive into more topics that intersect with environmentalism.

Take the IE pledge today to bring these learnings into your own life - whether that's by speaking up and being an ally, or by following and promoting the incredible work of intersectional activists.

Thanks for your support in creating a more inclusive planet.



Sign the IE Pledge

Visit
intersectionalenvironmentalist.com/take-the-ie-pledge