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Our Work

THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY GARDENING ASSOCIATION (ACGA) BRINGS PEOPLE, EDUCATION AND RESOURCES TOGETHER TO CREATE COMMUNITY WITHIN A VARIETY OF GARDENING ENVIRONMENTS.

Since 1979, ACGA has been a leading resource for starting, maintaining, and growing community garden programs throughout the United States and Canada.

The organization now has over 1,000 individual and 252 active organizational members representing the full range of community gardens, from community-based to giving gardens to urban farms. The member organizations represent over 2100 gardens across the country.

We are able to provide education to our members in the form of localized training workshops, online resources, distance webinars, and yearly conferences; also available is an invaluable communication platform that allows members to:

- Promote the formation and expansion of regional community gardening networks.
- Provide grants and other resources to member gardens.
- Develop resources in support of community gardening and community greening projects.
- Encourage research on the impact of community gardening, urban agriculture and greening.
- Conduct Educational training programs and events.
- Provide an online resource and network for all people interested in community gardening.
- Support community driven urban agriculture and food security projects.
Message

From our President

Let me start by saying ACGA will not be silent. ACGA understands the true effect that racism and unfair justice has on our country and the world. People of color have been treated unfairly for decades. Why Now? Because technology is capturing crimes taking place, unfair justice has come to the forefront. The world is outraged now. We as people of color have gone through pain and suffering since we were born. Hidden racism is everywhere, in the workplace, government, hospitals, schools, universities and in churches. The time has come for all people to stand up for justice, peace and equality. Black and brown people have suffered through racism while Caucasians have had all the power and privilege to work the system. Respect, Transparency and Justice should be for All.

As president of the American Community Gardening Association, I vow to always show respect, have transparency and treat all people equally. As a black American female, I have endured racism my entire life. Mine was the first black family to integrate an all-white school. My sister, brother and I were picked on, talked about and lied on. But through it all, “We made it!” We had strong parents that made us believe that we are just as good or better than anyone else no matter the color of their skin. As President of the American Community Gardening Association, I have a seat at the table. Now that I am at the head of the table, ACGA will address social justice, equality and respect for all people. Black lives matter. All lives matter. The time is now to stand up for what is right in all aspects of life.

As President of ACGA and a person of color I ask you to join our organization to make a difference in this gardening and greening movement. Everyone should have the opportunity to grow their own fresh vegetables and have access to healthy food.

Mother Nature does not see skin color. In the garden we all are equal. Gardening together is a chance to get to know one another as equals and promote justice, peace and equality. Enjoy our conference Digging for Victory. Thank you for your support, it is up to all us to make a change.

Sincerely,

Cathy Walker, President.
Wellness

The Governance Committee is responsible for the smooth and effective functioning of the ACGA Board. The Governance Committee handles AGGA’s human resources and internal policy development on behalf of the board. ACGA’s Board is an all-volunteer board, with many talents and passions. The board meets in person twice a year and conducts monthly board teleconference calls to ensure the mission of the organization is carried out. In addition to the monthly board teleconference calls, each committee meets monthly.

Highlights for the governance committee in 2017 include updating the organizational operations manual, developing the board member attendance policy, and managing a staffing search for the organization. ACGA moved to Atlanta in 2014, and it has been a good fit for the organization. The Greater Atlanta area is an urban agricultural mecca and an epicenter of food justice and sustainable agriculture. ACGA has settled in and integrated the organization into this thriving community.

Additionally, ACGA is always interested in anyone who has a passion for community Gardens who would like to become a member of our board. We have a diverse board from throughout the US who are involved in numerous aspects of government, gardening and horticultural healing. Please contact the home office if you are interested in applying to become a member of our board.

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AMERICAN COMMUNITY GARDENING ASSOCIATION

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Email: info@communitygarden.org
Web: https://communitygarden.org/
I was thrilled when the ACGA Board decided to host the 2020 ACGA Annual Conference in Los Angeles! We had formed a local Host Committee and were planning to hold the conference at the beautiful Hollywood Hotel and the adjacent East Hollywood Community Garden, the site of the Los Angeles Community Garden Council’s new office, opened in 2019. Then the Covid lockdown order came for Los Angeles on March 13th, 2020.

After a few weeks of rapidly rising Covid cases, we decided to move ahead with the first-ever ACGA online conference. We took a crash course in Zoom technology and required workshop proposals to include a short video. We changed the theme of the conference to “Digging for Victory” to echo the gardens that were grown after the Second World War and to emphasize the essential role that community gardens were playing in the current crisis by donating fresh produce to the increasing numbers of people experiencing job loss and homelessness.

The morning of Saturday, August 8th arrived and almost 300 avid community gardeners from all over the world logged in at 8am Pacific Time for the introductions from ACGA President, Cathy Walker, and myself. All participants joined the keynote presentation from Alberto Tlatoa, Co-Founder of South Central Farm, who spoke passionately about his work in land and food justice. Participants were then able to select their workshop of choice for the first session. We hosted 20 workshops on themes varying from the history and health benefits of community gardens to soil management, growing herbs, healthy cooking, fermentation, and crowdfunding for community gardens. The presenters were outstanding and were able to join us from all over North America due to the remote format of the conference. Each participant could select five workshops to attend throughout the day and translation into and out of Spanish was available.

Following the fifth and final workshop session, we showed video tours, with live narration, of twelve community gardens in Los Angeles County including one taken by a drone over the East Hollywood Community Garden. It was a wonderful way for conference attendees to feel like they were visiting Los Angeles and meeting a diverse group of community garden leaders in our city.
The conference ended with a Meet and Greet with the ACGA Board Members and Host Committee Members followed by a virtual party including a scavenger hunt, which became highly competitive! Who knew that community gardeners were so eager to be the first to find seeds, a shovel, or other gardening items around their homes during the lockdown?

Thanks to all who volunteered their time, the 2020 ACGA Annual Conference became the best attended ACGA conference ever. Sixty percent of participants were attending the conference for the first time and many stated that the cost of travel and accommodation deterred them from attending past conferences. We met our financial goal for the conference thanks to generous sponsorships from DIG, Food Well Alliance, Gardener's Supply Company, Garden Manager, Los Angeles Community Garden Council, Metro Atlanta Urban Farm, Santa Monica Community Gardens, Sylmar Agriculture, Urban Patch, USDA, and The Weybright Family.

Going forward, we decided that there should be an online element to all the annual conferences, even after we are all fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

Respectfully submitted by Julie Beals, Chair of the 2020 ACGA Conference Host Committee.
Development

ACGA would not be able to help so many people in North America if it were not for our members, partners and donors! It is because of our partners and donors that we are able to engage neighbors, and families and teach all that they can grow their own food, build community, and empower neighborhoods across North America. We are grateful for each and every donation; and sincerely appreciate the support we received from the following sponsors:

Gardener's Supply
The City of Indianapolis Office of Public Health & Safety
Indy Food Council
Flanner House
Newfields, a Place for Nature and the Arts
Urban Patch
BigCar.org
Visit Indy
Mapleton Fall Creek Development Corporation
Purdue Extension
US Department of Agriculture

Together we are empowering communities to grow their own food, and revitalizing neighborhoods. The development committee is always looking for partnerships and funding to move ACGA's mission forward.

Thank you for helping us Grow!
December 2019–2021

The Membership Committee is committed to reaching and impacting individuals in the entire community and requires no financial obligation for individuals to join, learn and grow, thus our Budding Membership (free).

Paid Membership requires various levels of financial obligations and this helps ensure AGCA has financial resources to maintain the home office along with its national mission and objectives.

Paid Membership levels include:

- Umbrella Member $500
- Life Member $600
- Organizational Member $100
- Supporting Member $65
- School Member $65
- General Member $45

Entire membership subscription: 10,498
Paid membership subscription: 617
2020 was a challenging year for our Growing Communities Workshops. We adapted our format to focus on the realities of our members while keeping with the guidelines for safety during the pandemic. We shifted our focus to serve those who were impacted the most. We presented virtual workshops in partnership with University of Georgia UGA Cooperative Extension of Dougherty County in Albany, GA.
Advocacy and Policy

ACGA works to influence public policy to encourage governments (local, state, federal) to increase support and resources for urban agriculture, which includes all forms of community gardening. Policy, utilities and land-use issues are top priorities. Trends tend to focus on land-use pressures or threats around community gardens not seen as a priority of use.

Other issues include access to land and local capacity for help and resources. In past surveys, many spoke to how ACGA could help advocate community gardens and the benefits of community gardening; educating & developing legislation to protect and develop gardens; supplying resources/grants to seed gardens; developing and sharing best practices and tips sheets.

Additionally, we research previous national community gardening legislation in preparation to find support legislatively for development of possible funding and land-use support. We appreciate all of the continued support of our members and other gardening groups when initiating surveys in order to gain better insight into how we can be of benefit to the gardening community as a whole.
2020 was an all-volunteer year for the American Community Gardening Association. We pivoted to hold our first Virtual Conference with success amidst the challenges of a pandemic. We are proud of our efforts and the Virtual Conference was extremely well received and many gardeners who could not afford our in-person conferences benefited. We plan to have a virtual option again even when we can resume an in-person conference. Our membership continues to be a strong source of support for ACGA’s mission.

We were pleased to be able to provide more than $9,000.00 in funding to community gardens throughout the US. We continue to strive to keep our administrative costs down although our all-volunteer office assistants who are there remotely to answer questions and advise community gardeners throughout the US and Canada.

Our all-volunteer Board has contributed hundreds of hours to the American Community Gardening Association and its mission. We thank our sponsors: Gardener’s Supply Company, USDA, Food Well Alliance, DIG Water Matters, Urban Patch, Metro Atlanta Urban Farm and The Weybright Family. Our gardeners have been enriched by your contributions.

A special gratitude for our benefactor, the late Marjori Malahan Brusasco, a nature lover who made a generous contribution to the ACGA in her will. Malahan Brusasco was a native of Brooklyn, New York and passed away in her home in Pompano Beach, Florida.
**Income**

*Grants, Program Fees, Membership and Contributions* $86,811

*Conference* $32,000

Total Income $104,512

**Expenses**

- *Professional fees* $11,100
- *Salaries and Wages* $9,697
- *Rent and Utilities* $5,378
- *Programming* $78,337

Total Expenses $104,512
Board of Directors

Cathy Walker, President
Metro Atlanta Urban Farm College Park, GA
cpfarmcathy@aol.com
Cathy Walker is currently serving as Director of Programming at Metro Atlanta Urban Farm. She also served as a Garden Specialist for The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension/Atlanta Urban Gardening Program (AUGP) for 17 years; offering gardening instruction and support to some two hundred gardens located at public housing complexes, shelters, schools, churches and elder care facilities in metro Atlanta.

Cordalie Benoit, Vice President
CT Community Gardening Association New Haven, CT
Cordalie.Benoit@aya.yale.edu
Cordalie Benoit holds a Masters in Environmental Management and is a UConn Extension active certified Master Gardener. She is an attorney with decades of experience with nonprofits, including the Connecticut Community Gardening Association. She is a member of the William Street Community Garden which is sponsored by The New Haven Land Trust.

Fred Conrad, Secretary
Fred.Conrad@communitygarden.org
Fred has been gardening and managing Community Garden programs in metro Atlanta since 1997. Currently, he is the Community Garden Coordinator for Food Well Alliance which provides funding, technical support, workshops and in-kind donations. The organization relies on an extremely robust volunteer program which Fred manages.

Prior to serving on the board of the ACGA, Fred helped coordinate several of our annual conferences. The ACGA has given Fred the opportunity to visit community gardens and meet urban growers from all over North America. Fred has a certificate in Horticultural Therapy and has been a Certified Organic grower, market grower, and keeps hens and honeybees at home.
Board of Directors

Joyce Moore, Treasurer
joyce.l.moore@gmail.com

Joyce is an entrepreneur and state licensed real estate broker who owns her own real estate and property management company. She is a member of the board of the Indy Food Council, The American Community Garden Association, a life member of both the Indiana University Alumni Association and NCNW (National Council of Negro Women), and a member of the NAACP. She works with various community education outreach programs and loves to work with youth and young adults on career fulfillment and financial wealth development. Mrs. Moore is a graduate of Indiana University's Kelly School of Business with a BS specializing in Business Administration, a graduate of REAL (MIBOR Real Estate Academy of Leadership) and of the University of Philadelphia's SAS Graduate Programming Course. She is an advocate for entrepreneurship and self-sustainability.

Bill Maynard
ACGA Board - Chair Development / Marketing Committee, ACGA Past President
Sacramento Area Community Garden Coalition
City of Sacramento Dept. of Youth, Parks & Community Enrichment – Community Garden Program
WMaynard@cityofsacramento.org

Bill has worked on community garden and school garden projects in the Sacramento area for over 25 years. His work has included technical support, design and layout, construction management and inspection, and best practices garden management. He is a UCCE Master Gardener and is the community garden program coordinator for the City of Sacramento. He is a steering committee member of the Sacramento Hunger Commission and was appointed to the State of California Board of Education School Garden Advisory Committee. His projects include design and planting of Maria Shriver's WE Garden at the State Capitol and design and Past President Sacramento Area Community Garden Coalition.
Terri Carter

Terri.Carter@cobbcounty.org

Terri Carter is a graduate of The University of Alabama and she is currently employed with The University of Georgia’s Cobb County Extension Office in The Family and Consumer Science Department. She is a Cobb Master Gardener and also a Sustainability Ambassador with the City of Atlanta. Terri can be seen on Cobb TV doing cooking and gardening shows and she is the coordinator at Historic Mableton Community Garden. She is the secretary for Cobb Community Gardens and a member of the planning committee for the annual Soil Festival. Terri teaches classes related to urban agriculture and food at local libraries, schools, senior centers, churches and she also does lectures on the food history of the South. She is committed to teaching environmental education, urban agriculture and food preservation.
Board of Directors

Julie Beals

Julie Beals is Executive Director of the Los Angeles Community Garden Council (LACGC) where she helps manage 42 community gardens throughout Los Angeles County. Prior to joining LACGC in 2013, Julie worked in corporate marketing for twelve years and as a development director for non-profit organizations for seven years. Julie holds a Master’s in Business Administration from the University of Southern California, a Master’s in Divinity from Claremont School of Theology, and a Bachelor of Arts in Hispanic Studies from the University of Bristol, UK. Julie’s grandparents taught her to grow food in the victory gardens that they had planted in post-WWII England. She remembers wrapping fruit and vegetables in brown paper to store them in a coal shed so that her family would have produce from the garden throughout the winter months. Julie moved to Los Angeles in 1998 and continues to be grateful for the warmer climate, where she grows food all year round. Julie’s passion for social and economic justice is the driving force behind her work building and supporting community gardens.

Marilú López Fretts

marilu.lopezfretts@communitygarden.org

Marilú López-Fretts is a community coordinator for Celebrate Urban Birds, a bilingual citizen science project from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. She is a photojournalist by trade, a graphic designer, visual communicator, informal science educator and community advocate who earned a Master’s degree in photography from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University.

At the Cornell Lab she currently co-leads National Science Foundation community-based participatory research to better understand and document the equitable co-creation of community science projects in the sciences. Marilú also loves the outdoors, nature and the birds in it and seeks to inspire and connect diverse communities with the outdoors and promote access while embracing culture, heritage, and community leadership.
Board of Directors

Karim Alston

Karim is a community gardener and organizer in Texas and founder of Grow Local Houston. He helped launch the Growing Roots East End Network (G.R.E.E.N.) in Houston, Texas. G.R.E.E.N. aims to bring together local schools and organizations for the purpose of helping sustain, promote, and connect gardens across school feeder patterns. As a result, grassroots efforts helped to increase access to healthy foods, improved nutrition education, create greater social cohesion and improve economic opportunities for low-income families. Karim Alston is a former art teacher, two time teacher of the year and school garden champion and advocate at Gallegos Elementary, HISD.

Steven Holley

Steven.Holley@communitygarden.org

Beginning February 2020, the experience of working with the established group in ACGA has changed my perspective of American local food security. Americans working together for a basic of sustainability, healthy food, with a history of success in the story of ACGA is a cause I am proud to participate in.

I am a landsman by profession, and I project coordinate for Alaska Village Initiatives and Alaska Carbon Exchange. In addition to ACGA, I sit on boards for Eklutna Tribal Conservation District, Community Business Development, Inc, NaTIV Hemp, LLC. In the afterhours, I lead a Dena'ina dance group to carry on the traditional ways of my Alaska Native people.

All my professional efforts rely on healthy lands, and ACGA provides me a chance to work alongside many communities across America. (A landsman is someone who shows others how they can best benefit from their land.)
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