



# *the* GARDEN PROJECT of Southwest Colorado

GROWING A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY SINCE 1998

## OUR PROGRAM

Since 1998, The Garden Project has been helping schools and nonprofit agencies develop community and school garden programs, and serving as a resource center for families, organizations and schools on local food and gardening. Direct services focus on lower income families, at-risk youth, and school-aged children. Programs are designed to promote environmental education, health and wellness and the promotion of a sustainable local food system.

The Garden Project has facilitated programs at over 18 school and community gardens since inception, serving a key role in the start up of 12 community and school gardens, including public and private schools, City Hall, our local soup kitchen and senior center. Core projects include supporting school and community gardens, the backyard garden program, community workshops, and on-line curriculum and resources. Direct services include program facilitation, onsite consultations, sharing tools and educational materials, organizing volunteer work crews and general support.

*Our Mission is to build a healthier community through the facilitation of educational and therapeutic garden programs and the promotion of a sustainable local food system.*

### OUR OBJECTIVES:

- ~To promote individual and community health and wellness.
- ~To increase education about the environment and the connection between plants, land and culture.
- ~To support a sustainable local food system in which all community members have access to nutritional and culturally appropriate food.

## MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS AND PROGRAMS

- *School Garden Programs and Services*
- *School Garden Resource Guide and Curriculum*
- *Community Garden Support*
- *Community Workshops*
- *Backyard Garden Give Away*
- *Dirt Club After School Program*



# 2011 Garden Sites and Projects

*2011 was another successful year in terms of the number of people served through direct garden programs. Over 1500 people (1100 youth and 400 adults) were served at 6 community, school and backyard garden sites and 6 garden workshops and community events. Seventy five garden programs and workshops were offered at existing garden sites in the Durango-La Plata area. The community events and workshops provided information and resources to youth and adults from the greater 4 Corners Area. Our volunteer force, representing over 20 community organizations and youth groups, contributed close to 1500 hours to make this year and all the programs possible!*

*Aside from the numbers, 2011 was a year to remember. We broke ground on 3 new garden sites. City Hall and Needham had their biggest harvest seasons, Upward Bound had its most successful summer full of new projects and partners, and students at Fort Lewis Mesa amazed their parents, teachers and community through their creativity, dedication, and level of ownership during the first Miner's Garden Tour. This year continues to show that gardens are as much about people as they are about plants.*

## YOUTH GARDENS

**NEEDHAM ELEMENTARY:** (2008-CURRENT) The Needham garden



had its most successful year and harvest, culminating with a large harvest of nearly 50 pounds of potatoes that were served in the school lunch program. The Garden Project along with local farmers hosted garden activities throughout the season. The

Garden Project also led student garden days tied to school curriculum. Dirt Club, after school garden program, was offered in the both the spring and fall of 2011.

**FORT LEWIS MESA ELEMENTARY:** (2006-CURRENT) This 10,000

square foot garden displays a variety of SW Colorado native plants and serves as a host for outdoor education, integrating reading, writing, science and history curriculum. Through a volunteer effort, The Garden Project served as



a classroom garden organizer for the school. We worked directly with each grade level Pre-K-5 with hands-on activities and curriculum integration. Special guest speakers spent the day with students on writing, birds and biology. This spring, the students

added a mine shaft, a new dye garden, and continued creativity and hard work. The highlight of the garden this year was the May Day Miners Tour. The story was created and shared by 15 students from the FLM Garden Club who turned the garden into a historical display, tour, and animation of the May Day Mines and the miners who worked and died there. Over 200 youth and adults attended the tour.



**Boys and Girls Club of La Plata County:** (2011-CURRENT)

Boys and Girls Club was the recipient of our youth garden search. We started small with 3 long raised beds, 2 filled with vegetables and one flower and herb garden.



Unfortunately, midseason the two new vegetable garden beds and deer fence were vandalized with only the flower and herb garden left untouched. The damage ended the growing season for the vegetables. Kids were still able to enjoy a few harvests of basil lemonade, basil grilled cheese and their first salad. With growing excitement underway and a brand new student Garden Club formed, we look forward to continued opportunities for growth and learning with the Boys and Girls Club.

## COMMUNITY AND BACKYARD GARDEN PROJECTS



### CITY HALL GARDEN:

(2010-CURRENT) City of Durango employees enjoyed their best harvest this year, with more greens, garlic, and herbs than they could eat. This once unused 30 x 30 grass plot is now filled with a thriving

vegetable garden.

**BACKYARD GARDEN** (MAY 2009-current) This year's backyard garden program was a collaborative effort between Fort Lewis College Environmental Center, The Garden Project, CSU Extension Office and Your Backyard Harvest. Two gardens were chosen as backyard garden winners. Each received hands-on installation, transplants, seeds, planting guides and a slot in the 12 week Backyard Food Production class with CSU Extension. The Matas in the Animas Valley and the 911 Communication Center were both chosen.

**911 CENTER:** On a clay hill side, we sheet composted and built two raised beds with a drip irrigation system and a hand crafted deer hoop fence, that can double as season-extension. Employees work 12 hour shifts and are able to harvest fresh foods from the garden to enjoy during their shift with plenty to take home to their friends and family.



### THE MATA FAMILY BACKYARD GARDEN:

The Mata Family: Shaunna, Mark, Cameron, and Riley have their first family veggie garden with everything from greens and garlic to chard,

onions, tomatoes, peppers and pumpkins. The Matas hope to share their garden to inspire neighbors and teach their children about healthy eating.

## OTHER PROJECTS

**SCHOOL GARDEN RESOURCE GUIDEBOOK:** In 2011, we continued compiling information, lesson plans and activities to expand the school garden resources. The guidebook is available on-

line at [www.thegardenprojectswcolorado.org/site/Resource\\_Guidebook.html](http://www.thegardenprojectswcolorado.org/site/Resource_Guidebook.html) We also carry a plethora of national resources, gardening books, and curriculum for school gardens. Community organizations and schools are welcome to "check" them out.

**PLANTING GARDENS, GROWING COMMUNITY:** CSU Extension, Healthy Lifestyle La Plata and The Garden Project partnered together on a community garden survey in La Plata County to gauge the level of interest and support for community gardens. The group put together 3 life size display banners sharing the results of the survey and the impact more community gardens could have in our community. Keep your eyes out around town for the new traveling banners.

**COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS:** As part of our interest to support a local sustainable food system, The Garden Project shares information about local food and gardening at a handful of community events each year. In



2011, community events included FLC Barnyard Days, Durango High School Health Expo, the Green Living Expo and the Homegrown Retreat.

### UPWARD BOUND SUMMER PROGRAM:

For four seasons, The Garden Project has partnered with Fort Lewis College Upward Bound (UB) students in their service-learning component of the program.

Along with providing hours of community service to four garden sites, students toured local farms, held a cooking contest and gained a wealth of entrepreneurial skills. Upward Bound provides opportunities for participants to succeed in their pre-college performance and ultimately in their higher education pursuits.

This year's theme for the UB summer program was agricultural vocations. Students helped local community and school garden sites with their construction, planting and art projects. Students toured James Ranch and Twin Buttes Garden, volunteered with Your Backyard Harvest and the Botanical Society of Durango's project at the Durango Library. UB spent the other part of their service learning project with Cooking Matters, learning how to prepare healthy, affordable meals using many ingredients straight from the garden. The month long program culminated with a cooking contest using locally grown fresh foods.

**DIRT CLUB:** Dirt club is a 4 week after-school gardening program that combines art, gardening and cooking into an engaging hands on educational experience for our youth. Thanks to Annie Chensoff, Darcy Craig, and Kelle Bruno for hosting the program this spring and fall.

# Our Partners



## Garden Sites

- Fort Lewis Mesa Elementary
- Needham Elementary
- City Hall
- Boys and Girls Club of La Plata County
- 911 Communications Center, a Backyard Garden Location
- Backyard Garden Winner, the Mata

## Volunteer Work Force and Other Populations Served

- La Plata County School Students
- Fort Lewis Mesa and Needham Elementary Community
- Master Gardener Volunteers
- Upward Bound – FLC Program
- FLC Environmental Center
- Escalante Middle School
- Americorps
- Durango High School
- Special thanks to Local Farmers: Gabe Eggers, Brooke Frazer, Kelle Bruno, Mike Nolan
- Annie Chensoff, Dirt Club Facilitator

## Working Coalitions and Local Foods Partners

- Growing Partners of Southwest Colorado
- SW Colorado Farm to School
- Healthy Lifestyle La Plata
- CSU Extension, La Plata
- Fort Lewis College Environmental Center
- Healthy Community Food Systems
- Turtle Lake Refuge
- Cooking Matters

## Community Events and Workshops:

- Fort Lewis College Barnyard Days
- Green Living Expo
- Durango High School Health Expo
- Homegrown Retreat at Fort Lewis College
- Dirt Club, after school program



*Along with all the wonderful garden sites, volunteers and partners mentioned above, we would like to thank the support of some of our sponsors: Healthy Lifestyle La Plata and Live Well Colorado, Growing Partners of SWCO and USDA Community Food Project Grant, Botanical Concepts, Durango Nursery Supply, Ecosphere Environmental Services and individual donors.*

*Thank you for believing in our work.*

*To all the people involved in garden efforts, especially the little ones who bring with you so much joy, excitement, creativity, sense of wonder and endless discoveries...we thank you.*