

GrowBoston Newsletter

Please note: If you would like to receive a translated version of this newsletter, please contact emily.reckardmota@boston.gov

If you would like to learn more about GrowBoston, check out our website [here](#). If you would like to find a community garden or urban farm near you, see our directory [here](#).



Photo: GrowBoston Food Producers Bi-Monthly October Meeting at The Food Project's West Cottage Farm! Photo Credit: MOH Team

GrowBoston wishes you a happy new year and a cozy winter season! Winter is a season for food producers to rest from the growing season and plan for the year to come. You'll find farmers and growers taking some time to rest before perusing through seed catalogues, creating crop maps, teaching workshops, starting seedlings in the greenhouse, and dreaming of the colorful vegetables and flowers they will grow come spring.

2025 Recap!

Last year was a big year for GrowBoston. Here are some of our accomplishments from 2025:

Grassroots Program:

- **5 parcels sold** (totaling 14,810 sq feet)
- **6 projects completed** (1 farm, 3 gardens, 1 food forest, and 1 greenway) representing

\$700k of investments in urban agriculture and open space

- **5 projects started construction**
- **3 disposition RFPs released**

Large Farm Sites

- One **half-acre site on public land** secured for future farm development

Raised Bed Program

- Built 275 garden beds

Urban Agriculture Ambassador Program

- Engaged over **115** individuals in 1:1 **gardening consultations**
- **55 workshops** conducted
- 12 youth engaged through a **6-week intensive gardening program** at Marshall Community Center

Grant Programs

- Awarded **\$145,000** to 4 nonprofits to provide residents with **fruit trees** & education about fruit trees.
- Awarded **\$151,645** to 7 nonprofits to expand their **capacity to grow more food** for Boston residents.
- Awarded **\$93,943** to 17 nonprofits to create **designs for new food production** spaces
- Awarded **\$179,838** to 5 nonprofits to develop **innovative methods of growing** more food for Boston residents
- Awarded **\$328,963** to 12 nonprofits to provide **urban agriculture education** for Boston residents.



Photo: Senior Garden Club at the Woodbourne Apartments in Jamaica Plain. Photo Credit: Marisela Valero Hernandez

Urban Agriculture Highlight: Woodbourne Apartments Garden **by Marisela Valero Hernandez (Community Life Coordinator)**

One year ago, the Woodbourne Apartments Community Garden began as a small green dream in Jamaica Plain. That dream took root, flourished, and became a powerful symbol of collaboration, learning, and renewal for the older adult residents. When residents are empowered, trusted, and encouraged to lead, projects like this one gain true sustainability. With startup funding from MassHousing and the Age Strong Commission, the Woodbourne residents constructed a garden with 7 raised beds and will add 2 additional garden beds in 2026 through GrowBoston's Raised Bed Program.

The garden has offered a safe and creative gathering space, a way to promote sustainable urban gardening practices, and an opportunity to strengthen residents' connection to nature in the midst of urban life. This fall, residents planted garlic and winter crops, preparing the soil for the colder months and reminding residents that even during seasons of rest, the earth continues to be generous.

The Woodbourne Apartments Community Garden produces much more than food and

plants. It grows connections, well-being, and a sense of belonging. Many participants—most of them immigrants—have shared how gardening reconnects them with their childhoods and youth in their countries of origin, where cultivating food was a family tradition and a way of life. When we care for the land together, we also care for one another—and in doing so, we contribute to the transformation of our city.



Photo: UMass Professor Josh Arnold speaking with GreenRoots staff and community during a workshop at La Finca in Chelsea. Photo Credit: Olivia Golden

Educational Tidbit: Raised Bed Soil Care

by Joshua Arnold (Assistant Extension Professor in Urban Agriculture), Olivia Golden (Urban Agriculture Educator) and Ibrahim Ali (Urban Agriculture Educator) at UMass Amherst Extension

With over a decade of experience in urban agriculture, we have encountered a wide range of raised garden beds, varying greatly in form and function. One challenge with raised beds is managing the moisture of the soil. Increased soil temperatures and high compost content can lead to rapid drainage and evaporation. Raised beds dry out faster than in-ground soils. In order to prevent beds from drying out, try dense planting, low-flow drip irrigation, and well-timed watering. During construction, a roughly 50/50 soil-to-compost mix (“loam”) is often recommended to balance fertility and water retention.

In addition to water management, compost-rich raised beds offer fertility benefits but require ongoing work to maintain healthy soil. While compost supplies many nutrients, nitrogen often declines as beds age and must be supplemented with high-nitrogen and low-phosphorus inputs such as blood or feather meals. Research suggests that two years after construction, applying nitrogen at about 25% of the standard rate can maintain adequate fertility in high-organic matter beds while minimizing phosphorus runoff risks. Despite added management and testing costs, raised beds remain a valuable tool in urban agriculture. They improve accessibility, reduce weed pressures, support pest management strategies, and provide a safe option when soil contamination is present.

You can find more information from UMass Amherst Extension here:

[https://www.umass.edu/agriculture-food-environment/home-lawn-garden/fact-sheets/
raised-beds](https://www.umass.edu/agriculture-food-environment/home-lawn-garden/fact-sheets/raised-beds)

Community Resources & Announcement

Maestro Jardinero Urbano



Febrero 7 y 14 | 2:00- 3:30 pm
Febrero 21 | 2:00- 3:30 pm
Marzo 7 y 14 | 2:00 - 3:30 pm

 **Taller por Zoom**
Regístrate antes del 20 de enero escaneando el código QR

Curso de Certificación

Fortalece tus habilidades para cultivar en hogares y jardines comunitarios del área de Boston. Ofreceremos conocimientos esenciales a principiantes y expertos para mantener jardines productivos.

Tarifa del curso basada en una escala de ingresos

En colaboración con:



Escanéame



¿Preguntas? Contacta a Vladimir en VladimirP@greenrootsej.org
Para inscribirte, visita greenrootsej.org/es/MUG

***El programa de Maestro Jardinero Urbano (MUG, por sus siglas en inglés)** ofrece capacitación intensiva y práctica para personas que cultivan en sus hogares o en jardines comunitarios en el área metropolitana de Boston y sus alrededores. Ya sea que estés iniciando o que lleves décadas cultivando, MUG te proporcionará los conocimientos prácticos necesarios para tener éxito en la agricultura urbana. Febrero 7th - Marzo 14th 2:00-3:30pm Taller por Zoom. Inscríbete antes del 27 de enero de 2026. Solicitar en GreenRootsSej.Org/es/MUG. [Curso de Maestro Jardinero Urbano \(MUG por sus siglas en inglés\) | GreenRoots](#)

***Join BABA for Bee School 2026, a fresh and innovative approach to beekeeping education designed with the new beekeeper in mind.** Whether you're just starting out or considering your first hive, this course will provide you with the essential knowledge and skills to raise healthy, thriving honeybee colonies in the unique conditions of the Boston area. Starting Wednesday, January 28th, and every Wednesday until Wednesday, March 18th, for 8 sessions. Classes are from 7pm to 8:30pm Boston time, and are held via Zoom. \$125 per person. Register [here](#).



Learn from **expert beekeepers** about hive designs and setup, seasonal hive management, disease prevention

8 Consecutive Wednesday Sessions from Wednesday, January 28th through Wednesday, March 18th.

Classes are virtual on Zoom from 7:00PM to 8:30PM EST.

Boston Community Gardens and The Food Project Present

Winter Workshops in the Dudley Greenhouse

Dudley Greenhouse, 11 Brook Ave, Roxbury
January 15 - February 5 | Thursdays | 5:30 - 7 PM

Hydrate & Heal: A Winter Skin Ritual

January 15 | Thursday | 5:30 - 7 PM

Cosmetologist & herbologist Ebriel shares how to protect your skin with plant based materials.



Grow Your Own Microgreens

January 22 | Thursday | 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM

Learn to grow fresh microgreens in your home in the winter months. Bring an aluminum tray or takeout container.



Sweet Potato Slips

January 29 | Thursday | 5:30 - 7 P.M.

Garden Elders Vernell & Elinora's annual demo on starting sweet potato starts ("slips") using grocery store potatoes. Bring a sweet potato themed dish for the potluck!



Winter Sowing

February 5 | Thursday | 5:30 - 7 PM

By using recycled milk jugs seeds can be started outdoors early- come learn how! Materials Provided.

The Trustees - Boston Community Gardens

boston_community_gardens

The Food Project

the_food_project



The Food Project

trustees

Dorchester Gardening Workshops:

Winter Planning Series

Growing Garlic Workshop



Saturday, November 15 | 4 - 6 P.M. | Dudley Greenhouse, 11 Brook Ave., Roxbury

Learn everything you need to know to grow and harvest fresh garlic

Beginner friendly, but all Dorchester gardeners are welcome

Seed Catalog Party



Saturday, December 20 | 4 - 6 P.M. | Dudley Greenhouse, 11 Brook Ave., Roxbury

Flip through the pages of seed catalogues, as we sip something warm

Beginner friendly, but all Dorchester gardeners are welcome

Crop Planning 101



Saturday, January 3 | 4 - 6 P.M. | Dudley Greenhouse, 11 Brook Ave., Roxbury

Start the new year thinking about your garden for the next season.

Beginner friendly, but all Dorchester gardeners are welcome

Crop Planning 102 — Succession Planning



Saturday, January 10 | 4 - 6 P.M. | Dudley Greenhouse, 11 Brook Ave., Roxbury

Continue planning what your garden will look like through the whole season.

Designed for advanced gardeners, but all Dorchester gardeners are welcome

Garden Journal Setup



Saturday, February 7 | 4 - 6 P.M. | Dudley Greenhouse, 11 Brook Ave., Roxbury

Setup and decorate your gardening journal

Beginner friendly, but all Dorchester gardeners are welcome

Get ready for spring gardening with The Food Project's Urban Agriculture Ambassador.



Join us for some or all!

Learn more and reserve your spots at:

www.thefoodproject.org/community/uaa/

The Food Project

the_food_project



***Winter Gardening Workshops:** Check out free gardening workshops by The Food Project [here](#) and The Trustees [here](#). Learn about crop planning, starting sweet potato slips, microgreen growing, winter sowing, and more! All workshops are free. GrowBoston is excited to support our Urban Agriculture Ambassador, Memia, in providing the Dorchester Gardening Workshops.

***Start Seedlings in the Dudley Greenhouse!** Community gardening programs based in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan can apply to The Food Project's seedling application. Learn more and apply online [here](#). Applications are due January 31, 2026.

IT'S TIME TO PUT YOUR IDEAS! INTO ACTION!

Your Ideas, Your City, Your Vote.



CITY of BOSTON



Office of
Participatory
Budgeting

VOTE FOR THE PROJECTS THAT
WILL HAVE THE BIGGEST IMPACT
ON YOUR COMMUNITY:

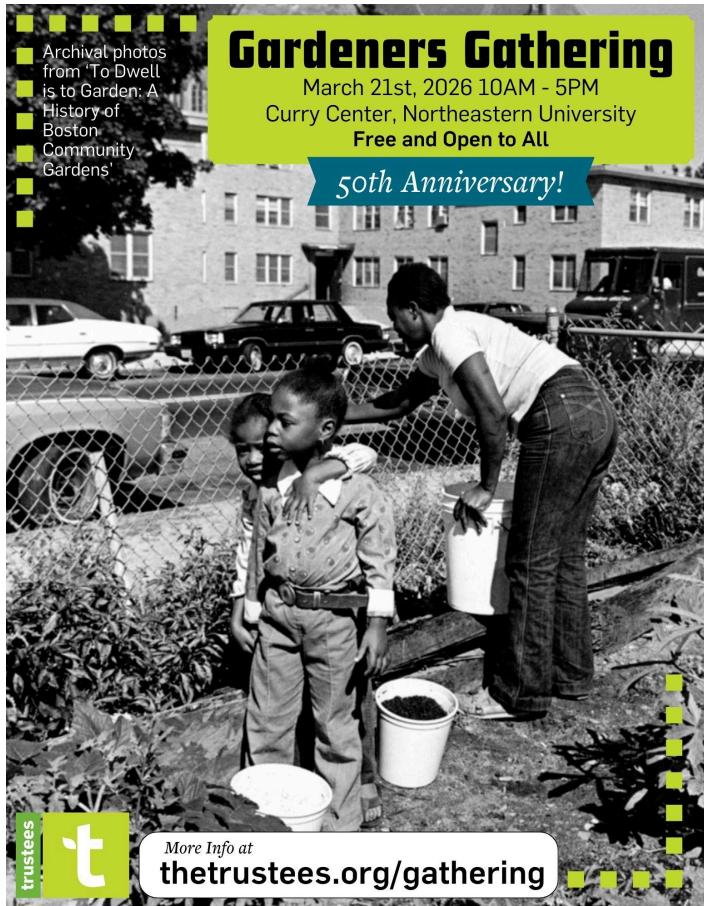
1. VISIT BOSTON.GOV/PARTICIPATE
2. GET TO KNOW THE IDEAS
3. VOTE FOR UP TO 5 PROJECTS!

VOTE ON THE
PROJECTS [HERE](#)



Ideas in Action is Boston's city-wide Participatory Budgeting initiative, where residents can decide how to spend a part of the City's budget. From **January 15 to February 15, 2026**, Boston residents can VOTE and **decide on how \$2.2 million in Participatory Budgeting funds will be spent** for community-driven projects across the City. Visit Boston.gov/participate, get to know the project ideas, and **vote for up to 5 of them!** To contact the Office of Participatory Budgeting, email PB@boston.gov or call 617-635-2381.

***Learn more about Fruit Tree care through the UMass Mass Aggies series!** These workshops cover topics including grapes, orchard pruning, blueberries, apple tree grafting, disease management, and more! Learn more and register [here](#).



***Save the Date: 50th Annual Gardeners' Gathering, March 21st, 2026, 10AM - 5PM in Northeastern University's Curry Center.** Celebrate the start of the gardening season! The Gardeners' Gathering is an annual free conference that brings Boston-area growers of all kinds together for a day full of informative workshops, engaging exhibitors, networking, and inspiration. Find more information and registration details [here](#).

The Trustees is currently seeking workshop presenters and exhibitors for the gathering. Please email arabiyah@thetrustees.org if you are enthusiastic about a gardening or community building topic, or want to table.



Save the Date • Save the Date

Massachusetts Urban Farming Symposium

An urban approach, leading with action.

March 28, 2026 | UMASS Boston
Boston, MA

The 2026 Symposium focuses on strengthening resilience from within the urban farming community. In a changing landscape of reduced funding, participants will gather to explore strategies for building durable, farmer-led solutions through collaboration, innovation, and community-based support.

Featuring talks, workshops, demos, and networking, this event is designed to equip growers to take action, develop partnerships, diversify approaches, and shape a thriving future for urban farming.

Registration will open in February, 2026.

For more information, contact Rose.Arruda@Mass.gov

For sponsor/vendor opportunities, contact jtretina@urbanfarminginstitute.org



***Urban Farming Symposium, March 28th, registration opens in February.** Save the date! This is a conference for Boston growers to participate in workshops, demos, and discussions in order to develop partnerships and shape a thriving future for urban farming.



RAISED BED

GARDEN PROGRAM

FREE garden beds for eligible Boston residents through 2026

PROGRAM DETAILS

- One bed will be installed at no cost with soil, seedlings, and an opportunity to receive gardening education
- Raised beds are 4 foot x 8 foot wooden garden containers raised above ground, used to grow vegetables, herbs, and flowers
- Available for renters, homeowners, and organizations in Boston with permission from property owners
- To learn more, scan the interest form below or go to www.boston.gov/growboston.

SCAN INTEREST FORMS

Individuals Organizations



CITY of BOSTON



Food Justice



GrowBoston

*[Receive a Raised Garden Bed!](#) GrowBoston, in partnership with the Office of Food Justice, is providing a total of 800 raised beds for low-income community members. Apply online [here](#). If you are a non-profit organization interested in receiving raised beds, apply [here](#). If you have received a garden bed from us, please share a brief testimonial [here](#)!

*[Check out Boston Winter Farmers Markets!](#)

***Announcement from the Office of Food Justice: BPS has earned Silver tier status in Good Food Purchasing, demonstrating how large districts can lead on food justice.**
50,000+ daily meals now meet higher standards for supporting local farmers, fair wages, and environmental sustainability. This positions Boston as a model for districts nationwide while strengthening our local food system. Progress that benefits our students and our community!

#BPS #FoodJusticeLeader #CommunityProgress

Find out more on our website at www.boston.gov/bpsgoodfood

*[Explore the City's Grants Calendar!](#) See what programs City departments plan on launching in the upcoming year! See the full calendar and apply for funding at boston.gov/grants.



Photo: Vital Village Networks, Innovative Food Production Grantee, provides families with kitchen salad garden kits through a pilot gardening event. Photo Credit: Vital Village team

Happy hibernating,
Emily & the GrowBoston team