



## 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

gardeneers  
growing school gardens



*Chefs in the Garden  
with Stephanie Izard,  
Montessori School  
of Englewood.*

WELCOME



## DEAR FRIENDS & SUPPORTERS,

As Chairman of Gardeneers from our infancy, I have had the honor and reward of watching them grow from just two staff members to a dedicated team of 19, serving 26 schools throughout the city. In the last three and a half years, Gardeneers direct service model has led them to the forefront of school garden education in Chicago. Increasing access to fresh, healthy fruits and vegetables is just a small part of the powerful work Gardeneers does with the communities in Chicago that need it most.

Along with members of the Gardeneers community, I am dedicated to creating opportunities for those that need it most. At Gardeneers we do this through the transformative benefits of garden education, not only in the health of our students who lack access to proper nutrition, but through the ripple effect our programs have in their communities. Our results are profound and I thank you for joining me in investing in the future of Gardeneers and the future of Chicago students.

We plant the seeds, your contributions nourish them.

**Thank you,  
Richard Levy**

*Gardeneers Board Chair*



GARDENEERS CULTIVATES  
CUSTOMIZED SCHOOL  
GARDEN PROGRAMS TO  
ENSURE EACH SPACE,  
AND THE STUDENTS AND  
COMMUNITIES WHO CARE  
FOR IT, CONNECT WITH  
HEALTHY FOOD AND GROW  
TO THEIR FULL POTENTIAL



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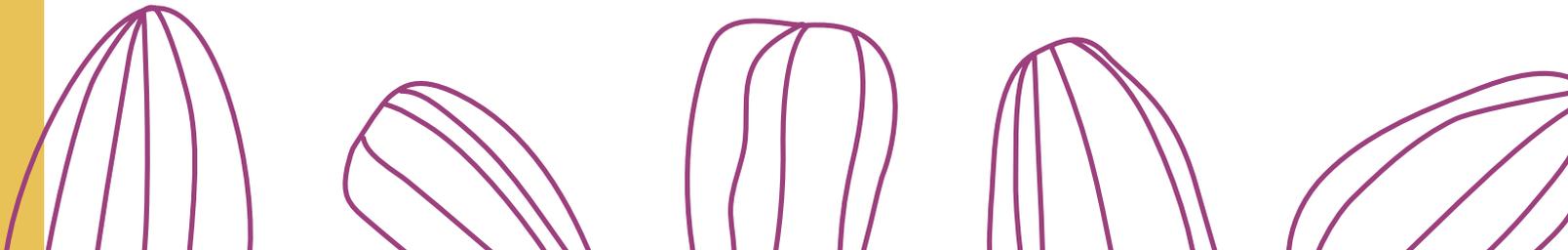
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## OUR ROOTS

**Teach for America alumni**, Adam Zmick and May Tsupros began their education careers in underserved communities in Chicago and St. Louis. Their experiences working in schools in food desert communities showed them first hand how vital access to nutrition is for the academic achievement of students.



Adam Zmick, Co-Founder

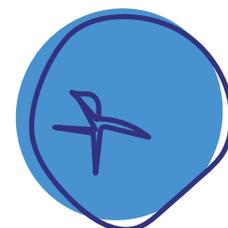
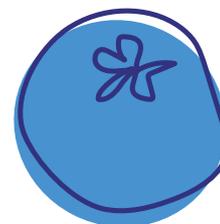
*Adam worked with a student who struggled in the classroom but **flourished in the school garden**, where **she felt safe**. On her last day at school, she was upset and very worried that **her new school would not have a garden**. It was then that Adam knew: no matter where a student goes to school, **every child should have access to a garden**.*



May Tsupros, Co-Founder

*After one of her students, a pregnant high school senior, **couldn't identify a blueberry**, May began to consider the impact of what her students were eating. She realized how **lack of access to healthy food was an obstacle to her students' success**. May needed a way for her students to **take ownership of their nutrition**. The answer was a school garden.*

**In the fall of 2013**, Adam and May joined forces to found Gardeneers. Designed to give students in food desert communities equal access to healthy fruits and vegetables, Gardeneers is dedicated to providing direct-service school garden education in Chicago.





*A student at John M. Smyth Elementary  
learns to minimize food waste by  
incorporating carrot tops into his meal.*

**"I like coming to garden because WE LEARN ABOUT PLANTS and that's important because without plants we would not have HEALTHY FOOD."**

*- Josiah, age 9, Hay Elementary Community Academy*



## WHO WE ARE

Gardeneers was created to give Chicago students in **food desert communities** equal access to healthy food and food education. We are a team of dedicated Garden Educators who work directly with students in our **partner school gardens** on a weekly basis.



## WHAT WE DO

Gardeneers cultivates **customized school garden programs** to ensure each space, and the students and communities who care for it, connect with **healthy food** and grow to their **full potential**.



## WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

Gardeneers is the only Chicago-based nonprofit providing **full-service**, customized school garden programs with **on-going support**. When schools lack the time and resources to sustain a garden program, we **ensure their success**.

## SUNFLOWER SEEDS

are the edible parts of a sunflower. They are packed with protein (ka-pow!) and enjoyed by many garden visitors, including humans, squirrels, and birds.

## WHY A SUNFLOWER?

Sunflowers are phytoremediators, or *plants that restore balance* by improving the soil so other plants in the garden can flourish. Sunflowers help gardens reach their full potential.

**So do we.**

## NECTAR & POLLEN

provide nourishment to many species of bees and butterflies that help pollinate and beautify the garden.

## THE LEAVES

absorb sunlight to create energy for the plant through photosynthesis. They also absorb carbon dioxide to produce the oxygen we breathe.

## THE ROOTS

are the first line of action, drawing up heavy metals from the ground, creating healthier soil for the entire garden.

*Students and staff from North Lawndale College Prep plant flowers for the Native Pollinator Garden.*



**Gardeneers implements school garden programs** in many Chicago communities, primarily on the West and South sides. We focus on partnering with schools in low-income neighborhoods and food deserts, where residents do not have convenient or affordable access to fresh, healthy foods. As Gardeneers grows, we are focused on deepening our impact in the North Lawndale and Englewood communities.



**North Lawndale** was recently ranked the second highest neighborhood for violent crimes in Chicago. Not only are 66 percent of children and 40 percent of adults obese, residents in this community are also double the national average for diabetes.

In **Englewood**, one in four families with children is living in poverty. In Englewood schools, 95 percent of students qualify for a free or reduced lunch program. Englewood is also ranked highly for violent crimes in Chicago.

Gardeneers is committed to partnering with these communities to grow healthier futures by improving access to fresh, healthy food.

*Students from Montessori School of Englewood help our Garden Educator cook the greens they harvested from their garden.*



1,800 STUDENTS

26 SCHOOLS

18 NEIGHBORHOODS

60 COMMUNITY DAYS

2,000 VOLUNTEERS

91% LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

89% STUDENTS OF COLOR

3,500 POUNDS OF PRODUCE  
HARVESTED ANNUALLY

75 STUDENT-RUN  
COMMUNITY FARM STANDS

OUR GOAL

**5000**  
STUDENTS BY  
**2020**

**A school garden** is a living laboratory where students are active participants in their learning. Gardeneers empowers students to connect with healthy food through experiential, garden-based learning.

**Our programming** is offered March through November, and includes opportunities for students (grades K-12) to engage with gardens during the school year and throughout the summer.

*A student participant  
at Chefs in the Garden,  
Montessori School of  
Englewood.*



# K-8

One to three days per week, Garden Educators work with groups of K-8 students in each school garden. While there are many opportunities for cross-curricular connections in the garden, our K-8 curriculum focuses on Gardeneers' three pillars:

**SUPPORTING STUDENT NUTRITION**

**EXPERIENCING NATURE**

**CONNECTING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

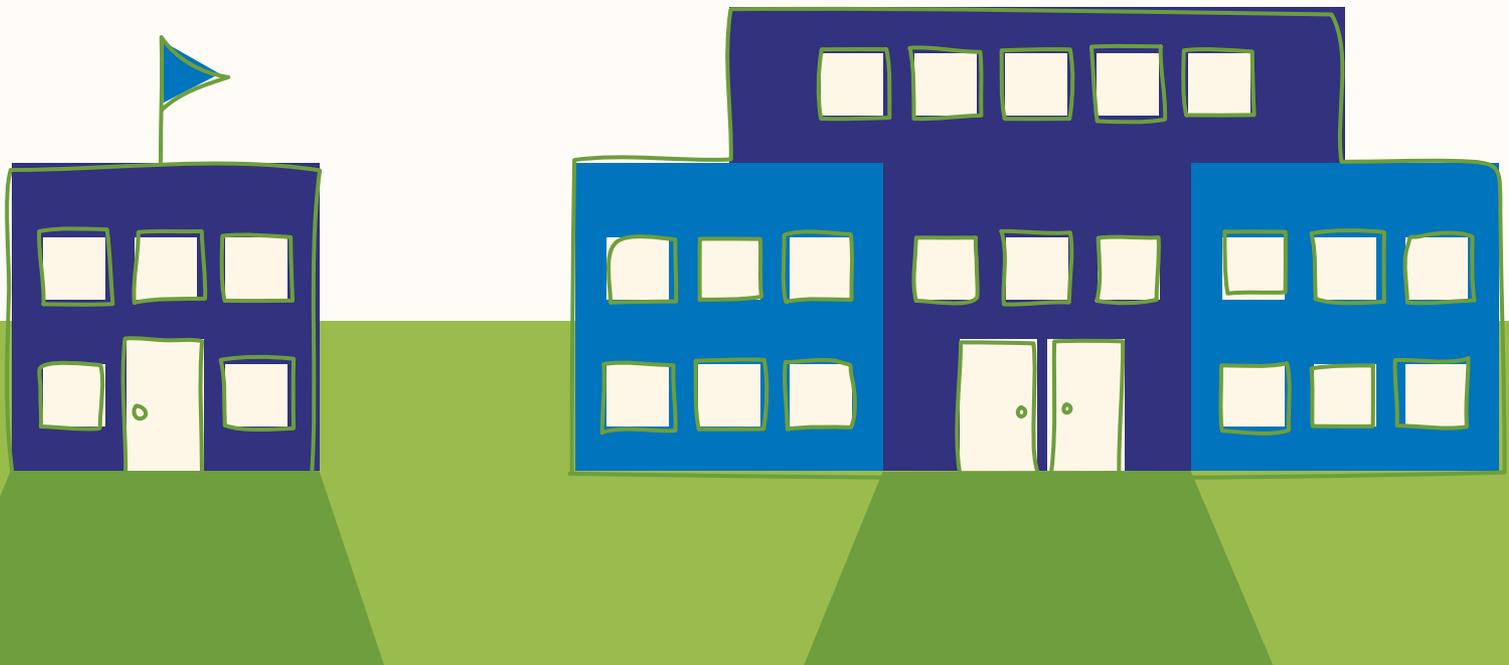
K-8 students are involved in the full seed-to-table process, choosing crops for their school garden, planting seeds, tending to plants, and harvesting food to taste, cook in the garden, or sell to community members.

# HIGH SCHOOL

In partnership with After School Matters, Gardeneers provides immersive urban agricultural programs for high school students up to four days per week.

Teens work in our vegetable and flower production sites, cultivating business plans, leadership skills, and fresh produce for their communities.

These teens receive a stipend for their involvement in our high schools programs and learn skills that will help them become the leaders of tomorrow.



# EVENTS IN THE GARDEN



## Chefs in the Garden Series

### Annual

Since 2015, Gardeneers has partnered with some of the most talented chefs in Chicago to lead cooking lessons in our school gardens. Featuring Chefs Paul Virant, Stephanie Izard, and Q Ibraheem, chefs have joined our summer garden programs, led students in harvest lessons, and worked with students to prepare fresh, seasonal dishes using produce grown in their school garden.

## Student-Run Community Farm Stands

### Monthly

Farm stands are a wonderful way to connect our school garden programs to the surrounding community and increase access to fresh produce in neighborhoods that otherwise may not have it. During our student-run farm stands, produce and flowers grown in our school gardens are sold to parents, neighbors, and community members at affordable rates.

## Garden-to-Cafeteria

### Monthly

Chicago is one of the only cities in the country with policies in place to serve school garden produce in the cafeteria. Through certification in the CPS Eat What You Grow Garden-to-Cafeteria Manual, Gardeneers is able to harvest and safely serve produce grown in our school gardens. As often as possible, we provide our partner schools' cafeterias with a salad bar or tasting of a featured vegetable grown by our students.



*Chefs in the Garden with Paul Virant, Montessori School of Englewood.*

**"I like gardening because IT'S FUN and you're HELPING THE EARTH."**

*- Joel, age 13, Francisco I. Madero IB Middle School*



## OUR PARTNERS

After School Matters  
Alphawood Foundation  
AmeriCorps  
Avant  
Blue Cross Blue Shield Association  
Boka Restaurant Group  
Centre Lane Partners  
Chef Ann Foundation  
Chiditarod  
Christy Webber Landscape  
Clif Bar  
Common Ground Foundation  
Duff & Phelps  
Flowers for Dreams  
Pangea  
Giordano's  
Golden State  
Gotham Greens  
Growing Power Chicago  
Karen Malkin Counseling  
Katten Muchin Rosenman  
Kindle Communications  
Lyfe Kitchen  
Match Point Solutions  
New Belgium  
Patagonia  
Polk Family Foundation  
Social Venture Partners  
SP+ Parking  
Theodore G. Schwartz  
Family Foundation  
Vedder Price  
Victory Park Capital  
Wexford Events  
Whole Foods Market  
Whole Kids Foundation  
Woodcock #4 Foundation  
Yoga Six

**Gardeneers is so grateful** for the incredible support of our sponsors, donors, and supporters. Because of their support, in 2017 we were able to serve more than 1,800 students in 26 partner schools, and harvest 3,500 pounds of produce in our school gardens.

Every day, our school garden programs provide opportunities for students, teachers, and community members to connect with nature, increase access to nutritious food, and take part in creating a safe, beautiful space for their neighborhood. We would not be able to do this without their support. Many thanks!

### PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

EST.  2012

**FLOWERS FOR DREAMS**  
CHICAGO

Since 2015, Gardeneers has partnered with Flowers for Dreams at our **Englewood Student Farm**. In partnership with **After School Matters**, we have provided Englewood teens after school jobs, transforming a once vacant block into a beautiful food and flower farm.

Flowers for Dreams has been our primary partner in purchasing our beautiful student-grown, local blossoms and **supporting the growth of this program**. We are so grateful for the support of Flowers for Dreams and look forward to our continued partnership!



**Ensuring the success** of each school garden takes a great deal of support. We are always looking for new donors, partners, board members, and volunteers. For additional information on ways you can support Gardeneers visit [www.gardeneers.org](http://www.gardeneers.org). While you're there, fill out a contact form so we can keep in touch.

**DONORS** are critical to the success of Gardeneers school garden programs. A \$300 donation supports the garden materials and curriculum necessary for one student for a single growing season. A \$2,000 donation supports the garden education of one entire classroom.

**PARTNERS** come in many forms, including corporate sponsors with volunteer opportunities in namesake school gardens, with universities for program research and service work, and with companies for in-kind donations. Have an idea for a Gardeneers partnership? Let's connect!

**BOARD MEMBERS** and Junior Board Members are volunteer-based positions that help grow the organization. Responsibilities include advising the organization, increasing visibility of Gardeneers' work, and supporting fundraising efforts and events throughout Chicago.

**VOLUNTEERS** are an important piece in sustaining our school garden programs. There are a multitude of ways to get involved as a volunteer, from a weekly commitment working with students at a school, to seasonal volunteer events with corporate and community groups.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands washing a red radish under a running faucet. The hands are wet and the radish is being held under the water spray. The background is blurred green foliage.

“The Gardeneers  
are some of the most  
**dedicated people** I’ve seen in the  
school gardening arena. They take the  
resources which are available and make  
the most of everything given to them.

Gardeneers is exactly the support we need  
for our **overextended teachers** and  
**hungry to learn students.”**

- Annamarie L., Edible Landscape Director,  
Christy Webber Farm & Garden



"Gardeneers adds an **EFFECTIVE** and necessary component to supporting holistic **YOUTH DEVELOPMENT** and I am proud to call them a partner."

- Vicky C., Resource Coordinator  
Madero Middle School,  
Enlace Chicago

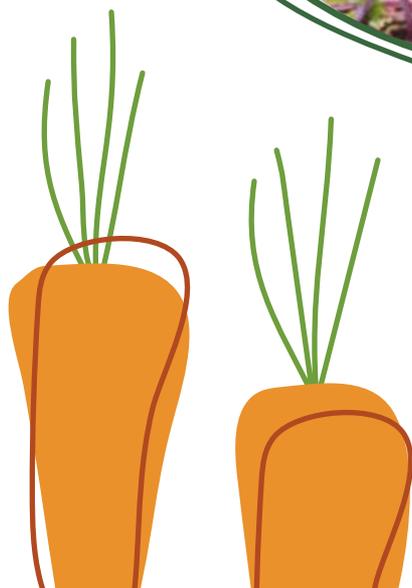
"It's fun to create new life and plants."

- Maria, age 12, Francisco I.  
Madero IB Middle School



"Gardeneers not only provides an opportunity for students to be employed, but also **empowers them** to take charge of their eating habits and motivates them to **advocate for healthy options** in Englewood. I am truly thankful for our partnership."

- Michelle R., Principal,  
TEAM Englewood  
Community Academy



*Question: Did you know that worms can have up to five hearts?*

"They must be so kind!"

- Miriam, age 6, Eliza Chappell Elementary



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