



**ROOTS  
DOWN**

**2021**

**Fruitful Communities  
Impact Report**



*a little bit*  
**about us.**

## Our mission.

*Here at Roots Down we envision a world where every person in the US is less than a 5 minute walk away from fresh food, and where communities grow closer out a mutual love of growing and preparing food.*

That work starts by showing governments and educational institutions how to build greener, more productive spaces that feed people, spur green jobs growth, fight climate change, and provide ecology and leadership education for teenagers and college students.

Join us as we grow a world where every person has access to the fresh food and thriving ecosystems that feed our soils and our communities.



**This**  
**LIBRARY**  
**feeds**  
**people.**



LEARN MORE



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# What we do.

*Roots Down is about more than food; we're also about growing community through food production, education. and plain old fun.*

That's why we've developed a number of community-based programs that help bring people together, educate future land stewards, and grow capacity within local government to build and maintain this new paradigm in food production and green jobs growth.

Whether you're an eco-conscious teenager, young adult looking to join the green jobs revolution, or a homeowner with an interest in ecological landscaping, there is somewhere for everyone at Roots Down.





# DEKALB COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY CLARKSTON BRANCH



*our*  
programs.



# Fruitful Communities Initiative.

*The Fruitful Communities Initiative is our flagship program. It's the big tent that pulls all of our other programs together and gets local government, community orgs, and residents involved in the process of creating better, more productive urban spaces for human thriving.*

In a nutshell, Fruitful Communities is a 3-5 year process for city and county governments to develop internal capacity for designing, building, and maintaining ecological landscaping, and the programming necessary to make it all work.

At the end of the process, a government will have all of the labor, processes, and community involvement needed to continue to grow their ecological landscaping program on their own.





# The Grower Program.

*In year two and three of the Fruitful Communities Initiative, we introduce the Grower Program, a suite of educational services that strengthen, enrich, and institutionalize the ecological landscaping concept within the government and the community.*

In partnership with local economic development orgs, community colleges, and technical schools, The Grower Program provides a 10-week certificate course for residents to learn the basics of building and maintaining ecological landscapes.

In addition, the Grower Program provides a 10-week certificate course for landscaping professionals and a paid apprenticeship pathway for future government employees and growers.

*Amateur*



**10-wk  
residential  
certificate  
course**

*Pro*



**10-week  
public land  
certificate  
course**



**12 month paid  
apprenticeship**





# The GreenHive.

*The GreenHive is a youth movement for fighting climate change while feeding people.*

Designed just for 12-18 year olds, the GreenHive is growing a movement of future land stewards, where we provide teens with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to fight climate change and feed people in their backyard.

Through weekly meetings, a quarterly zine, and a clever badge system, GreenHivers are taught simple, effective ways they can fight climate change in their own community.

The GreenHive does so much more! In addition to the teen club, we also manage the GreenHive Leadership Program, a 10-week paid leadership and community organizing fellowship for 18-22 year olds.

Through weekly training sessions and a final capstone project, eco-conscious scholars will get hands-on experience designing and building food forests, gardens, and pollinator habitats, while working side-by-side with other young adults to engage the community, build #GreenHive chapters at DeKalb high schools and middle schools, and gain crucial leadership skills.





*our*  
**impact.**





# Shifting the paradigm of public landscaping.

*Since starting work in March, 2021, Roots Down has already had an outsized impact on the communities they serve.*

Starting with 6 DeKalb County libraries, the Mohammed Schools of Atlanta, the Cottages on Vaughan, and the DeKalb Central Senior Center, Roots Down has already converted over 3 acres of land in DeKalb County to food forests, pollinator gardens, and ecologically-sound foodscape pilots that showcase this new paradigm in landscaping.

In addition to the pilot builds, Roots Down organized a series of educational community engagement events, held several policy listening sessions, and hosted "Edible Library" garden tours for multiple officials at all levels of government.

The impact has been immediate. Library staff has already reported that the new installations have provided unique outdoor space for events and community engagement.





# Stonecrest Library



before



after





# Clarkston Library

before



after





# Cottages on Vaughan



before



after





# What library staff is saying.

*We sent out a survey to the District 5 and 6 Library Staff and here's what they have to say about the Edible Library Gardens.*

**100%**

*Feel like the landscape installation has improved the quality of the green space at the library.*

**86%**

*Want to see the gardens expand beyond the space around the gazebo.*

**86%**

*Feel like these landscape installations protect your patrons' health during programming.*

"We absolutely love all of the outdoor programming we are now able to do with the gazebo & gardens at Hairston Crossing Library during COVID-19 & beyond."

**- NICOLE HERCULES, HAIRSTON CROSSING**

"The garden has been very well used by the patrons of the library and those along the walking path."

**- MICHAEL STRONG, STONECREST**

"It is a nice addition to the branch."

**- KAREN FITCH, HAIRSTON CROSSING**

"Would love to see more wildflower meadows."

**- JONATHAN MYERS, HAIRSTON CROSSING**



# Impact highlights.

- Completed 6 Edible Library Phase 1 Pilots:
  - Clarkston
  - Hairston Crossing
  - Lithonia
  - Redan-Trotti
  - Salem Panola
  - Stonecrest
- Converted over 3 acres to food forests and pollinator gardens.
- Planted over 100 fruit trees and fruiting bushes and shrubs, and over 50 native pollinators
- 1 FTE created through the build and maintenance efforts
- 14 community engagement events, GreenHive youth events and groundbreaking ceremonies with a combined attendance of 100 kids, parents, press, and dignitaries
- Forged partnerships with Georgia Audubon, King of Pops, and DeKalb County Roads & Drainage.
- Hosted garden tours for GA State Senator Kim Jackson, US Senator Raphael Warnock's NE GA Policy Team, members of the DeKalb County Library Board, 2/3 of the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, and GA State Representatives Becky Evans and Angela Johnson.
- Launched the Roots Down Foundation in order to spur additional investment in ecological landscaping on DeKalb properties, as well as expand the mission to private residences and businesses.
- Hosted the annual RED Day volunteer event for the Metro Atlanta Keller-Williams office, bringing over 75 volunteers to the Clarkston library garden.





Food.  
Earth.  
People.

*the*  
**future.**



# Fighting climate change and feeding people

*As we round out 2021 and look to 2022 and beyond, it's clear the Fruitful Communities initiative has struck a chord with DeKalb County residents, officials, and staff alike.*

We'll be continuing and strengthening our work over the next year by developing masterplans for all 6 DeKalb Edible Libraries, working to remediate soil erosion and drainage problems at the Stonecrest Library, and growing our volunteer and donor base.

Here are a few of the other prominent projects that we're rolling out in 2022:

- **Grower Certification.** We're developing a 10-week Grower Certification course with Georgia Piedmont Technical College, with the first cohort enrolling in January, 2022. This first-of-its-kind green jobs training program will give DeKalb residents the chance to learn how to build and maintain ecological landscapes, preparing them for the future of public landscaping.

- **GreenHive Leadership Program.** We've selected 3 DeKalb students to participate in the inaugural GreenHive Leadership Program, a 10-week leadership course, where these future eco-leaders will learn how to help shape the future of DeKalb.
- **Library Feeds Program.** In partnership with Fight Childhood Obesity, we will be hosting over 20 food distribution events at DeKalb libraries and other sites around DeKalb.
- **Roots Down Foundation.** Dedicated to "growing climate-resilient communities," the Roots Down Foundation has applied for its 501(c)3 status and will begin the process of raising funds to expand on the work we've started in DeKalb by issuing grants to local organizations and piloting new strategic partnerships.
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## Greener landscapes. Fulfilling jobs. Fruitful communities.

We are proud to announce **The Fruitful Communities initiative**. In partnership with DeKalb County, The Fruitful Communities Initiative focuses on ***addressing food insecurity, creating green jobs, and combating climate change by installing Productive Urban Landscapes*** in strategic public spaces.

These landscapes are filled with edible and native plants that are ***environmentally friendly and grow food for nearby residents***. Productive Urban Landscapes include fruit trees, perennial herbs and flowers, as well as native species that are as beautiful as they are beneficial. ***Productive Urban Landscapes are a significant improvement over landscapes that are mowed and sprayed with synthetic chemicals*** -- such as herbicides or other harmful chemicals -- and are more expensive to maintain in the long run.

**Join the movement for better landscapes!**

**Pledge your support for the Fruitful Communities Initiative!**

**[rootsdownga.com](http://rootsdownga.com)**