

## growing a healthier community since 1998



### The Garden Project of Southwest Colorado 2010 Year End Report

2010 marked The Garden Project's most successful year in terms of the number of people served through direct garden programs. Over 1600 (1100 youth and 500 adults) were served at 5 community and school garden sites, 2 backyard gardens, and 8 garden workshops and community events. In all nearly 70 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. We expanded our partnerships and volunteer team to include nine new youth and service groups. Our volunteer force contributed nearly 1800 hours (1200 hours in program related activities) of volunteer time to make this year and all the programs possible!

Along with all the wonderful garden sites, volunteers and partners mentioned below, 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, La Boca Center for Sustainability, Ballantine Family Foundation, Botanical Concepts, Durango Nursery Supply, Yoga Durango, Ecosphere Environmental Services and individual donors. Thank you for believing in our work.

And to all the people involved in the garden efforts, especially the little ones with your joy, excitement, creativity, sense of wonder and endless discoveries...we thank you.

#### Main Contributions and Programs:

Community and School Garden Support Services  
School Garden Resource Guide and Curriculum  
Community Workshops and Training  
Backyard Garden Give Away  
Garden Cooperative

#### Garden Sites

Manna Soup Kitchen  
Fort Lewis Mesa Elementary  
Needham Elementary  
City Hall  
Commons Garden  
3 Backyard Garden Locations- one implemented; 2 planned

#### Community Events, Training, and Workshops:

Apple Days Festival  
Fort Lewis College Barnyard Days  
Green Living Expo  
Durango High School Health Expo  
County-Wide School Garden Training  
Evenings on 8th Market  
Tour de Farms

#### Working Coalitions and Local Foods Partners

Growing Partners of Southwest Colorado  
SW Colorado Farm to School  
Healthy Lifestyle La Plata Local Foods Group  
CSU Extension Office- La Plata  
Fort Lewis College Environmental Center  
Healthy Community Food Systems  
Turtle Lake Refuge

#### Volunteer Work Force and Other Populations Served

Manna Soup Kitchen and Clients  
La Plata County School Students  
Fort Lewis Mesa Elementary Community  
Master Gardener Volunteers  
La Plata Youth Services  
Upward Bound – FLC Program  
FLC Environmental Center  
Fort Lewis College Block Interns  
Southwest Conservation Corps  
Americorps  
Durango High School  
**NEW School, Youth and Service Groups**  
Durango Empowerment  
Leadership La Plata  
Southwest Conservation Corps  
Americorps  
Park Elementary  
Del Alma  
Mosaic Charter School in Aztec  
Telluride Academy  
Escalante Middle School)  
Additional School Gardens Received Information and Handbooks

## YOUTH GARDENS

**FORT LEWIS MESA ELEMENTARY: (2006- CURRENT)** Through a volunteer effort, The Garden Project served as a classroom garden organizer for the school. The Garden Project worked directly with each grade level Pre-K through 5 with hands on activities and curriculum integration. The focus for 2010 was on science curriculum for each grade level. Other main programs included the after school Dirt Club program, Student Garden Club, and Community Work Days. Special garden days included visits from CSU Extension and Turtle Lake Refuge.

**NEEDHAM ELEMENTARY: (2008-CURRENT)** The Garden Project helped Needham Elementary with the school garden through attending planning meetings, obtaining supplies, and building new raised bed structures. Upward Bound summer youth crew helped with beds and artwork. Farmers from Turtle Lake and Gardens at Twin Buttes hosted garden activities. The Garden Project also led student garden days tied to school curriculum. A new after school garden club was offered in the fall of 2010.

## COMMUNITY GARDENS

**MANNA SOUP KITCHEN: (2005, 2007-2010)** The Garden Project led garden days at Manna through mid July. We helped install a new water system, arranged new beds, and planted cool and warm season crops. Volunteer work forces from Master Gardener volunteers, Upward Bound, and Durango Empowerment helped Manna in 2010. This was the last of our five seasons coordinating the Manna Garden. We wish them the best in their garden efforts and their work to feed and support our community.

**COMMONS GARDEN: (2009-CURRENT)** The Commons Garden, in its third year, experienced a set back due to heavy snowfall and the necessary removal. In lieu of focusing on planting this season, TGP volunteers led art projects with SWCC and Del Alma. The Girl Scouts became the new garden coordinator in the fall of 2010.

**CITY HALL GARDEN: (2010-CURRENT)** The City of Durango decided to become part of the movement for local agriculture and urban gardens by planting a small vegetable garden behind City Hall. City Hall Employees along with The Garden Project of SW Colorado, FLC Environmental Center and CSU Extension converted a 30 x 30 unused plot of grass into a new vegetable garden, with 6 raised beds. The garden was filled with salad greens, herbs, steamed greens, root crops, squash, beans, tomatoes and 3 grape vines.

## **OTHER PROJECTS**

**SCHOOL GARDEN TRAINING (APRIL 2010)** On Saturday May 8th, 28 people attended a School Garden Training hosted by The Garden Project of SW Colorado. Over 9 schools and community gardens were represented at the training. The training covered SW Colorado Growing Guidelines, Starting a School Garden, Profiles of local School Gardens, Biodiversity in the Garden, Integrating Gardens into the Curriculum and a tour of the new Escalante Greenhouse and Garden. The training connected garden coordinators, parents and teachers with other school gardens and our local food and gardening resources. Attendees received garden supplies, seeds, a local lunch and the new School Garden Resource Guidebook.

**SCHOOL GARDEN RESOURCE GUIDEBOOK:** In 2010, we continued compiling information, lesson plans and activities to expand the school garden resources. The guidebook, over 80 pages in length, contains chapters on starting a school garden, incorporating curriculum and school goals into the garden program, along with lesson plans, activities, and theme garden suggestions and templates. The guidebook is available on-line and was distributed in hard copy for the school garden training attendees.

**GARDEN POLICY:** As part of our work with Healthy Lifestyle La Plata, The Garden Project facilitated discussions with City of Durango employees to develop and explore potential community garden policies that would lift the efforts in our community. As a result of these efforts, the Sustainability Services Department, along with help from TGP, started a new community garden at City Hall for City employees.

**SOUTHWEST COLORADO GARDEN CO-OP:** The Garden Project and Environmental Center continued to research and plan for a community garden co-op. The mission of the co-op would be to build capacity for self-sustaining gardens, while growing the economic portion of the garden pie. Benefits for members would include the transfer of skills and knowledge; providing access to gardening information and resources; and networking between local gardening related businesses and potential clients and customers. To greater understand the needs and goals for a garden co-op, a survey was distributed to community members. Results demonstrated a strong desire and need for a garden cooperative, especially access to information, networking, and local garden materials.

**BACKYARD GARDEN (MAY 2009-current)** The Backyard Garden Program is a collaborative effort between Fort Lewis College (FLC) Environmental Center, The Garden Project of SW Colorado, and CSU Extension Office. Support

to the neighborhood garden helped amend new and existing beds, install a drip watering system and provided them with classes and ongoing support and advice throughout the growing season. The Alamo Street Neighborhood Garden was the second recipient of the program and was unique because their “backyard garden” was for multi-family use. The host family wanted to share their backyard in hopes of teaching their own son about growing healthy food and building relationships with their neighbors. Another family and community work site were chosen for “backyard garden” sites for 2011.