



ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021



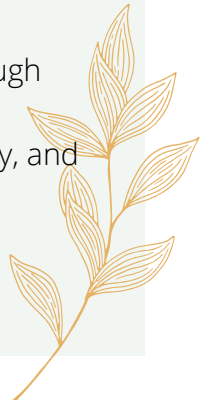
About the Healing Garden

The mission of the Healing Garden Institute (HGI) is to support communities, families, and individuals to achieve optimum physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health, by exposing them to the healing powers of nature, through gardening, therapeutic horticulture, and use of medicinal foods.

We achieve our goals by operating a **Community Garden** at 4 King Street, Worcester, where we demonstrate affordable and sustainable gardening methods to help low income families, renters, and homeowners to produce their own food. Thus, we provide access to healthy food to the impoverished and underserved communities in **Worcester's food desserts**. Our nutritional education program and gardening volunteer opportunities help to improve the community's quality of life. Our medicinal and culinary herbs help to improve the quality of life of those who may not afford access to traditional health care.

We partner with local organizations to implement **Therapeutic Gardens** with design elements that: enhance mental health; aid with disease recovery and substance use disorder; engage the elderly in meaningful activities; and alleviate the pain of those who experience emotional trauma.

Our work is based on research which is conducted through the **Healing Garden Institute**, which generates and distributes knowledge of medicinal plants in their totality, and evaluates their use in healing. Although HGI is rooted in Worcester, and engages a diverse community there, its reach is worldwide.



Garden at Stone Soup

We had a very productive Spring and Summer despite the impacts of COVID-19, which limited our ability to recruit volunteers for gardening activities. We harvested plenty of **cabbage, collard greens, kale, different varieties of tomatoes, peppers, okra, lettuce, gourds, eggplant, chard, basil**, and experimented with corn varieties. Some of perennials that came back were **sage, garlic, scallions** and medicinal plants such as dandelions, **Milk Thistle, varieties of Mint, Lamb's Ear, Lemon Balm**, and more.

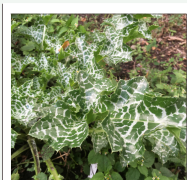
Challenges

We were not able to set up vertical gardens because of COVID-19 disruptions. We had also intended to grow more produce and **medicinal plants hydroponically** in response to an increase demand for locally produced food by vulnerable groups here in Worcester, however we were financially limited to obtain hydroponic equipment.

Unfortunately due to COVID-19 closure, the Stone Soup property experienced vandalism and conflicts and the garden infrastructure was affected. The garden fences were broken down and the space became contested terrain as the homeless population increased around King Street. Despite this we were able to achieve most our our goal.



Milk Thistle Flower



Milk Thistle Leaves



Therapeutic Garden

Beginning last year 2019, HGI has been strengthening its **Therapeutic Garden program**, by developing a nature-based model that would provide gardening experience to alleviate mental conditions for elderly, those recovering from illness, and those facing homelessness and other mental concerns. HGI is working on two pilot designs in Worcester. To this end, HGI joined with **Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI)'s South Africa Project Center** in Summer 2020, to develop this model further. WPI students developed a **Therapeutic Garden Design Manual** (available soon) to help HGI partners to implement therapeutic garden models. HGI greatly appreciates manual developers Ciara Young, Mairead O'Neill, Chris Davenport and Matthew Adams..



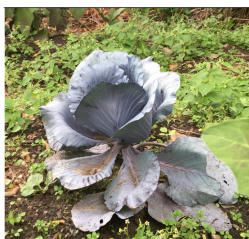
Chinese Eggplant



Bell Peppers



Tomatoes



Purple Cabbage



Medicinal Plant Research



The HGI research team, led by Dr. Thidi Tshiguvho, has been exploring the use of medicinal plants in addiction recovery, by reviewing **herbs used in Africa and South America in addiction recovery**. The team is also planning to cultivate medicinal plants hydroponically and compare the potency of two sets of cultivation media. HGI will recruit youth to lead parts of this program, and will develop a **curriculum that will align with Massachusetts's Math, Science, and Engineering standards**.

Community Support

As a non-profit organization, HGI depends on volunteer services to work the garden, organize community workdays, preparing for health workshops, and fundraising. We invite you to **support us by: donating, membership, garden tools, work time, and partnerships**. We would like to give thanks to special volunteers who found ways to keep the garden going while observing COVID-19 restrictions: including all members of Worcester Roots, Stone Soup, Our Story Edutainment, homeless persons, neighbors and community members who stopped by for encouragement and harvested some produce for themselves or had fun.





Goals for Fiscal Year 2021

- We will continue with organizational strategic planning
- Create and grow our donor database
- Host a virtual fundraising event
- Recruit more staff, youth and volunteers to strengthen programs
- Establish hydroponic garden to produce food for vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Identify two partners to implement therapeutic gardens
- Continue with research in medicinal plants and herbs to support chronic and other diseases.






HGI Staff

Dr. Thidi Tshiguvho
Founding Director and Research Lead

Robert Cabral
Garden Designer and Therapeutic Gardens

Bernadine Mavhungu
Marketing and Communications Lead

Errica Saunders
Community Gardening Lead





www.hgiworchester.org

 **hgiworchester@gmail.com**