



Metro Blooms

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

MISSION

Metro Blooms partners with communities to create resilient landscapes and foster clean watersheds, embracing the values of equity and inclusion to solve environmental challenges.

VISION

Engage with communities to create resilient landscapes.

VALUES

*Ecological Health • Environmental Justice • Education
Inspiration • Community Engagement & Partnership*

EQUITY

We work to create the conditions for all of a community's members to be meaningfully involved in projects to protect clean water and create habitat. We carry out our work using principles of equitable engagement and environmental justice so that those most impacted have the opportunity to take part in the decision-making. We intentionally reach out in underserved communities that include — but are not limited to — people of color, lower-income neighborhoods and affordable housing communities.

Metro Blooms

Redesigning Landscapes in Rental Communities

We put in our first nature play area, complete with stick trellises and a child-sized bridge, at Brook Gardens in Brooklyn Park. This is part of a program to create more resilience and better quality of outdoor life in the green spaces of rental communities where many BIPOC folks and recent immigrants live. We work closely with resident project stewards, equitably paid, who help plan activities and encourage other residents to be part of decision-making. While the redesigns always include raingardens, native plantings and other sustainable practices, community priorities shape each landscape. Many families with children live in the community where we put in the nature play area. To compare, in another community with seniors, residents wanted to garden so we put in easily-accessible raised beds. In 2020 we offered paid work to residents during installs. Our work with rental communities is growing.

These projects are made possible by public and private funding. This includes government agencies like watershed districts, cities, and counties, foundations, and property owners. Community organizations are a vital supporter as well, helping us connect with residents.



At Riverside Plaza, home to more than 5,000 residents in Minneapolis' Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, community volunteers helped us plant a large raingarden in a parking lot. We're planning a parklet here in 2021!

"I care about my community. My kids live here. I want it to be nice, and to show my kids how to take care of the outside like they take care of inside their home."

— Michelle, Project Steward



13

resident
project
stewards

15

raingardens
installed

32

residents hired
to work on
installs

2.2 MILLION

gallons estimated
annual runoff
captured

Resilient Landscapes: Neighborhood Projects

Neighborhood Pollinator Projects

We were part of two projects offering pollinator gardens in communities historically left out of environmental improvement opportunities. We worked with local organizations in Near North Minneapolis and the Corcoran and Phillips neighborhoods to engage residents, including many BIPOC folks and renters, in planting habitat for pollinators.

Partners included BWSR (through the Lawns to Legumes Demonstration Neighborhood Program), Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, Corcoran Neighborhood Association, Northside Residents Redevelopment Council.



Illustration by Katie Sartor-Duchene

Neighborhood of Raingardens

For more than a decade, Neighborhood of Raingardens has helped communities make it easier for their residents to get raingardens in their yards. We leverage combined resources to lower residents' costs and reduce practical challenges like digging and removing earth. In 2020, 12 Minneapolis neighborhoods and the City of St. Louis Park provided cost-shares to participating residents, while our longtime partner Conservation Corps MN & Iowa provided crews paid through the Clean Water Fund.



205

raingardens
+ native
plantings



9,213

Native plants
+ shrubs
planted



23,300

square
feet



2.5 MILLION

gallons estimated
annual runoff
captured

"I'm ecstatic about the garden and really appreciate the work the team put in to help beautify my yard...I'm excited to share the positive impact that rain gardens and native plants can have on our community."

— Participant testimonial

Lawns to Legumes

Minnesotans across the state planted pollinator-friendly lawns, meadows, pocket gardens, and trees and shrubs as part of this initiative that we helped launch on behalf of the state Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The program provided grants to residents, matched grantees with coaches, and offered educational workshops and free downloadable resources. Lawns to Legumes (L2L) has received national recognition for pollinator protection and engagement.

There were many partners in this effort: BWSR, statewide conservation agency staff, Master Gardeners, Minnesota Water Stewards and the Minneapolis College of Art and Design.



Illustration by Ava Barry

850
grant
recipients



350,000
square feet of pollinator
habitat created*

**Reported by grant recipients
and others inspired by this program*



Photo by Anne Claflin

“I could not be happier with this program and feel so grateful for being selected to participate. I intend to add more plantings every year and I can’t wait to install my Rusty Patch Bumblebee signs to help educate and inspire others!”

— Program participant



PLANTING FOR CLEAN WATER™

bluethumb.org

Blue Thumb Workshops

We taught people about ways to make their yards more resilient to the challenges of climate change and friendlier to the environment. Our workshops covered stormwater management practices (like raingardens!), site planning, native plants, options to traditional lawns, pollinator habitat (including information about the L2L program) and healthy soils. We offered workshops via Zoom for the first time due to the pandemic.

We’re happy to report that people acted on what they learned! In a follow-up survey, 89% of respondents planted native plants to protect pollinators, 61% reduced fertilizer and irrigation and 50% reduced stormwater runoff, a major cause of water pollution.



your yard
CAN BEE
the **CHANGE**
#Lawns2Legumes

31
workshops



1,919
attendees

Commercial and Institutional Projects

We finished up our third and final year helping small businesses and institutions put in raingardens and other green infrastructure in Near North and Northeast Minneapolis. In total we worked with 12 properties, including a brewery, two mosques and a bike shop, to install raingardens, permeable pavement, a green roof, a bee lawn and pollinator plantings. We applied The Alliance's equitable development scorecard to make sure the benefits of the environmental improvements directly supported the community. The project also prioritized hiring local contractors and contractors of color. Our largest project was the "Eco-Mosque" at Masjid An-Nur in Minneapolis.



"ECO-MOSQUE" MASJID AN-NUR

988

square feet
of permeable
pavement



1,485

square feet
of perennial
plantings



2,861

square feet
of bee lawn



329,000

gallons rainwater
captured
annually



We installed our first City of Minneapolis public property project, a raingarden in a traffic diverter in Southeast Como.

Design, Maintenance, Installation

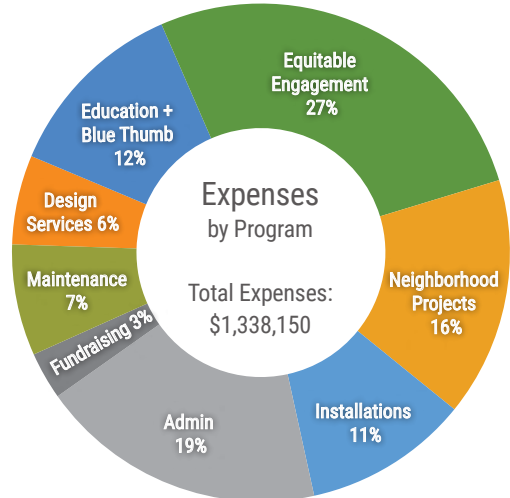
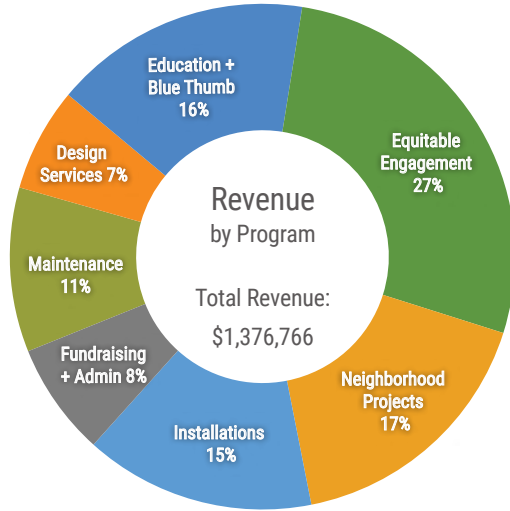
Our design team, most of them graduate landscape architects, take a more sustainable approach to designing landscapes. Our team did almost 300 individual consultations (some of them virtual) and created 16 landscape designs in 2020.

For the second year, we had our own crew, seven strong, who we trained in sustainable landcare. They installed 21 new landscape projects. They also inspected and took care of raingardens and other stormwater practices at 28 Minneapolis Public Schools, several affordable housing communities and a few commercial sites. This helps our clients stay in compliance with stormwater regulations, ensuring they are eligible for stormwater utility credits, while keeping the raingardens working properly and beautiful for all to see!



Photos: Rich Harrison

2020 Financials



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Blue Thumb Partners

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Shingle Creek WMO
Studio Gro
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Twin City Seed Co.
Twin Lake Design Group, Inc
VLAWMO
Washington Conservation District
Water in Motion
West Mississippi WMO

Our New Home

In 2020 we found our new home, at 3747 Cedar Avenue, just off 38th Street in South Minneapolis. It provides the space for a growing staff, for hosting workshops, trainings and community events, and for housing our tools and equipment. We are conducting a capital campaign to make it truly ours, a community asset with a pollinator-friendly yard demonstrating environmentally-friendly ways to reduce runoff and conserve water.



Supporters

We are so grateful for all levels of support our community provides. Some of our major supporters include:

Center for Prevention at BCBS
Manitou Fund
Minneapolis Foundation
Fourth Generation
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