



# Metro Blooms

2024 Impact Report





**Mission** Partner with communities to create resilient landscapes and foster clean watersheds, embracing the values of equity and inclusion to solve environmental challenges

## Strategic Areas of Focus

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Design + Build for Healthy Resilient Lands & Water

Community Relations, Engagement & Inspiration

Broaden Geographic Reach

Organizational Identities & Interconnections

Education & Community Resources

Partnerships in Community - Strong Interconnected Partnerships

Financial Sustainability & Accountability





We plant to connect with each other and the land around us, to demonstrate abundance, and to honor and value our interconnectedness and shared space on this earth. Community is at the root of our work.

In 2024, we spent time in relationship with so many of you, learning together, planting together and working alongside each other to care for rain gardens and native plantings. We pushed for change, evaluating the Lawns to Legumes program to advance accessibility. We shared our resources and knowledge, growing our Sustainable Landcare Training and reaching people across Minnesota through our Blue Thumb online resources.

We're ready to do more and continue being intentional, prioritizing those impacted by environmental injustices and holding ourselves and our partners accountable. Thank you for planting, learning and connecting alongside us.



Our education program and a statewide public/private partnership



Our technical expertise in landscape design, install, and landcare



## 2024

- More than **7,200** people connected with us to learn about and create more sustainable landscapes.
- This year's rain gardens installed through our community programs soak in and clean more than **2 millions gallons** of stormwater annually.
- We planted more than **31,000** native plants in our community, park and rain garden programs.

# Working Towards Environmental Justice

**Everybody has a right to clean  
air, land and water**

We work towards climate-resilient green spaces that soak in and clean rain water, offer cooling shade and provide habitat. Our work centers communities most impacted by environmental injustices, including Black, Indigenous and people of color, and low-income and rental communities. We listen carefully to community concerns and respond to their vision, encouraging community members to be part of decision-making through an equitable engagement process.

- **1,424** people participated in programs centering communities impacted by environmental injustices.
- **38** programs and engagements led by Metro Bloom young adult Community Relations staff
- **8,745** native plants planted in **46** rain or pollinator gardens
- **55** trees planted

## Some highlights

At Penn Place, a rental community in Bloomington, we replaced a canopy of unhealthy ash trees with a diversity of native species. Community members of all ages joined us to plant 14 trees.

A redesign at Highland Gables, a rental community in Brooklyn Park, included several rain and pollinator gardens — and a patio, picnic table and grills. We held two planting events with many community members. Some later attended our landcare training to continue learning and working alongside us!



We winter-sowed native plants in milk jugs with **Green Garden Bakery**, a youth-run business in Minneapolis. We used plants from our winter-sowing in their new rain garden — which we planted together!

# Working Towards Environmental Justice

## Partnering with community

We nurture longstanding relationships within communities, allowing us to learn from local knowledge and do better work together. These partnerships typically continue over several years. The work should benefit the people who live there the most. We pay people for their time, from planning to planting to maintaining the gardens alongside us.

## Let's meet at the Flowers That Beam Community Garden

Last summer, our young adult community relations team led plant- and pollinator-focused activities with kids at Beam Apartments in North Minneapolis. We had the perfect location: the [Flowers That Beam Community Garden](#). We co-designed and planted the mini-park with the Beam community in 2023.



*“My job was to listen to the community and put their ideas to paper. They wanted a clean, safe place to relax in the shade, and lots of colorful flowers. We added pedestrian lights, trash cans, benches, a short fence along Cedar Avenue and lots of trees. The rain gardens are filled with seasonal blooming perennials.” — Rich Harrison, Co-Director of Design and Landscape Architect, Metro Blooms Design+Build, on working with the community to design a mini-park at Riverside Plaza*



## Riverside Plaza

Our partnership with the community at [Riverside Plaza](#), a rental complex in the heart of Minneapolis, started in 2018 with a parking lot rain garden. Throughout, the [Riverside Plaza Tenants Association](#) has worked to connect us to community members. Most recently, we transformed an underutilized open space into a beautiful mini-park with gardens, benches and walking paths. In 2024, many residents — from young children to elders — helped plant 23 native trees at a [tree-planting event](#). Elders gather in the park with their tea in the early evening.

- We partnered with **8** rental communities.
- We worked with **20** community partners.
- We hired **759** community members to work alongside us.

# Native Plants + Protecting Pollinators

## Creating habitat

Native plants are more climate resilient, contribute greatly to soil health and provide habitat for pollinators. We support individuals and communities in projects that bring native plants into their green spaces.

## Turf to Pollinator Gardens

We partnered with Wilderness in the City, park and conservation agencies and others to create six pollinator gardens in Twin Cities regional parks, showcasing native plants and styles of planting to support pollinators. Volunteers including Master Gardeners, corporate groups, local residents and St. Paul grade-schoolers planted the gardens! One partner, **Wakan Tipi Awanyankapi**, selected native plant species with importance to Dakota people for the project at Keller Lake Regional Park.



**550** volunteers helped plant  
**50,000** sq. ft. pollinator habitat created  
**18,000** plants planted



Plant Name	Dakota Name
Prairie Smoke	piŋkpá hijšmá
Bee Balm, Wild Bergamot	waŋpé waštémna
Prairie Sage	pŋeží hóta
blazing star, dotted gayfeather, liatris	thatéte čhaŋnúnŋa
Swamp Milkweed	Wahigheya iphiye
Lead Plant	Ziŋtkátho
Anise Hyssop	waŋpé yathápi
Stiff Goldenrod	čhaŋhdóŋaŋ makhá
	or
	Thad'ahnake

## Lawns to Legumes

Minnesotans received grants and support to plant native pollinator habitat at their home. Through our Blue Thumb education program, we facilitated Lawns to Legumes with the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. Some grantees welcomed visitors to their yards for the first annual Lawns to Legumes Garden Tour Day. Our community relations team surveyed more than 450 people at BIPOC community events as part of evaluating the program's accessibility. Thank you, volunteer coaches, for your time helping Lawns to Legumes grantees!



**5.2 million** sq. ft. new pollinator habitat  
**6,898** pollinator-friendly trees and shrubs  
**2,969** grantees completed projects

## Design+Build

**Metro Blooms Design+Build**, a for-profit supporting the Metro Blooms non-profit, designs, installs and maintains projects featuring more sustainable practices. Design+Build works with individual homeowners and commercial, institutional and other clients; maintains green infrastructure practices for large properties; and collaborates closely in our community and education programming.



- **91** designs created
- **33** projects installed
- More than **130** rain gardens and other stormwater practices maintained

# Taking Action for Clean Water

## Neighborhood of Rain Gardens

**Neighborhood of Rain Gardens** makes it easier for residents in participating neighborhoods and cities to add a rain garden in their yard. The program lowers costs and reduces practical challenges like excavating soil. **Conservation Corps MN & Iowa** provides crews paid by the Clean Water Fund. Metro Blooms Design+Build manages the program and provides onsite consultations and a rain garden design for each resident. Typically, residents do the actual planting after picking up their plants at a designated pickup spot — this way they get to know their plants!

- **57** new rain gardens installed
- **4836** native plants in gardens
- Estimated **978,665** gallons stormwater runoff captured annually
- One native plant shoreline restoration: estimated **59,437** gallons stormwater runoff captured annually



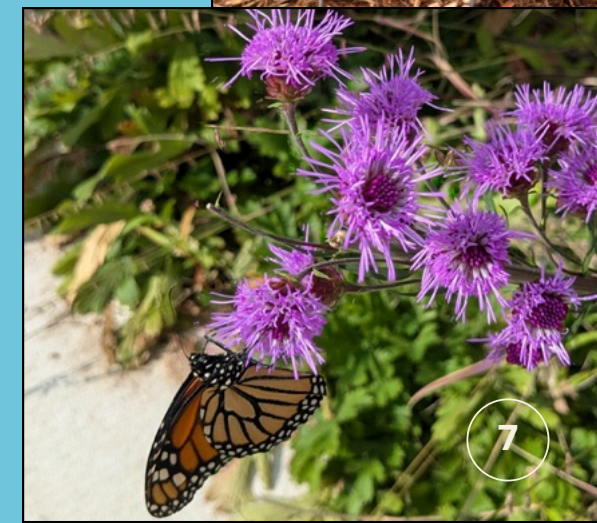
## Blooming Boulevards

**Blooming Boulevards** transforms boulevards into native plant rain gardens that soak in and clean stormwater and provide habitat for pollinators. We partnered with North and South Minneapolis communities, focusing on those impacted by environmental injustices. We connected with community members to share how rain gardens help keep water clean and how native plants support pollinators, and to plant their Blooming Boulevard. We partnered with the youth organizations **Beloved Community MPLS, All Nations Youth and Community Assistance Program, Helping Hand Companies** and **Green Garden Bakery** to plant and care for gardens.



*“Metro Blooms was very helpful in picking the design, types of plants and gardens and I literally could not have done a better job. Thank you to everyone who participated in my garden!”*  
— **2024 Blooming Boulevard participant**

- **9,070** sq. ft. of new boulevard gardens with native pollinator habitat
- Estimated **1,123,315** gallons stormwater runoff captured annually
- **160** community members engaged in boulevard planting and maintenance events
- **90%** of boulevard recipients were Black, Indigenous and People of Color.



# Sustainable Landcare Training

## Growing a green workforce and environmental stewardship

Participants gain job-ready skills in maintaining and inspecting rain gardens, native plantings and other climate-resilient practices, as well as a greater understanding of our relationship to the environment. We offer the 30-hour training primarily to young adults in communities impacted by environmental injustices. Stipends for participants and learning sites close to public transit help reduce barriers to joining.

*"The program opened up my eyes to seeing a lot more things in our environment that we need to change, that we need to make better to grow, and I think that's big." — Jay, SLC '24*

- We had **55** trainees in **3** training groups.
- We later hired **7** trainees to work on Metro Blooms Design+Build projects, including prepping and planting large sites in Minneapolis.
- After training, **4** trainees worked inspecting city-installed rain gardens in Minneapolis.



## Highlights

- Some new speakers offered larger context, including Indigenous perspectives of land and water and building financial security.
- Young adult community relations staff led discussions focused on environmental justice.
- We matched **trainees with mentors** in the environmental field for next-step support.
- We celebrated landcare training at summer's end, inviting partners, supporters, and Blue Thumb partners to learn about the program and meet trainees.



Staff from **Metro Blooms Design+Build**, experts in sustainable landscapes specializing stormwater management and native vegetation, lead many of the onsite trainings.





# Learning + Sharing Resources

## Resilient Yards Workshops

We provided resources to help people take action at home. Blue Thumb's Online Learning Series lets people learn about Resilient Yards, Turf Alternatives, Resilient Shorelines and Seed Saving, at their own pace. We offer this free. We also continued our live workshops, online and in person. **After attending a workshop, 60 percent of attendees who filled out a survey reported taking action in their yard!**

<b>3673</b> online learning series registrants	<b>19</b> live online workshops	<b>367</b> live workshop registrants
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## Workshops for land trust homeowners

We partnered with the **City of Lakes Community Land Trust** to provide sustainable gardening and maintenance workshops to many first-time homeowners. We planted a pollinator garden for a **CLCLT homeowner who hosted workshops**. We also surveyed homeowners on their interests. Tree care, identifying weeds and native plants were popular topics — for future work together.

*“I would just like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Metro Blooms ... bringing all this beauty and knowledge to people in underserved areas, helping homeowners, people who are first-generation homeowners, be able to provide love and life to their yards.” — Homeowner and workshop host*



## Minnesota State Fair

Fair-goers stopped by our Blue Thumb exhibit at the Eco Experience building! Our exhibit buzzed with activity, including many pollinators attracted by the native plant displays. Shoutout to the many **Blue Thumb Partner** volunteers! And a special thanks to **Glacial Ridge Growers, Prairie Restorations, Morning Sky Greenery, Dakota Prairie Composting, Monarch Joint Venture, Rice Creek Watershed District** and the **Eco Experience** team!

More than <b>9000</b> visitors at our exhibit	<b>60</b> volunteers, staff and partners
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## Blue Thumb Resources

Our **Blue Thumb website** has become a trusted resource for DIYers, offering plant lists, templates, how-to videos, and more, all free. Our education team updates resources continually. In 2024, we updated a more comprehensive **Plant Finder** tool to help people search native plants.

<b>132,814</b> Blue Thumb website annual users	<b>39,144</b> Blue Thumb Resources downloads
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# Thank you!

We are grateful to have so many partners and contributors in our work.



Community members

Community organizations

Board of Directors

Blue Thumb Partners

Foundations + grant agencies

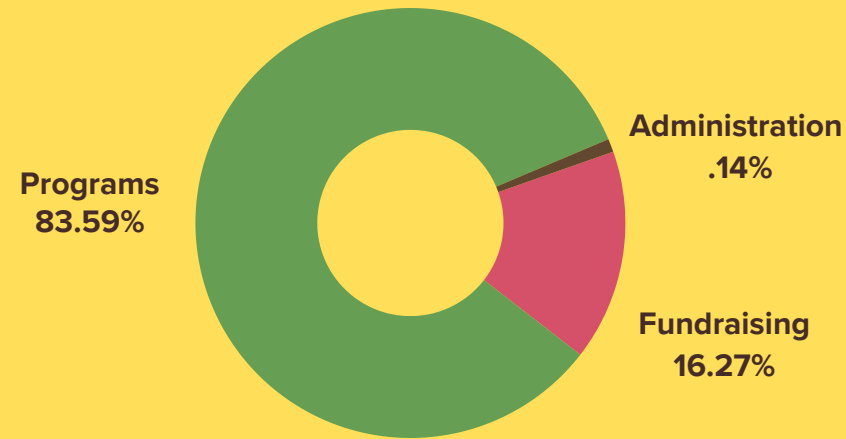
Donors

Sponsors

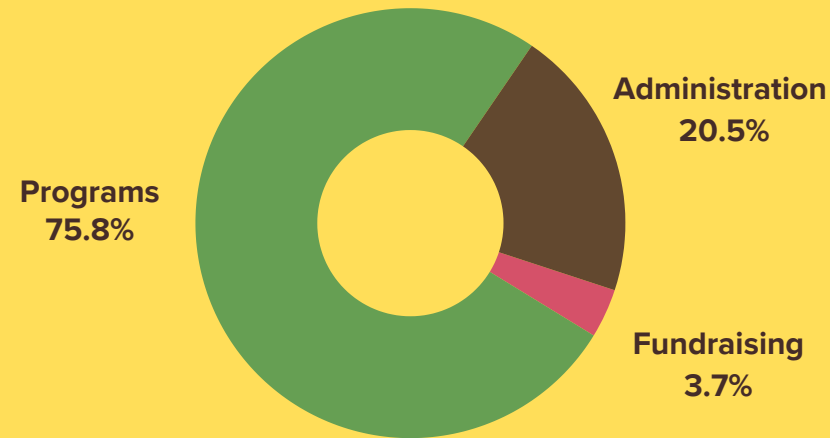
Volunteers

# 2024 FINANCIALS

Consolidated Revenue: \$2,870,248



Consolidated Expense: \$2,803,131

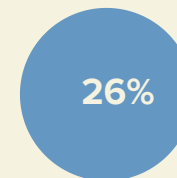


Consolidated financials for Metro Blooms, Metro Blooms Design+Build and Metro Blooms Property LLC

We are questioning concentrated power and decision-making authority, and are working to dismantle practices that are harmful to our work and employees. Ideas of shared leadership and workplace democracy help inform the steps we're taking. We believe everyone's best work is easier to accomplish when they are trusted and engaged.

We redistributed **26%** of program funding in environmental justice communities we partnered with, through paid work opportunities for community members and working with local businesses and community organizations.

**Funding redistributed in environmental justice communities**



## LEADERSHIP

Laura Scholl, Executive Director

## GOVERNANCE

### Board of Directors

**John Kinara, Chair**

- Alex Kim
- Bendu Teage-Kollie
- Carol Kuechler
- Catherine Menick
- Dan Jaker
- Jeanette Boit-Kania
- Norman Greenberg
- Rachael Sterling
- Steph Jacobs
- Todd Carreño
- Stephanie Hatzenbihler, Blue Thumb Liaison



Metro Blooms Design+Build LLC offers design, build and landcare services. Our D+B team's landscape designers and crews provide technical expertise for community projects and education programming.



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

Ecological health | Environmental justice | Education | Inspiration | Community engagement | Partnership



Blue Thumb - Planting for Clean Water is Metro Blooms' education program and a statewide partnership of local governments, and private companies promoting practices that protect pollinators and improve clean water, including planting natives, rain gardens and shoreline stabilization.