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# Accelerating the SDGs at GrowNYC's Teaching Garden

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# GrowNYC – Who We Are

- GrowNYC is a 50 year old non-profit that exists to make NYC the most livable city in the world.
- GrowNYC is *the* sustainability resource for New Yorkers: providing free tools and services anyone can use in order to improve our City and environment.





# Greenmarket

**54 markets in all 5 boroughs  
of New York City**

**250 family farms keeping  
over 50,000 acres of  
farmland in production**

**100% farmer grown,  
produced, caught or foraged**

**15 Youthmarket farm stands**

**Greenmarket Co. – NYC's  
first all local “food hub”**





# Recycling

Staff provides training, free resources and programs events in neighborhoods with low recycling rates

Hands-on recycling education to more than 250,000 New Yorkers across the 5 boroughs

Over 6 million lbs. of food scraps diverted from disposal for composting

Free Stop 'N' Swap events in every community district





# GARDEN

- Since the 1970s, built 83 community gardens, and help hundreds more each year.
- Support over 500 school gardens.
- Installed 90 rainwater harvesting systems.
- Annual Plant Sale distributes to more than 600 community gardens, schools, and block associations.





# EDUCATION

- 200 teens in the South Bronx connect food and environment and promote healthy eating to their neighbors.
- 5,000 young people participate in field trips to Governors Island Teaching Garden.
- 6,000 young people tour the Greenmarket, meet the farmer and learn about what they eat.
- 100 schools each year get hands-on help launching school-wide recycling programs





# THE TEACHING GARDEN

- GrowNYC's one-acre urban farm space on Governors Island
- Serves to deepen the public's understanding of sustainable agriculture, healthy eating, climate change and the urban environment





# INFRASTRUCTURE AT THE GARDEN – TEACHING BEDS

- Over 70 raised garden beds for organic vegetables, flowers, fruits, and herbs
- These beds are made of recycled plastic composite lumber





# INFRASTRUCTURE AT THE GARDEN – FARM BEDS

Over 32,000 square feet of intensively planted in-ground rows of organic vegetables and fruit





# INFRASTRUCTURE AT THE GARDEN – AQUAPONICS SYSTEM

- A two story, 750 gallon aquaponics system where 100 tilapia and 14 varieties of vegetables are raised together.
- The system is powered by solar panels.





# INFRASTRUCTURE AT THE GARDEN – HIGH TUNNEL

- A 6,000 cubic foot season extending high tunnel
- The tunnel captures the sun's heat allowing us to extend our growing season without using electric/petroleum powered heaters





# INFRASTRUCTURE AT THE GARDEN – SOLAR COOKER

- A bank of mirrors focuses sunlight onto a single point which can be directed towards the bottom of a cook surface
- On a sunny day the cook surface on the solar cooker reaches over 700 degrees Fahrenheit





# SCHOOL PROGRAMING AT THE TEACHING GARDEN

- We hosts free daily hands-on, farm-based, educational programing for NYC K-12 public school students, summer camps, and youth groups, as well as active- and differently-abled adults
- We prioritize students from low-income neighborhoods and those with little or no proximal green space





# WEEKEND PROGRAMING AT THE TEACHING GARDEN

- We also offer free weekend public programing including tours, and garden, sustainability, and nutrition related workshops, and more.
- Each season, over 17,000 visitors come to the garden on weekends





# CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS AT THE TEACHING GARDEN

- Each season, we host over 1,500 corporate volunteers in the garden
- These volunteers help maintain the garden and help to off-set our operating costs





# ADDING IN THE SDGs

- In total, the Teaching Garden hosts almost 25,000 New Yorkers each season for free hands-on learning about sustainable agriculture, healthy eating, climate change and the urban environment.
- Incorporating the SDGs into our existing public programing helps draw attention to the Goals and connects our work at the Teaching Garden to a larger global movement





# OUR SDG DISPLAYS

- To integrate the SDGs into our programming at the Teaching Garden, we built 40 interactive SDG-themed displays which we placed throughout the garden
- Each display identifies a specific SDG and is paired with a real world example of that SDG in the Teaching Garden.





# OUR SDG DISPLAYS

Each display has a flap that opens to reveal:

1. An explanation of the SDG;
2. A short description of how it applies to the Teaching Garden, (including the relevant targets);
3. A few sentences about how visitors can support the implementation of that SDG elsewhere in the city





# OUR SDG DISPLAYS

In order to capture the attention of our younger visitors, each sign also includes a cartoon about that specific SDG.





# OUR SDG DISPLAYS

- Example: We have a demonstration space about using green infrastructure for storm water management in NYC. Next to it we added a display with information about Goal 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation
- Inside the display are details about the Goal; how Targets 3, 5, and 8 apply to our green infrastructure demonstration; and how green infrastructure can help mitigating stormwater in NYC





# OUR SDG DISPLAYS

- Example: In the center of the Teaching Garden, we added a display with information about Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities
- The display has details about the Goal and how the Teaching Garden offers examples of some of the significant transformations that are needed with how we build and manage our urban spaces.





# OUR SDG DISPLAYS

- Example: Next to our giant solar cooker, we added a display with information about Goal 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy
- The display explains the Goal and provides information about how the Teaching Garden's solar cooker demonstrates that even a simple device can sustainably capture the sun's heat for practical use.





# USING THE DISPLAYS - STUDENTS

The displays and Goals were incorporated into existing lessons used with our public school students. Goals that we regularly touched on with these students:

- #3 Good Health and Well-Being
- #6 Clean Water and Sanitation
- #7 Affordable and Clean Energy
- #11 Sustainable Cities & Communities
- #12 Responsible Consumption and Production
- #13 Climate Action
- #14 Life Below Water
- #15 Life on Land





# USING THE DISPLAYS – PUBLIC WEEKENDS

The SDGs were integrated into our public weekend programming through an SDGs-themed scavenger hunt for children and an SDGs-focused self-guided tour





# USING THE DISPLAYS – CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS

At the start of each corporate volunteer event, volunteers are given an introduction to the Teaching Garden. That introductory script was updated to include a mention of the SDGs and the way that they connect the Teaching Garden to a larger global movement





# INITIAL IMPRESSIONS - STUDENTS

- Our most successful integration of the SDGs was with students. Our garden-based environmental programming already overlaps with many of the SDGs.
- Since September, approximately 1,600 students have been introduced to the SDGs at the Teaching Garden
- The majority of these students (88%) said that they had never heard of the SDGs before coming to the Teaching Garden





# INITIAL IMPRESSIONS – WEEKENDS AND VOLUNTEERS

- Difficult to quantify the success of implementing the SDGs into our weekend programing, since most of that programing is self-guided. Many visitors tried the SDG themed scavenger hunt and tour, but we didn't have the ability to survey their impressions.
- Corporate volunteers showed the least amount of interest in the SDGs. This might be because the focus on their events is on volunteering not education.





# IDEAS FOR ACTION

Speak up! We found that most participants in our garden programing had never heard of the SDGs. Raise awareness about the SDGs by introducing them into conversation with friends, family, colleagues, clients, etc. in identity relevant ways.

Join a community garden or start a new one. Shared garden spaces are perfectly suited for exploring and demonstrating many of the SDGs.

