



# 2022 Urban Farm Impact Report

Toronto  
Metropolitan  
University

Urban  
Farm





## Year at a Glance: Celebrating the first Harvest on the DCC rooftop

2022 was the first official growing season of the Urban Farm at Toronto Metropolitan University's second rooftop farm, situated atop the 8th floor of the Daphne Cockwell Health Sciences Complex (DCC). The roof is dedicated to Indigenous Foodways and Black Food Sovereignty and is the first purpose-built rooftop farm under Toronto's green roof bylaw.

To celebrate the inaugural growing season and thank numerous stakeholders who made this space possible, over 100 guests joined a Harvest Party on October 6, 2022. The menu featured a Three Sisters stew of corn, beans, and squash, a Jamaican pumpkin soup, and a Jamaican pumpkin patti, all made with ingredients grown on the DCC roof and prepared by the talented chefs at TMU Eats.

Thanks to all who came to celebrate and brought this space to life!





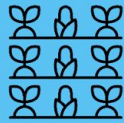
Photos from the  
2022 Harvest Party



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# 2022 Highlights



Harvested more than **5,000 lbs** of produce from two rooftops.



Donated **2,000 lbs / 40%** of total harvest.



Finished construction of the **Urban Farm's first greenhouse** in fall 2022.



Provided over **70 engagement opportunities**, Hosted over **500 visitors** through tours and programs.



Hosted the third annual Living Lab Roundtable, with more than **100 guests** in attendance.



# Indigenous Foodways Program Overview

Under the leadership of Samantha Williams, Indigenous-led programs coordinator, the Indigenous Foodways Program expanded from 800 square feet on the ENG rooftop to 1,680 square feet on the DCC.

Over 41 food crops, medicinal plants and pollinator plants were grown, including 12 new crops to the Urban Farm, five different types of berries (blueberries, elderberries, black raspberries, red raspberries, and strawberries), and three different trees (sumac, juniper and eastern white cedar).

This year was the first season using the traditional mound method to grow the Three Sisters' (corn, beans and squash) on both ENG and DCC.



# Indigenous Foodways Program Highlights



Planted over **41 culturally significant foods crops**, medicinal plants and pollinator plants on the DCC.



Provided **three part-time summer jobs** for Indigenous Field Assistants.



Established a **seed library of Indigenous crops and medicines** grown at the Farm and hosted a seed exchange at the Harvest Party.



Welcomed over **100 guests** to the Indigenous Foodways gardens including:

- the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto,
- Indigenous Nutrition program students,
- Aboriginal Student Services,
- and TMU students, faculty and other stakeholders.



Collaborated with Miziwe Biik, an Aboriginal Employment and Training Centre in Toronto, to offer **training programs to Indigenous youth and community members**.



Participated in the first **Truth and Reconciliation Business Conference** that was Indigenous-led and hosted by the TRSM Indigenous Initiatives.



# Black Food Sovereignty Initiative Overview

Under the leadership of Nicole Austin, Black-led Programs coordinator, the Black Food Sovereignty Initiative launched the pilot of the Harvest Collective program and Learning Circle garden plot on the DCC in 2022. After trialling culturally significant crops in the ENG Market Garden in 2021, the Black Food Sovereignty Initiative expanded to an 874 sq. ft. plot on the DCC rooftop farm. The space is dedicated to growing culturally significant crops for the Black community and to share teachings via monthly experiential learning events.

An Advisory Circle was established with five members (community leaders, students, and TMU faculty) who will play vital roles in shaping the future of the Black Food Sovereignty Initiative's programming, based on the needs and priorities of Toronto's diverse Black communities (African, Caribbean and Black of African descent).



# Black Food Sovereignty Initiative

## Highlights



Participated in **15 external speaking engagements**, all focusing on how Black Food Sovereignty and social justice factor into issues like climate change, food security, and city building.



Expanded selection of **culturally significant crops** including okra, African eggplant (aka “garden eggs”), callaloo, scotch bonnet peppers, Jamaican pumpkin, bitter melon (aka cerasee) and more.



Welcomed representatives of the Government of Canada to the Harvest Collective and Learning on the DCC rooftop to provide consultation on how **Black Food Sovereignty can be incorporated into environmental, gender, and agricultural policy.**



Hosted experiential workshops through the **Harvest Collective and Learning Circle** on various topics including:

- Introduction to Black Food Sovereignty (BFS) with Anan Xola Lololi
- Celebrating Black Farmers and BFS through story-telling with Hansel Igbavboa
- Herbalism and Plant Medicine with Kwabena
- Seed Saving for BFS with Peachtree



## Market Garden Overview

**35 crops** and **92 cultivars** were grown on the ENG market garden, distributed following the “Model of Thirds” distribution system, where no less than one third is donated to the community, no more than one third is sold at market value, and one third is available at equitable rates for TMU students.

**30%**

sold to students at  
affordable prices

**40%**

donated to community  
partners and non-profit  
organizations

**30%**

sold at market value to  
the TMU community

# Market Garden Highlights

Planted the field 1.5 times over by using succession planting, harvesting over 4,600 pounds of food, which equaled to 7,265 units of produce, from 35 crops and 92 cultivars.

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Top five most productive crops by quantity: cucumbers (1,437), eggplant (852), garlic (699), summer squash (599), and cherry tomatoes (410).

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Sold 129 Garden Grab Bags, with 65% sold to students at an affordable rate.







## Living Lab Overview

In 2022, the Urban Farm Living Lab continued to create research partnerships to address user-driven and community-informed research priorities, and fulfilled 25 requests from undergraduate and graduate students, research groups, and professors from TMU and beyond.

The Living Lab hosted its second annual Research Roundtable, featuring 17 speakers and more than 100 attendees, to bring together participants from across sectors to have discussions about rooftop farming, share relevant research presentations, and to inspire future research.

This year marked the second time the Urban Farm collaborated with the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO) on a farmer-led research project, investigating a fava bean variety trial with other participating farms across Ontario to find out which variety was the most marketable and productive to grow in this region.

# Living Lab Highlights

**Afsana Alam Akhie**, MSc Civil Engineering and **Dr. Darko Joksimovic**, Associate Professor and Program Director of Civil Engineering: investigated the performance of **low-cost sensors and sensor networks** for real-time monitoring of a productive green roof to gain a better understanding of **rooftop hydrologic and thermal benefits analysis**, including supervision of plant growth and temperature.

**Joseph Medaglia**, Chair and Associate Professor, Fashion, Creative School, and **Rachel MacHenry** (Fashion, Creative School): established a research-creation partnership with the Natural Dye Network in North East America where we grew several plant species on the rooftop farm used for natural dyeing for teaching, learning, research and creative purposes.

**Tamer Almaaitah**, PhD Civil Engineering and **Dr. Darko Joksimovic**, Associate Professor and Program Director of Civil Engineering: completed analyzing the data that he collected in 2021 and published his findings in an open-source journal titled, [Hydrologic and Thermal Performance of a Full-Scale Farmed Blue-Green Roof](#). This study found that **85-88% of stormwater was retained by the Urban Farm's green roof, resulting in a peak delay of 7.7 to 8 hours**, greatly reducing strain on municipal sewer infrastructure.







## Engagement Overview

The Urban Farm launched new programs that focused on experiential learning, skill sharing, research collaborations, and building community connections.

After the rooftop spaces were closed for a number of years for structural upgrades and the construction of the second rooftop farm, 2022 focused on welcoming as many visitors back to the rooftops as possible. The Farm emphasized themes of experiential learning, knowledge sharing and hands-on approaches to all engagement opportunities for the TMU community and beyond. Existing programs such as chartered tours and volunteering returned and expanded, alongside new programming like Friday Field Walks and workshops.

In total, The Urban Farm hosted over 70 engagement opportunities for the TMU community and welcomed over 500 visitors to the rooftop spaces!



## Engagement Highlights

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Provided **5 full-time student positions** for **14 weeks** through the Urban Farm Field Apprenticeship program.

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Hosted the Ecological Association of Ontario (EFAO)'s first **in-person BIPOC Farmers Network** meetup for farmers of all backgrounds to gather, connect, build community and share knowledge at the Urban Farm.

Participated in **35 engagement events** including 5 in-class presentations, 3 tabling events, 14 interviews, 2 consultations, 8 panel discussions, and 3 webinars.

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Hosted **11 in-field classroom visits** on both rooftop spaces and **8 in-person educational workshops** on tomato and basil pruning, garlic processing, medicinal plants, lacto-fermentation, microgreens growing, potato harvesting, garlic planting, and composting.

Welcomed **over 100 TMU students** to the Urban Farm over the growing season through the Friday Field Walks program.

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Welcomed **25 TMU students** through Workbee Wednesdays to provide hands-on farming experience over **7 weeks**.

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Hosted **50 tours**, totalling **500 guests**, from June to October on both farm sites.



## Media Features

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The Urban Farm's ENG roof was used as a visual backdrop in the National Ballet of Canada's, MADDADDAM, a contemporary ballet based on Margaret Atwood's MaddAddam book series.

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In light of the Urban Farm's 2022 Harvest Party, The Eyeopener published an article highlighting the Urban Farm's DCC location, the first purpose-built green roof dedicated to Black and Indigenous Food Sovereignty.

The Urban Farm field apprentices were interviewed by Nordic Bridges, a Nordic-Canadian cultural hub, on how urban agriculture helps them build community, engage with nature, and reconnect with food and culture.

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Members of the Urban Farm were highlighted in the EFAO's Fall 2022 newsletter, with Ines Lacarne, field engagement coordinator, and Sharene Shafie, research coordinator, being interviewed alongside other rooftop farmers on the challenges (and rewards) of rooftop farming in relation to soil health, and Michelle Dang, living lab assistant, being featured on the cover for the Fava Bean research trial.





## Panels

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Participated in Durham College's horticulture program at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair on current and future opportunities in urban agriculture and how youth can get involved.

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Spoke at Toronto Urban Agriculture Week alongside farming experts from Toronto and Nerima, Japan on the benefits of urban agriculture.

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BFSI participated in 5 panel discussions including "Black Food Futures: Black Youth-led Labour Market Assessment" and the York Region Youth Food Committee in collaboration with the Black Environmental Initiative's, "Intersection of environmental racism and food insecurity".

In a webinar series hosted by Laboratoire Agriculture Urbaine, we gave a presentation on the principles of soil health and how to nurture healthy soil for productive, rooftop farming.

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Nicole Austin, the Urban Farm's Black-led Programs Coordinator, presented her work on running the Urban Farm's Black Food Sovereignty Initiative at a community conversations event hosted by the Black Food Sovereignty Toronto and the City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism unit.



## Urban Farm Donors

The Urban Farm would like to acknowledge and thank the following donors who provided funds in 2022. We appreciate the support and generosity of these individuals and organizations who helped fund many of the accomplishments the Urban Farm team achieved this year.

- Graywood Developments
- MakeWay/Harbinger
- Dawn Davis
- Rodney Yip

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GRAYWOOD  
AN INTELLIGENT MOVE



A project of

MakeWay

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Harbinger  
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Rodney Yip on the DCC rooftop farm