

The Story of the Community Garden at the Ann Arbor Civic Center Commons

*November 6, 2018, Ann Arbor
Citizens voted 53.11% to 46.89%
to pass Proposal A:*

*“The City-owned public land bounded
by Fifth Ave, William, Division,
and Liberty Streets be retained in
public ownership, in perpetuity,
and developed as an
**urban park and civic center
commons.**”*

Overhead view: Civic Center Commons >



Developed by Jeff Crockett with Robert Black and the Center of the City Commons Green Team

The Commons is a progressive, international movement to provide equitably shared public spaces

for gathering...

gardening...

education...



collective action...

relaxation...

entertainment...

Join the Commons Movement in Ann Arbor

<https://annarborcommunitycommons.org/>

Check Out Chad Monfreda's Youtube presentation at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XJ3wSYtH4>

The Community Garden Timeline

2009: The **vision for the Commons** began at the Labor Day Democratic Party picnic at the Black Elks and was inspired by a 2008 Commons publication by Peter Linebaugh titled “The Magna Carta Manifesto, Liberties and Commons for All” Univ. of California Press.”

2010: The **Community Commons Organizing Committee** (A2C2) was formed.

2011: The **Library Green Conservancy** was formed to promote a park on the Library Lot.

2012: An “**Imagine a Park**” open program was held with exhibits and citizen engagement.

2018: **Proposition A** was passed calling for an Urban Park and Civic Center.

2019: The City Council appointed a **Center of the City Task Force**.

2020: In February, the City Task Force made its recommendations and the **Community Commons Initiating Committee** was formed. In October, 2020, the **Council of the Commons** was formed whose membership was determined by City Council.

2021: **The Garden Committee** now known as **The Center of the City Green Team** was formed as a group within the Initiating Committee.

December, 2020

Alan and Odile Hugonot Haber collaborated with **Margolis Nursery, Kevin Leeser and horticulturist Tom Stevens** to secure and deliver a Douglas Fir to initiate the **civic participation** in the Commons. The tree was later moved to Leslie Park Golf Course by **the Forestry Department's Scott Spooner**.

Photo (from L) unknown bystander, Anne Bannister, her dog, Bailey, Kathy Griswold, Chad Monfreda, Odile Hugonot Haber, Alan Haber, Phil Carroll and Tom Stevens



The Community Garden Project and **The Green Team**

On March 12, 2021, a garden committee now known as **The Green Team** started **weekly meetings** to plan for a community garden on a plot of land designated as N3. **Alan and Odile Hugonot Haber, Chad Manfreda, Bonnie Pearce, Rita Mitchell, & Joet Reoma** were pivotal in the planning phase, which included plant selection, plot preparation, weeding, communicating with **City Administrator Tom Crawford** and **DDA Interim Director Maura Thomsen**, and securing wood chips. The Garden Site Map was suggested by Joet Reoma, a Board member of Project Grow Community Gardens, an MSU-Extension Master Gardener and a member of the Washtenaw Master Gardeners Association.



The Green Team has also added flowers and is helping to maintain area C2.



**At first,
the plot
was full
of weeds...**

**Soaking hoses
were in place but
not activated.**

April, 2021



Chad Monfreda, Bridget O'Brien, Bonnie Pearce and Michael D'Archangelo after 5 hours of weeding and covering the site with a tarp.

Preparing the Site



Rita Mitchell learned that the city had wood chips set aside from the removal of trees on city-owned properties. She contacted Maura Thomsen, DDA Interim Director, who identified the drop-off site. **Tiffany Giacobazzi, the City Forester, then arranged to have wood chips delivered to Commons.**

Early May, 2021



Wood chips were dropped in the parking lot and shoveled into a wheel barrow that was used to distribute the wood chips around the raised garden plot.



Bonnie Pearce, Michael D'Archangelo, Odile Hugonot Haber, Jeff Crockett and Chad Monfreda, celebrating the completion of spreading wood chips **after three hours in a very hot sun.**

Mid May, 2021



The weeding was **time-consuming and challenging** due to the depth of some of the root systems.

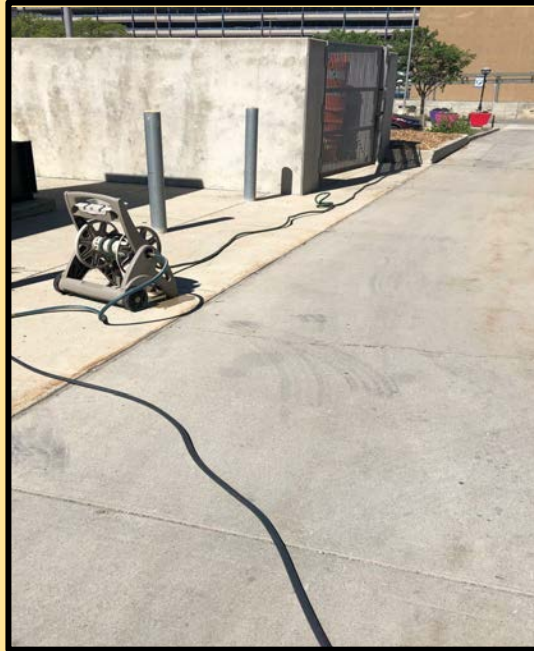
Late May, 2021 The Planting Begins



The planting begins. To the left, Alan Haber and Odile Hugonot Haber clear a path for the wildflowers. To the right, the result of the first round of planting. All flowers in these pictures were donated by Bonnie and Odile.

Irrigation

Prior to the activation of the irrigation system by **Edward Wheeler of Republic Parking** and **facilitated by DDA's Maura Thomsen**, it was necessary to water plants three times a week using a hose attached to a spigot in the rear of Jerusalem Garden (JG) and a hose reel cart provided by Jeff Crockett.



Thanks to Ali Ramlawi (pictured to the left of Alan and Odile) for access to JG's water. Pictured watering to the left is Michael D'Archangelo. The hoses are expected to be used as needed during hot weather.

All the Plants Were Donated

The garden crew poses for photographer Linda Wan prior to planting more flowers donated by Odile and Bonnie.



Bonnie, a resident of Northville, has led the Garden Committee Zoom meetings and provided the vision for the garden design. Rand, a friend of Michael and a resident of Florida, volunteered to help during a trip to Michigan.

L to R: Rand Carter, Michael D'Archangelo, Odile Hugonot Haber and Bonnie Pearce

Let The Weeding Begin



Odile Hugonot Haber and Alan Haber at the end of several hours of weeding and planting flowers donated by Kathy Griswold. They were joined in this work by Jeff Crockett and U of M grad student Clare Lanaghan.

The Green Team



To the left, Odile Hugonot Haber and Alan Haber briefed volunteers (L to R) Shari Thompson, Rita Mitchell, Sue Perry, Jeff & Chris Crockett, and Chad Monfreda who will be maintaining the garden over the summer. Two other volunteers, Team 1, Ilene Tyler and Anne Bannister are shown to the right jumpstarting the summer weeding project.

The C2 Flower Bed



Rita Mitchell and Shari Thompson seen here to the left attending to the **C2 flower bed**. They have donated perennials and have spent hours removing weeds. Jeff Crockett installed **ID stakes** next to the smaller plants in N3 to ensure that they wouldn't be accidentally removed during weeding.

April, 2021



July 8, 2021



Margaret Mead famously said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” We are not out to change the world. We do believe, however, that a group of dedicated volunteers can create a beautiful and vibrant Commons for all Ann Arbor residents and visitors to enjoy.

July, 2021



To the left, Marsha Benz, new member of the Green Team, with her scuffle hoe, which quickly and efficiently removes weeds. In the center, Marsha and Christine removing the invasive creeping yellowcress.

Above, the thriving garden after just eight weeks of growth. Some of the sunflowers are eight feet tall. Buds are beginning to appear. The garden is looking GOOD.

August, 2021



Above, a bumblebee gathers pollen on a Zinnia.



Several of the sunflowers are now 12 feet tall.



Please do stop by and see the Community garden up close. We would love to hear what you think.

September, 2021



Zinnias



Pumpkin



Corn



Coreopsis



Cosmos



Feverfew



Shastas Daisies



Marigolds

Touring the Community Garden I



1st Ward CM Disch kindly pitching in.



Adam Zemke stopped by on his way home from Ann Arbor Scooter, Co.



1st Ward CM Hayner with Arrowwood Hills resident James Daniels enjoying the sunflowers.

Touring the Community Garden II



5th Ward CM Erica Briggs and Council of the Commons member helped prune the vegetable garden during her tour.



Dr. Missy Stultz, Sustainability and Innovations Manager for the City of Ann Arbor, has agreed to work with us to incorporate features in our gardens that support sustainability.

For a tour, contact Jeff Crockett at jeffcrockett8@gmail.com. We believe tours are a great way to tell our story and engage the Ann Arbor community.

List of Plants in Area N3



Perennials

Bee Balm, Shasta Daisy, Purple Coneflower, Red Yarrow, Coreopsis, Blanket Flower, Gayfeather, Feverfew, Lupine, Delphinium, Wildflower mix, and Salvia

Annuals

Sunflower (Russian Grey Stripe), Zinnias, Marigold, Cleome, Tomatoes, Corn and Basil

List of Plants in Area C2



Perennials

**Catnip, Echinacea, Milkweed,
Prairie Dock, Wild Senna,
Rudbeckia, Rattlesnake Master,
Butterfly Milkweed**

Annuals

**Sunflowers (Tall Border mix,
Citrus, ZinniaFun & Sun Blend, &
Autumn Beauty)**

Yikes, We've Got Rabbits!

In 2018 the Observer wrote an article about Ann Arbor's native rabbit, the Eastern Cottontail, which has regularly been seen all over town. Recently during weeding, we saw a Cottontail boldly hopping through our garden. It appears to have a taste for our sunflowers, milkweed, and corn. To deter the rabbits, Jan Luft and Odile Hugonot Haber placed garlic stalks next to the sunflowers.



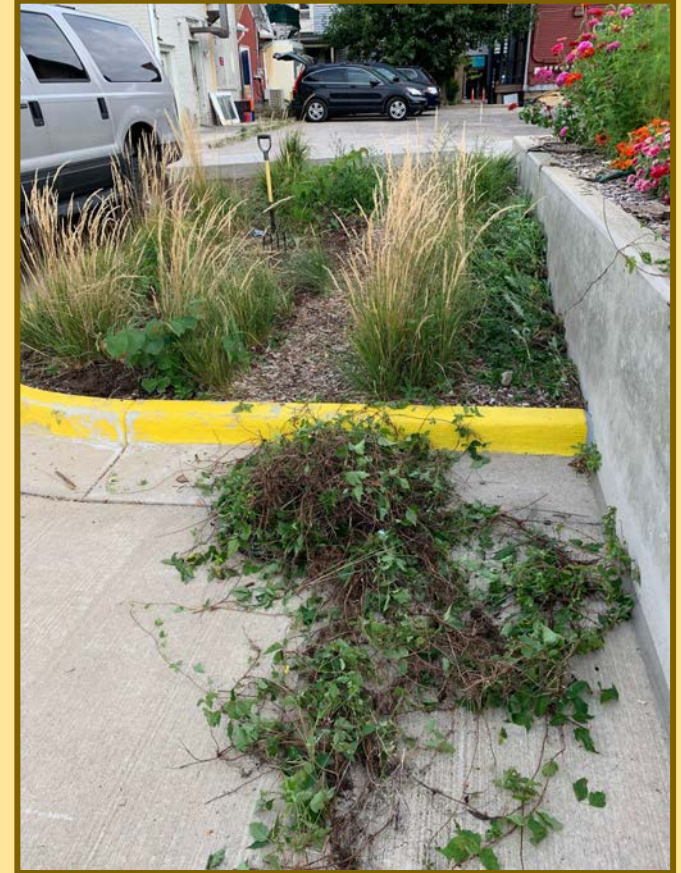
Sunflower Damage



Garlic Stalks

https://annarborobserver.com/articles/eastern_cottontails.html#.YNt4EuhKiUk

And Invasive Species!



When it was learned that the DDA did not have the manpower to remove the poison ivy that had invaded a plot close to our garden, Joet Reoma volunteered 3 ½ hours to remove it for the safety of patrons and especially children. Thank you, Joet!!!!

The Center of the City Green Team

Garden Committee: Bonnie Pearce, Alan Haber, Odile Hugonot Haber, Chad Monfreda, Rita Mitchell, Jeff Crockett, Anne Bannister, Amy June Roe, and Joet Reoma

Volunteers: Michael D'Archangelo, Bridget O'Brien, Joet Reoma, Shari Thompson, Cynthia Price, Rand Carter, Linda Britt, Clare Lanaghan and Jan Luft

Credits: Maura Thomsen (DDA), Ali Ramlawi (Jerusalem Garden), Tiffany Giacobazzi (City Forester), Dr. Ron Suarez and Amy Rose (Web site), Scott Spooner (Parks & Rec), Robert Black (Consultation), Linda Wan (Photography), Grafaktri (Wap John & Julie Ritter), Geoffrey Henny (Zoom Management)

Flower Contributors: Bonnie Pearce, Odile & Alan Haber, Kathy Griswold, Jeff Crockett, Argus Farmstop on Liberty, Margolis Nursery, Rita Mitchell and Shari Thompson

Summer Weeding: Team 1: Ilene Tyler and Anne Bannister; Team 2: Sue Perry and Chad Monfreda; Team 3 Rita Mitchell and Shari Thompson; Team 4: Christine, Jeff Crockett, and Marsha Benz

Key Facts about the Community Garden

- As of September 17, 2021, 26 Ann Arbor residents, a Northville resident, as well as residents from North Carolina, Vermont, and Florida have contributed to the garden project.
- Total documented volunteer hours as of 9/25/21 are 400 +.
- The ages of the contributors range from the low 20s to the mid 80s.
- Four teams of Ann Arbor residents helped with the weeding over the summer.
- Contributors have included private citizens, local businesses and city officials.
- The Green Team is already planning for an even better garden in 2022.

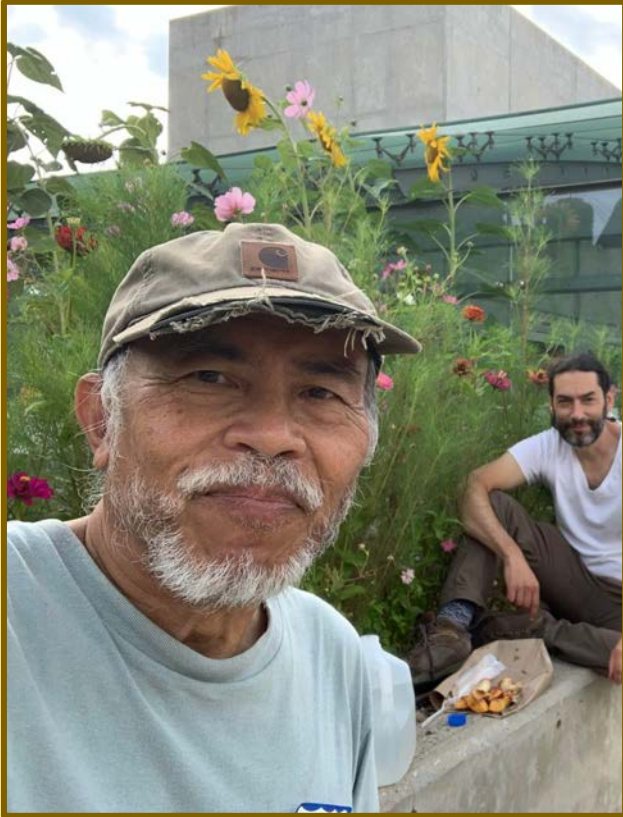
To get involved, register at the Community Commons website at:

<https://annarborcommunitycommons.org/register/>



Wap John and Julie Ritter, owners of Grafaktri, provider of visual services located on 1200 N. Main Street, donated this beautiful sign.

Community Education



Joet Reoma and Chad Monfreda are helping us plan for next year. We are considering dividing the large plot into several smaller plots with a sun powered fountain in the middle. We are considering expanding into other plots on the Commons site with volunteers consulting with and learning from local Master Gardeners.

We believe that the garden plots on the Commons will offer educational opportunities for local gardeners to include winterization strategies such as:

- 1. Cleaning the garden**
- 2. Enhancing the garden soil with compost & mulch**
- 3. Composting garden waste**
- 4. Using cover crops**
- 5. Preparing the garden for Spring cultivation.**

Finally, with the help of Dr. Missy Stultz, we intend to add features that support sustainability and educate the public.



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
committed citizens can change the world;
indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

(Margaret Mead)



To volunteer, sign up at:

<https://annarborcommunitycommons.org/volunteer-today/>