



Rio Grande Community Farm 2022 Impact Report

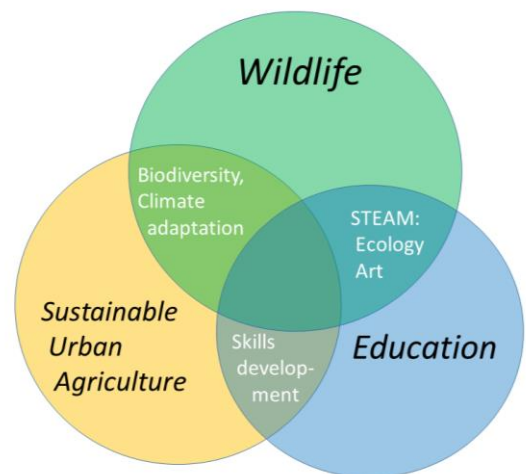
Overview

Rio Grande Community Farm (RGCF) is a non-profit organization operating on 27 acres of the City of Albuquerque, Los Poblanos Fields Open Space in Albuquerque's North Valley and has been part of the community for 25 years. The organization is:

- A land-based platform that provides equitable access to land, water, barn, greenhouse, equipment, expertise, social interaction, and community cooperation.
- A showcase of urban regenerative agriculture, growing food in a multi-generation, culturally diverse community, serving education and training opportunities for life-long learning, enhancing urban wildlife habitat, and hosting events that celebrate land, farming, and community.
- Led by Jamie Welles, Executive Director, and Kelvin Schenk, Farm Coordinator.

Our mission is to connect people, earth, water, and wildlife in an urban setting by farming sustainably, enhancing wildlife habitat, educating our community, and providing fresh, naturally grown food to diverse populations.

Rio Grande Community Farm's three mission elements. Intersections highlight synergistic aspects of the mission that manifest in diverse activities that fulfill our strategic plan.



This report briefly covers our major impacts, reviews highlights of each mission element, followed by descriptions of ongoing partnerships and events.



Our impacts in 2022:

Four events – Spring Festival and Plant Sale, Lavender Festival, Fundraising Dinner, and Maize Maze – serve approximately **11,000** people at a cost below \$10 per person.

97 community gardeners from around Albuquerque and the Village of Los Ranchos, including Albuquerque Master Gardeners Program, and an in-patient rehabilitation program.

30 micro-farmers, including a seed saver, flower grower, a grower of plants to dye natural fabrics, a food justice group, **4** farmers that grow produce for the Downtown Growers Market, **4** veterans and **6** neuro-diverse growers.

3 farm incubator programs – Lutheran Family Services Refugee Agriculture Partnership Program, Mountain Dojo Neuro-diverse Agriculture Program, and Veteran Farm Incubator Program.

366 children ranging from 6 to 17 attended farm camp programs.

4 National Resource Conservation Service (USDA NRCS) training days, including **2** field day demonstrations and **32** participants in **2** Regenerative Farming Workshops

4 UNM Mechanical Engineering solar lab interns.

11 Farmers and gardeners purchased approximately **1200** small bales of hay and alfalfa.

27 Regular volunteers with approximately **10,000** hours of service.



High school students from an NRSC outreach program.

In partnership with RGCF, the Shik Gurdwara and Interfaith Coalition, have planted **152** fruit trees of which **116** have survived.

Through our semi-monthly farm stand we train interested incubators and micro-farmers to sell produce and value-added products at larger farmers' markets.

We are fiscal sponsor for **3** organizations– Better Together CSA, Rio Grande Farmers Coalition, and Friends of the Candelaria Nature Preserve.

Our affordable farm equipment rental program serves **42** farmers on- and off-site in the area.

RGCF supports wildlife by rotating small fields specifically for wildlife habitat and maintaining borders and orchard areas as wild. Some of the wildlife are pheasants, say's phoebes, roadrunners, red winged blackbirds, owls, fly catchers, other songbirds, hawks, sandhill cranes, Canada geese, snakes, and toads.

RGCF uses compost as the main nutritional supplement. The types of composting processes we do are hot pile, windrow, and Johnson Su bioreactors (**2**). We innovated a spray system for tractor and BCS field application of the Johnson Su compost tea. RGCF is purchasing a manure spreader in 2023.



Mission Elements

SUSTAINABLE URBAN AGRICULTURE

COMMUNITY GARDEN

This year we had a waiting list for community garden rows. RGCF provides garden tools, water cans, wheelbarrows, educational information, compost, and workshops for the gardeners. We provide and maintain water troughs for the gardeners' in-between irrigation sessions.



Garden Row holders, Nicole Riner and Maria De Blassie working on compost with Kelvin Schenk the RGCF Farm Coordinator

MICRO-FARMERS

RGCF has increased its micro-farmer program from **8** farmers in 2020 to **30** farmers in 2022. The micro farmers have access drip irrigation using water piped from the well at Field 4. This helps support their water needs between irrigation sessions.

We continue to work with our micro-farmers to better serve their needs. In 2023 we will have equipment training classes, an online equipment scheduling portal, and will meet regularly to ensure we serve the micro farmer needs. **9** participants from the farm incubator programs, including **4** neuro-diverse farmers have started to farm at RGCF.



Ashokra Farms, a micro-farmer, harvesting squash.

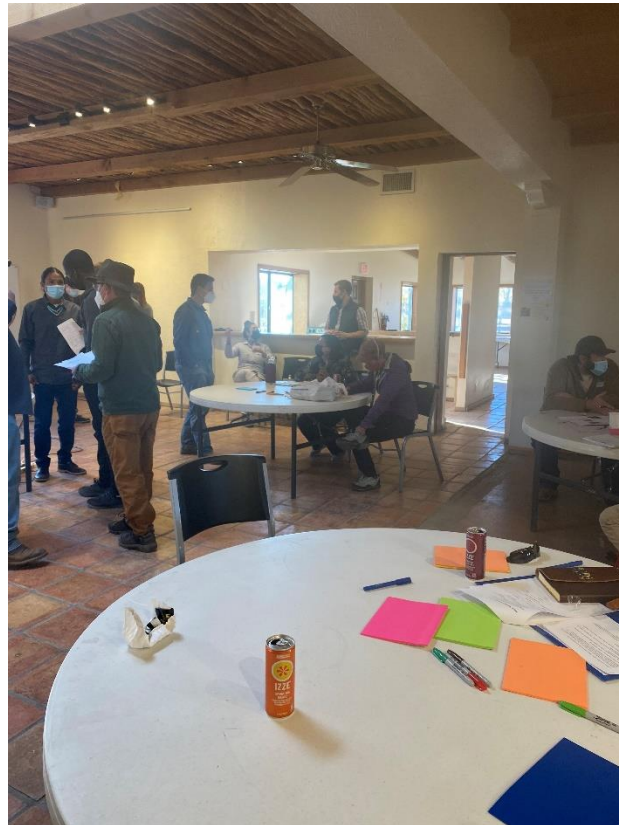


EDUCATION

PROGRAMS AND WORKSHOPS

RGCF supports farm camps in partnership with City of Albuquerque Open Space Division, Explora, Agri-Nature Center, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and schools in the area. RGCF conducts garden workshops for the community garden row holders and in partnership with the City of Albuquerque Open Space Division.

On November 13th 2021, and February 26th 2022, with a grant from the NRCS, RGCF held two free day-long farm incubator program workshops for anyone interested in learning about farming as a career. The workshops were held at The Village of Los Ranchos Agri-Nature Center building. The November workshop focused on the holistic picture of being a farmer and was designed for curious, beginning farmers. The workshop introduced agriculture in the Middle Rio Grande Valley, including environment, community, markets, and farmer goals. Activities included RGCF tour, expert presentations, and panel discussions to examine farming options in the Middle Rio Grande Valley, climate trends, principles of regenerative agriculture, and crop choices matched to consumer demand in local markets, ranging from CSAs to commercial and municipal entities. Through a guided self-assessment, participants examined their attitudes about farming as individuals and as members of family and community, thereby identifying gaps and goals for improvement.



Regenerative Farming Workshop participants interacting

The February workshop focused on looking at the benefits, profitability, and strategies of regenerative agriculture that create sustainable urban farms now and for future generations. The workshop launched participants into practical aspects of becoming a farmer such as getting set up to obtain funding, assessing soil health for economic success, and using equipment for small farms up to five acres. The participants met experts from several local, state, and federal agricultural organizations who share the mission of building regenerative agriculture in communities of the Middle Rio Grande Valley and beyond. The workshop served beginning and intermediate farmers. The participants were introduced to



RGCF as a platform that provides access to land, irrigation, equipment, greenhouse, barn, washing station, expertise, and financial management support.

UNM MECHANICAL ENGINEERING SOLAR LAB INTERNS

In 2022 UNM mechanical engineering worked on a mobile solar trailer at RGCF. The students took our defunct manure spreader and converted it to a solar trailer. The mobile solar energy generating trailer will be functional in 2023.

This year's project is taking a BCS walk-behind tractor, with a blown engine, and converting it to an electric motor. It will be powered by donated solar panels.

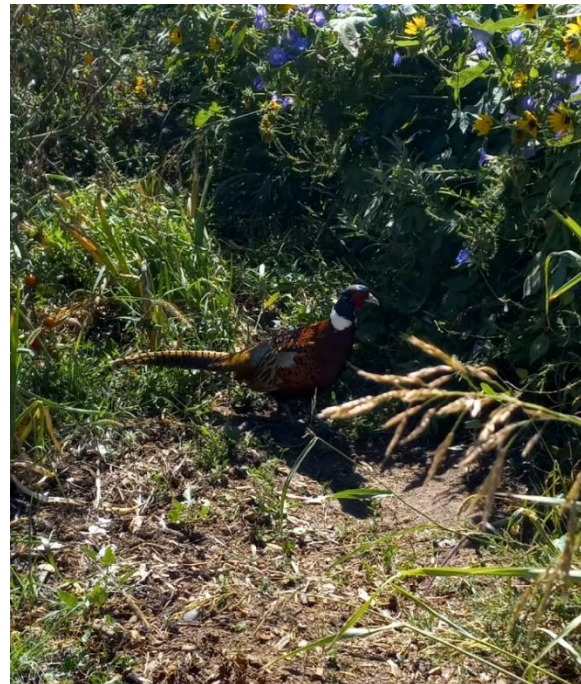
RGCF has solar panels on the wellhouse to power the pumps to maintain the appropriate soil moisture content in the Johnson Su bioreactors.

WILDLIFE

In 2022 RGCF started a permanent wildlife cropping practice in Field 6B, adjacent to the Tierra Viva neighborhood. The Tierra Viva Neighborhood Association donated money for blue corn seed and a skid steer brush mower.



Roadrunner enjoying the community garden.



Pheasant at wild border area.

Pheasants have started cropping up around the wildlife areas created by RGCF. The photo of the pheasant was taken in the wildlife border at the community garden.



Partnerships and Events

PARTNERSHIPS

- City of Albuquerque, Parks & Recreation, Open Space Division
- Tres Hermanas Farm, Refugee Agriculture Partnership Program
- Mountain Dojo
- Veterans Incubator Program
- Mandy's Farm AgrAbility Program
- New Mexico Agrabilities
- Explora
- Master Gardeners Program
- Alvarado Elementary School
 - 22-year-old pollinator garden at RGCF
- UNM Mechanical Engineering & Sustainable Studies Programs
- New Mexico State Department of Agriculture
- New Mexico Highlands University
 - Facundo Valdez School of Social Work
- University of Arizona Blue Chip Leadership Program
- New Mexico Tech Hydrology
- Bernalillo County Cooperative Extension Service
- NM Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Ciudad Soil & Water Conservation District
- USDA
- Cloud Dancers Therapeutic Riding Program
- Lavender in the Village
- Village of Los Ranchos
 - Larry P Abraham Agri-Nature Center
 - Agri Futures
- Food Justice
- Turning Point Recovery Program
- Black Health New Mexico
- The New Mexico Birth Equality Collaborative
- Rio Grande Farmers Coalition
- Better Together CSA
- Friends of the Candelaria Nature Preserve
- Sikh Gurdwara & NM Interfaith Coalition
- New Mexico Healthy Soils Working Group (&) Compost Coalition
- Agranat Center
- ABQ Backyard Refuge Program
- Albuquerque Community Foundation
- Central NM Audubon Society
- Nusenda Credit Union
- Sprouts Farmers Market
- Positive ENergy



AGRI-FUTURES PROGRAM

In Partnership with the Agri-Nature Center Agri-Futures Program, RGCF has been involved with the Village of Los Ranchos Agri-Futures program since 2019. In 2020 -2021 RGCF led the team to research equipment loan pools, which RGCF has taken the ideas and are implementing. In 2020 -2021 RGCF was on the Soil Health Laboratory team in conjunction with the Mid Rio Grande Conservation District (MRGCD). It was determined the soil health laboratory is a larger effort and will be led by the MRGCD. For 2021-2022, RGCF is on the Economic Development and Agri-Tourism, the Education, and Research Teams.

LOS RANCHOS AGRI-NATURE CENTER

This strategic partnership links RGCF with the Village of Los Ranchos municipality around our Maize Maze event, equipment sharing, meeting space, and publicity.

LAVENDER IN THE VILLAGE NON-PROFIT

In 2022, RGCF was recruited by Lavender in the Village non-profit to shadow its organizational process for the annual Lavender Festival in anticipation of signing a license to conduct the event in 2023.

EVENTS

RGCF holds **4** fundraising events a year. The fundraising events generate approximately 1/3 the annual budget funds to keep RGCF nonprofit fiscally sound and able to serve our community by developing our programs. The following are the fundraisers:

- Spring Festival and Plant Sale
- Lavender Festival
- Fall Fundraising Dinner
- Maize Maze



Drone photo of Mazie Maze