



2009-2018

*Impact* **REPORT**

*edible flint* supports Flint residents in growing and accessing healthy food in order to reconnect with the land and each other

# MISSION STATEMENT *and* WHERE WE WORK

The City of Flint and Genesee County are communities in significant need of activity that can support economic opportunities for low-income individuals, access to healthy foods and innovative models and ideas around land use and community vitality. With high levels of obesity, limited access to healthy food and abundant available vacant land in Flint, the launching point for all local food efforts is improving access to healthy food, land, knowledge, and resources. The City of Flint is considered underserved by the conventional food system as defined by Sadler et al (2013). The lack of chain grocery stores in the city

combined with many corner and convenience stores with unhealthy food options has further reduced food access for those most vulnerable to lead exposure and diet-related diseases. Some of the community's solutions include urban agriculture, community gardening and nutrition education as a comprehensive approach to building community, improving public health and maintaining vacant and abandoned land. They also are working with disenfranchised youth and empowering residents to make a difference in their neighborhoods.

## GENESSEE COUNTY STATS

### Poverty Rate

Is the highest in the Country at

# 45%

# 100%

of children receive free lunch through the

### National School Lunch Program

Genesee Co ranks **81st out of 82 MI counties** in Health Outcomes

There are **more than 12,000** vacant lots in the City of Flint.



*Flint, Michigan* **HAS A RICH HISTORY** of urban food gardening that goes back many generations. Since 1997, numerous efforts have been underway in Flint to establish and strengthen the local food system. In July 2009, local agencies (Genesee County Land Bank, Ruth Mott Foundation, Flint Farmers' Market, Michigan State University Extension staff and volunteers, Salem Housing Development Corporation) proposed an organization named *edible flint*, with a mission to support Flint residents in growing and accessing healthy food in order to reconnect with the land and each other, be created. The collaboration has grown into a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization by March 4, 2014 that works on supporting Flint residents' ability to connect, grow, and access healthy food.

*"edible flint has strengthened my belief that we are all in this together-together we rise or fall. We are our brother's keeper."* **edible flint FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT**

With this mission in mind, *edible flint* envisions an economically and environmentally sustainable organization cultivating the model of a community food system in the Flint region through advocacy, expertise and partnerships.



“ It has been said that two problems in shrinking cities-finding better food supplies for underprivileged people & finding new uses for abandoned land-have one solution in urban agriculture in the form of home and community gardens and small commercial farms. **ANONYMOUS** ”



# GARDEN STARTERS KITS *and* SERVICES

“ I never thought of myself as a gardener. If not for the **edible flint** Veggie Kit and services I would have never felt confident enough to grow food for my family. Thanks to that support and assistance I have become a confident gardener. ”

**HEIDI PHANEUF, LOCAL GARDENER AND TOUR GARDEN SITE**

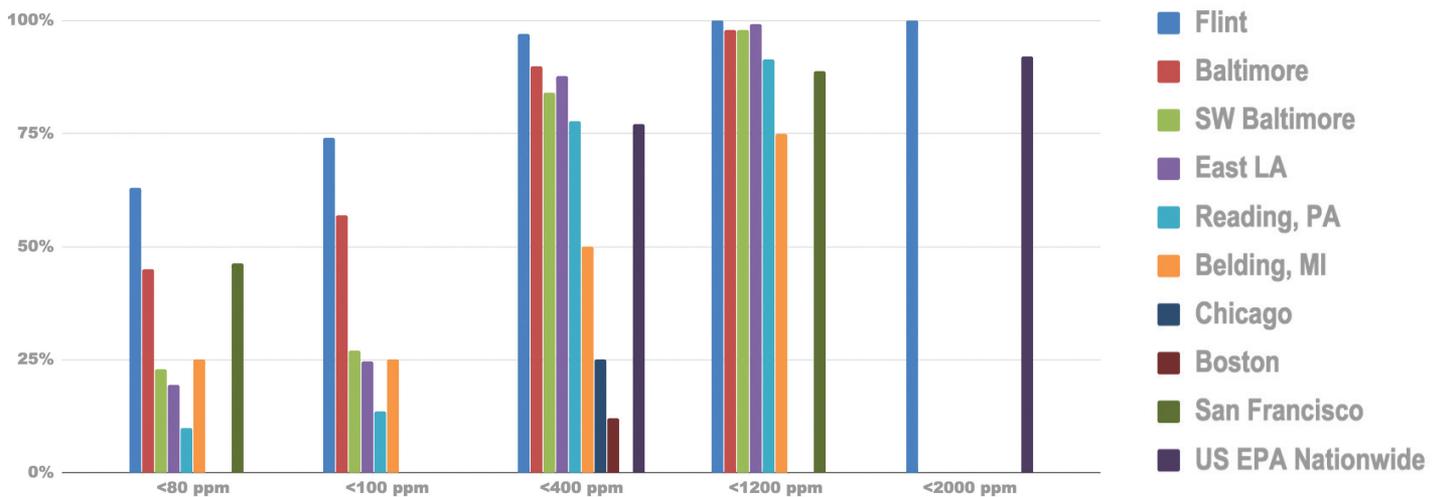
Since 2011 **edible flint** has supported gardeners and small farmers in Flint and Genesee County by offering veggie kits and gardening services to residents. Through offering low-cost veggie kits, soil testing, garden tilling, compost, rain barrels and water hose filters, **edible flint** helps to make growing healthy food more accessible to Flint area gardeners and growers.

What's in a veggie starter kit? It is designed to plant a 1500 sq. foot garden and provide most of the vegetables for a family of 4 through the gardening season. The **edible flint** Veggie Kit consists of 15 varieties of organic seeds and 9 transplant varieties.



## PERCENTAGE OF GARDENS THAT ARE SAFE FOR FOOD PRODUCTION IN CITIES

Within the City of Flint 8 years of data: **500 gardens from 2011-2018**  
 Most of the lead levels are well **below 300 ppm, <10% elevated**



Graph courtesy of Richard Sadler, PHD, Assistant Professor, Department of Family Medicine/Division of Public Health, College of Human Medicine, Michigan State University

# The *edible flint* DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

In 2014 *edible flint* transitioned the former Hurley Community Garden into the *edible flint* Demonstration Garden. The garden, designed to be a learning and growing space, highlights different growing techniques including raised and accessible garden beds, square foot gardening, companion planting, gardening with high soil lead levels and composting.

The Demonstration Garden has become a reliable source of fresh produce for the Neighborhood

residents. One grandmother shared how grateful she was for the fresh produce her family had regularly received, saying that they had a much healthier diet that summer because of it. The garden serves as a hands-on classroom for *edible flint*. Each year workshops are held in the garden throughout the gardening season. The garden welcomes hundreds of visitors and volunteers each year by serving as a stop on the annual *edible flint* Food Garden Tour and local community events.

SINCE 2015

**7,069 lbs.** of fresh produce has been grown in the *edible flint* Demonstration Garden and donated to the community and Hurley Hospital's Food Pharmacy.



## *A note from* OUR GARDEN MANAGER

"I became engaged through my daughter, Samantha who had an internship with *edible flint*. I had no idea how many people were interested in community gardens and growing vegetables. We have always had a garden and it was a cool thing to discover. I started volunteering with the Demo Garden in 2013. What I've learned being a part of this family is connecting with people that I probably would never have an opportunity to meet. There are so many people in the Hurley neighborhood that I would never meet in my own neighborhood and it's people from different walks of life in the garden. It's a learning experience for us and the people who come into the garden to try foods from different cultures. I started trying new foods I never would have tried before because of the demand from the neighborhood. We interact with the community, we have impacted the community so much through giving out the vegetables. There's a woman named Francis and she and I have made a special connection. She's had a completely different life experience than I have but we have discovered having so much in common. That is really special to me. Also, the people who work at *edible flint*, Scott and I are really great friends. We have made so many special connections through gardening."

# LEARNING *and* MENTORING

In April of 2017 *edible flint* launched the **Neighborhood Ambassadors program** to further support Flint residents during the growing season. Through this program 8 senior citizen households were able to continue their backyard gardens even with increased mobility problems and 36 early child care families had the opportunity to learn how to garden and have access to weekly produce grown by their school community members. In 2018, the Neighborhood Ambassadors continued their work with school-aged families in the City of Flint by partnering with community partners at the Sylvester Broome Empowerment Village to conduct a 6-week program in the Carolyn Meekins garden with youth involved in their summer program. Each week, children were bussed from the center to the garden to learn the basics of gardening, insect identification, edible plants and have fun with most participants eager to return the following season.

196

Training Class Participants

10

Demo Garden Workshops

13

Producers' Network Classes

85

Neighborhood Ambassadors & Garden Mentors trained

106

Community Presentations

200

Container Gardening Class Participants

## The *edible flint* Garden Starters Training

**Class** is designed to teach Genesee County residents how to start and grow a sustainable food garden. Each year, 30 Genesee County residents enroll and participate in 11-weeks of in-person classes on gardening topics instructed by a leader in that subject. These classes, which include topics such as pest management, seed starting, food preservation, soil health and local food systems focus on empowering interested individuals and assist them in becoming confident urban gardeners.

## Gardening **ON THE GO**

In addition to traditional learning, *edible flint* has started to mobilize. Through short container gardening classes given to Flint residents around the City, *edible flint* hopes to make gardening accessible to all by encouraging gardeners to start small, plant where they can and enjoy fresh healthy produce grown above ground!



**March 1st serves as the kick-off for *edible flint* veggie kits and services sales.** As a way to address area gardeners' concerns about lead in the drinking water in 2016, *edible flint* hosted the first Garden Talk event to educate and inform local gardeners. Each year since, this now annual event encourages local gardeners to come to the workshops, interact with community partners, listen to gardening specific presentations and ask questions of local experts and other experienced gardeners. This workshop has grown each year and has become a fun and informational way to kick-off the coming garden season.



“ Honestly, when I planted those first seeds this March, I didn't think anything was going to happen. I was just kind of waiting to see them not grow. When I saw the first leaves, I remembered what she told us in class about watering and next steps. I was still just shocked that something had happened from sunlight, soil, water and some seeds. I go outside and still feel that way, my garden is huge, and I actually did all of it. I am so proud of what I was able to do I show everyone pictures. I can't tell you how this has changed me and my son's life.

**PARTICIPANT IN MOTT GROWS! CONTAINER GARDENING CLASS**

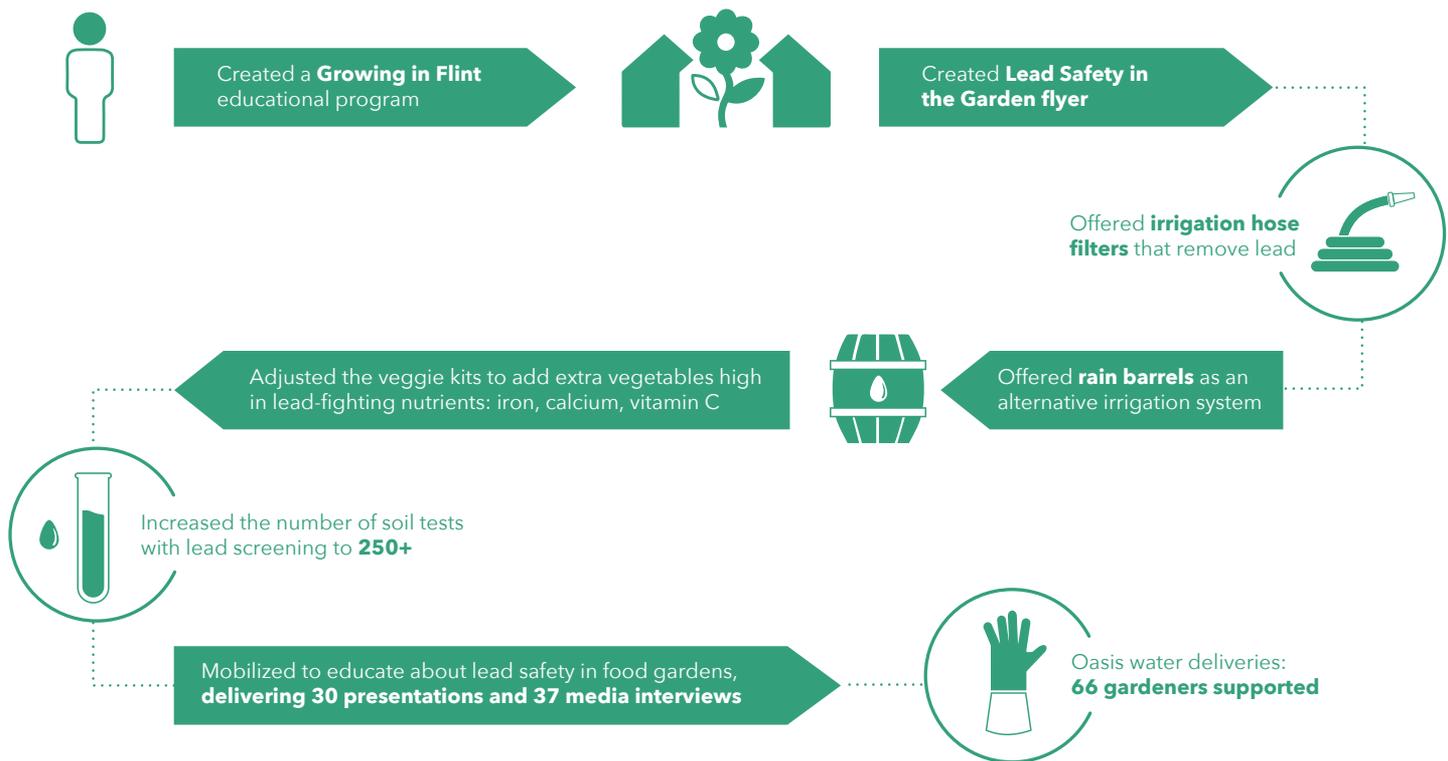
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# *edible flint* and THE FLINT WATER CRISIS

In January 2016, after the state of emergency was declared in the City of Flint, it was confirmed that Flint’s drinking water was contaminated with lead. *edible flint*, a trusted community resource, adjusted the Garden Starters Veggie Kits to add extra vegetables high in the lead-fighting nutrients iron, calcium and Vitamin C.

In addition to the kit, the Garden Starters Workgroup sprang into action to offer local gardeners garden hose filters and ramped up their soil testing efforts. The Flint Water Crisis led to a new partnership to offer gardeners in Flint an alternative for watering their gardens. A new collaboration, Oasis, was created and delivered water from the Flint River to 66 local Flint gardeners without water access.



“ I can’t say enough about *edible flint*. In the middle of the water crisis they rose to the challenge. **ROY FIELDS, SR.** ”

# PRODUCERS' NETWORK, CO-OP, FLINT FRESH PARTNERSHIP

“ I have never met a more inspiring or dedicated & selfless group of individuals in my life. Here are people who work hard in the trenches day in & day out with little compensation or recognition. This is out of love for their fellow man. I am honored to personally know many of these people. They have completely changed the way I look at urban gardening and small-scale farmers. ”

**MIKE ROOSE, *edible flint* VOLUNTEER, PRODUCERS' NETWORK PARTICIPANT**

**Given the income and health realities already present in Flint and Genesee County**, local organizations have collaborated to give Flint residents better access to healthy, fresh food. Through *edible flint*, local partners and growers, access to healthy food has been increased. Recently, the Flint Fresh programs have come online to increase Flint residents' access to healthy food in underserved neighborhoods with transportation challenges. Through Flint Fresh Mobile Market and the Flint Fresh Veggie Box program more Flint residents have access to fresh food. Through the Flint Fresh Veggie Box program and Flint Fresh Food Hub local growers have access to a wider market of customers and an additional source of revenue. In April 2017 *edible flint* hired a Producers' Network Coordinator to

support Flint Fresh and small business/entrepreneurial development through the increased demand for local produce.

In the Fall of 2017, with 13 local growers attending the Producers' Network, classes were launched. These classes focused on developing local farmers' personal business plans. Held throughout the fall and winter, these classes educated new farmers on how to launch a successful produce farm and served as a refresher for more established farmers. More than education, these classes gave beginning farmers a place to ask questions to local, regional and statewide experts along with creating a network among each other.

## *The* **edible flint** FOOD CO-OP

Created in 2010 as a way for local growers to sell produce at the Flint Farmers' Market, the *edible flint* Co-op was formed. Around 20 growers participated in the Co-op and maintained a stall at the Flint Farmers' Market. The Co-op served as the launching platform for a few local growers who grew their businesses to expand to their own market stalls at the Flint Farmers' Market.

- **2700 LBS.** of food produced by Co-op growers
- **\$8,879** Co-op sales from 2010-2013



# The **FOOD GARDEN TOUR**

Every year *edible flint* invites **Genesee County residents to participate by bus or bike** in their Annual Food Garden Tour. The Food Garden Tour highlights the way local gardeners are addressing several challenges in our community, showcasing how they are removing blight, increasing food access and improving diets with their gardens.

The Tour serves as a celebration of that year's best gardens and farms. It also gives participants the chance to meet other local gardeners, volunteers, community partners, and is a great excuse to relax and have fun.



## *Food Garden Tour* **BY THE NUMBERS**



**112 GARDENS**  
have been showcased



**1,924 PEOPLE**  
by bus or bike



**95 LOCAL PARTNERS**  
have participated

“ ...Just the other day I found a tour plaque dating back to 2011, I have 5 or 6 of them. The plaques help me reflect on how important it is to do what we are doing. We held a very special reading on the tour this year. I was very proud of all the kids involved, even teenagers involved in the garden and they are excited to come back every year. **ROY FIELDS, SR.** ”



# VOLUNTEERS *and* COMMUNITY PARTNERS

None of the work *edible flint* does would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers

2436

Volunteers 2009-2018

8549

Hours donated 2009-2018

## *edible flint* WOULD LIKE TO THANK ITS COMMUNITY PARTNERS

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension



Carriage Town Ministries  
 CPSA Courier  
 Crim Fitness Foundation  
 Dort Federal Credit Union  
 El-Shaddi Ministries  
 Faith United Methodist  
 Family Worship Center  
 Flint Area Reinvestment Office  
 Flint Children's Museum  
 Flint Ingredient Company  
 Flint Our Community Our Voice  
 Flint River Educational Farm  
 Food Bank of Eastern MI  
 ForMar Nature Preserve  
 Garden View Apartment  
 Genesee Conservation District  
 Genesee County COGIC Alliance of Churches  
 Genesee County Farm Bureau  
 Genesee County Health Department  
 Genesee County Master Gardener Volunteer Program  
 Genesee County Parks  
 Genesee Intermediate School District  
 Genesys Regional Medical Center  
 Greater Flint Health Coalition  
 Greater Holy Temple  
 Hamilton Community Health Network  
 Harvesting Earth Educational Farm  
 Health Alliance Plan  
 Hoffman's Deco Deli

Howard Estates  
 Hurley Medical Center  
 Indian Trails, Inc.  
 Keep Genesee County Beautiful  
 Kettering University  
 Living Word Ministries  
 Local Grocer  
 Lunch Studio  
 Mass Transportation Authority  
 Metropolitan Baptist Tabernacle  
 Meyer Family Foundation  
 Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development  
 Michigan Farmers' Market Association  
 Michigan Food and Farming Systems  
 Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems  
 Michigan State University College of Human Medicine,  
 Mott Community College  
 Mr. Rogers Say No/ Mr. Gaines Gardening Program  
 My Brother's Keeper  
 National Kidney Foundation  
 New Beginnings Ministries  
 Refuge Temple  
 Resource Genesee  
 Salem Housing and Development Corporation  
 Shelter of Flint  
 University Michigan-Flint  
 Urban Youth Community Outreach  
 Whole Cities Foundation  
 YMCA - Flint



The amount of grant dollars brought in from the period of 2009-2018 for *edible flint* equals **\$1,179,854!**



*edible flint* programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status or family status

[www.edibleflint.org](http://www.edibleflint.org)