



LEAF 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



FREMONTLEAF.ORG



LEAF's small group of thoughtful, committed, volunteers that have changed our corner of the world.

**“NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL,
COMMITTED, CITIZENS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.
INDEED, IT IS THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS.”**

- MARGARET MEAD, CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGIST

OUR GOALS ARE TO

INSPIRE

We, at **LEAF**, love to learn, to give, and to inspire each other with a sense of shared purpose and being part of a community.

INNOVATE

We believe that innovation is the key to LEAF's success. Whenever there is a new challenge, we search for creative solutions to meet these challenges. We encourage experimentation be it trying a new variety of plants, implementing new garden practices or processes.

INVOLVE

We believe that everyone has the power to shape and determine strategies for their communal food systems. Join us on our journey to provide healthy food for our community and to educate one another on growing healthy food.

LEAF is your community powered purpose driven nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to regenerating the land using innovative sustainable practices and inspiring our community to nurture the earth.

Our food gardens cultivate nutritious produce for underserved communities and serve as living classrooms for educational programs that empower local residents to garden sustainably. Our community garden has planters for rent to the public.



Garden Volunteers harvesting yummy beets between the sunflowers



Taking a photo shoot break during a LEAF Center Volunteer Day

LETTER FROM THE PREZ

Dear **LEAF Friends**,

Reflecting on 2023, two words come to mind: resilience and perseverance. Last April, we were informed that the LEAF Stone Garden property was sold and needed to be vacated after 10 years cultivating the land. This necessity to relocate the garden seemed like a daunting task as we had transformed Stone Garden from a weedy field into a productive food and educational garden by using regenerative practices, installing irrigation and electricity, and building structures such as the greenhouse, lath house, kitchen patio and stage for our classes.

We needed to move the garden by spring, and as a team we faced the task with a positive attitude and determination, the Olympic hurdles race was on.

We took a deep breath and we were off and running. Undeterred, we continued nurturing crops and held our Summer Weekend Classes while implementing an action plan for moving the structures, plants, and supplies from Stone Garden to the Urban Garden.

The first hurdles on the starting stretch were approaching but resilience came to the forefront through a team effort. With the wholehearted support of Alameda County Water District (ACWD) we renewed the contract for the adjacent property, secured additional property for a parking lot, completed the arduous task of organizing and throwing away 10 years of accumulated junk into a 30 cubic yard dumpster, and secured funding for the Urban Garden infrastructure. **We successfully cleared these 4 big hurdles by the end of the year, and we reached our target goal of donating 6500 pounds of produce to the food banks, 800 pounds coming from gleaned fruit. Go Team!**

At this point, we were halfway through the race and we started to feel fatigued. The next hurdle was daunting, we had to move the large structures including a shipping container that weighed over 7000 pounds to the Urban Garden through a very muddy clay obstacle course. We needed more muscle, so we rented an \$800 forklift and with lots of perseverance and sweating, the structures were safely moved on the last day of January. BINGO! Another hurdle completed ahead of schedule.

Now we are on the home stretch, and have the hurdle of building the Urban Garden from the ground up. Deja Vu!



Gardeners having a good laugh planting seedlings and sowing seeds at the LEAF Center

From past experience building the Stone Garden 10 years ago, we are confident we will install the new garden faster and better than before. Seeing the finish line, we are eager to have at least one harvest by the end of this year.

The last two hurdles are our innovative Composting for Community Program using regenerative design. The first project is to build an aerobic thermophilic compost that expedites the compost maturation process with a balanced soil community of organisms. The second is a worm farm that will work in tandem with the food banks. The worm compost will be used to fertilize plants that grow into the produce donated to food banks who in turn will collect excess veggie food waste and give it to us to feed the worm farm.

As we get closer to the finish line of building the Urban Garden, we would enjoy sharing our plans with you including our 2024 classes and events, and our Students for LEAF Summer Program at our biggest outreach event of the year, Earth Day. **Please join us at the City of Fremont Earth Day celebration on Saturday, April 20th at the Fremont Downtown Event Center from 11 to 3.**

Together we can get our hands dirty and convert the LEAF Urban Garden into productive land using regenerative gardening practices while inspiring one another to nurture the earth, the ultimate Olympic gold medal of all.

Happy Spring! - elaine

A photograph of three students in a garden, overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. One student in the foreground is wearing a blue t-shirt with 'OFFICIAL' and 'YACAL-PRINCETON' visible, and is using a pair of scissors to harvest a plant. Another student in the middle is wearing a white shirt and a hat, looking down at a plant. A third student in the background is wearing a white shirt and a hat, also looking down. A black bag with 'YACAL PRINCETON' is visible. The background shows rows of plants in a garden.

2023 STRATEGIC PROGRAMS

Students harvesting herbs and flowers in our gardens.



EVERY DAY IS EARTH DAY

We love Earth Day. Our motto is, **EVERY LEAF Day is Earth Day.**

It's our biggest outreach event every year. **In 2023, we had 19 booths where we passionately spoke non stop for 4 hours to over 1,500 people.** Our booths focus on sustainable living and regenerative gardening, covering topics such as building your own worm composting bin, composting techniques, tree pruning and planting, recycling and reuse, and how to get involved with LEAF. ;)

We bring our observation bee hives where you can look inside a frameful of live buzzing bees and also our worm bins to see red wiggler worms. This year, we are going to have an artist circle where local artists will be working on their art pieces and our botanical illustrator will show you how to draw leaves. Earth Day is a great way to learn about regenerative gardening while outdoors.

Our Earth Day Recycling Event was a huge success. We collected ~550 pounds of goods that were either reused or repurposed, which meant they were being diverted from the landfill. This year we will be collecting bras, crayons and socks.



72 POUNDS OF CRAYONS

NEW ONES WERE GIVEN TO LOCAL SCHOOLS AND THE OTHERS TO THE CRAYON INITIATIVE WHO MELTED, THEN DONATED THEM TO CHILDREN IN HOSPITALS ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY

255 BRAS

WERE GIVEN TO THE BRA RECYCLERS WHO WILL REPURPOSE AND DONATE THEM TO PEOPLE IN NEED.



NEW SOCKS WERE DONATED TO FAMILIES

IN NEED AND THE OTHERS WERE REPURPOSED FOR INSULATION IN VEHICLES

POUNDS OF TEXTILES WERE REPURPOSED TO CREATE NEW PRODUCTS

227 POUNDS

STUDENTS FOR LEAF SUMMER PROGRAM



Students learned about the superpowers and lives of honeybees

Students for LEAF is our summer program for middle and high school students. Students spend their summer in our food gardens with us where they get their hands dirty as they nurture our garden with regenerative gardening practices, harvest produce for local food banks, explore ecology in our pollinator garden, interact with our honeybees, worms and other insects plus learn how to make a healthy meal with our garden produce.



Students for LEAF, nicknamed, the "Leaflets" are ready to go into the hives

Some of the highlights of the program are: beekeeping, Bumble Bee Atlas Community Science Project, composting including worm composting, herbal medicine, harvesting and planting, and maker days with the plants from our garden, propagating plants from seed and cuttings, botanical illustration and most importantly connecting to the land by learning how to regenerate the soil using healthy gardening practices.

The 2024 Students for LEAF Program is now open for registration.

GROWING FOR GOOD: CULTIVATING MINDS AND GROWING HEALTHY FOOD

Due to the pandemic, we put our robust educational program on hold. Last year, we ramped it back up and added some new programs. We had over **2200 people** participate in the following programs:

- **Talkin' Dirt** our online monthly webinar
- **Second Saturday Volunteer Events** at our gardens
- **Earth Day Celebration**, outreach event
- **Field Trips** to our gardens (NEW for 2023)
- **Weekend Fun Classes** in the spring and summer (NEW for 2023)
- **Library Workshops** at Newark Library (NEW for 2023)



Field trip to LEAF by the Bay Area Black Deaf Advocates



BABDA students taking a break after getting their hands dirty

GROWING FOR GOOD CULTIVATING MINDS

We held 15 classes in regenerative gardening ranging from medicinal herbs, pruning fruit trees, winter edibles, propagating from cuttings, botanical illustration, worm composting, beekeeping plus much more. Join us in 2024 for an exciting lineup of workshops! Our schedule will be posted by Earth Day.



Weekend Fun Class on Medicinal Herbs

Students had a total sensory experience by identifying, smelling, touching and tasting herbs at the LEAF Food Gardens while learning the medicinal values of the herbs.



Weekend Fun Class on Pruning your Fruit Trees

After an introduction to pruning tools and pruning techniques, students got hands-on experience on pruning trees in the apricot orchard in the California Nursery Historical Park where the LEAF Center is located.

For info about our classes, volunteer events and our gardens go to [FremontLEAF.org](https://www.fremontleaf.org)

GROWING FOR GOOD: GROWING HEALTHY FOOD

We work year-round to feed our community by planting, nurturing, and harvesting fresh produce in our food gardens that we donate to our local food banks. All the work done in the gardens is by our amazing volunteers.

Student volunteers planting seedlings in a Hugelkultur mound. What are Hugelkultur mounds? They look like a compost mound on the surface but their magic is what is beneath. They are dug as deep as they are above the ground. The hole is filled with large to small tree debris and organic materials i.e. trunks, limbs, branches, organic materials, greens leaves, weeds, plant debris and organic matter and loosely packed.

They are then covered in straw to prevent evaporation. The beauty of this structure is that the materials decompose at different rates thereby releasing nutrients at different times and at different depths. The roots of the plants are nourished as they can go down through the loosely stacked moist tree debris.



Students harvesting zucchini on a hugelkultur mound

GROWING FOR GOOD HARVESTING HEALTHY FOOD



Student Volunteers harvesting beans for donation to the local food banks. Is a bean a fruit or a veggie? Botanically, a bean is a fruit. Beans are the matured ovary of a plant that developed from the flower of a plant. So if an edible plant has a flower, it's botanically a fruit.



GROWING FOR GOOD: DONATING HEALTHY FOOD



We surpassed our goal of 6500 lbs!

2023 Produce Donations: 6565 lbs which included 864 lbs of gleaned fruit from our community.

A crate of freshly picked zucchini, crookneck and yellow scallop squash ready to be delivered to our two local food banks. Fresh produce is delivered to our food banks in less than 2 to 3 hours after harvesting. It's like growing produce from your own backyard.

An aerial photograph of a community garden, overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The garden features numerous raised wooden beds, some of which are covered with glass panels, forming greenhouses. Several people are visible working in the garden. In the background, there are trees, a paved road with utility poles, and a building. The text "OUR NUMBERS" is centered in white, bold, uppercase letters.

OUR NUMBERS

INCOME

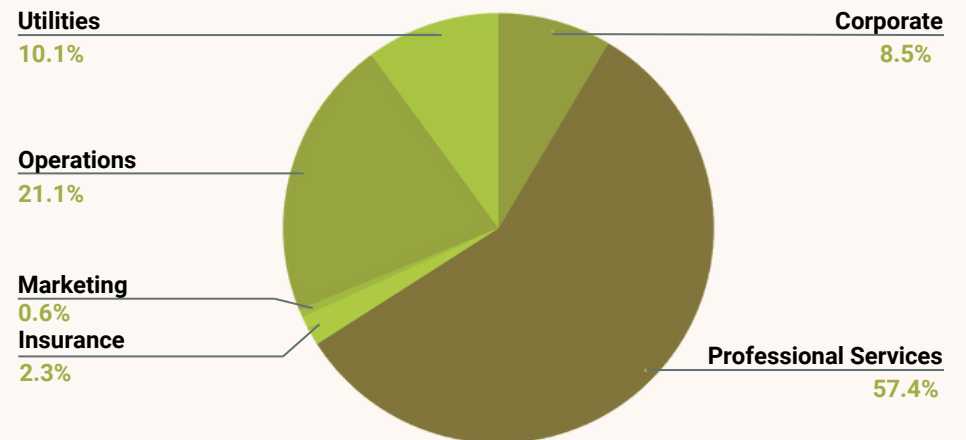
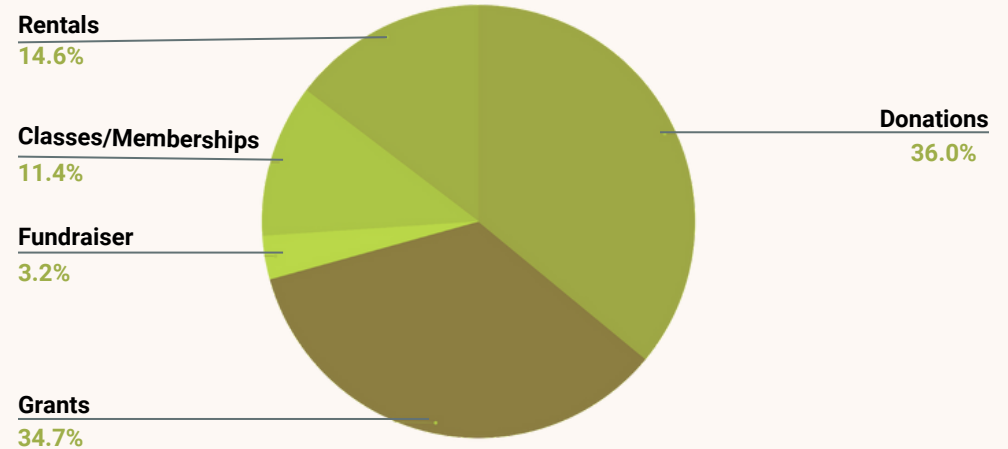
\$54,723

We were able to revitalize our educational programs through the grant funding we received toward the end of 2022, totaling \$35,000. We used those funds in 2023 to hold weekly classes for 6 months in a wide range of subjects from botanical illustration to beekeeping to medicinal herbs. We also redesigned our LEAF website and monthly LEAF newsletter to showcase our gardens and programs and to reach a wider community.

EXPENSES

\$84,887

Our professional services and operational expenses are a direct reflection of our enhanced focus on education and outreach efforts. We reached over 2,200 members of our community, and over 50% of our volunteers were high school students and recent college graduates. Our other expenses were similar to previous years.



OUR COMMUNITY



Girl Scout team in front of LEAF painted mural

THANKS TO OUR 2023 GIVING COMMUNITY

LEAF is a purpose driven volunteer organization. We accomplish what we do through the hard work of our volunteers, the collaboration of our community partners and the generosity of our grantors, foundations and individual contributors. Thank you all for your amazing dedication and ongoing support.



LEAF Board and LEAF Volunteers with Assemblymember Alex Lee at the LEAF Center

Our Board of Directors

Elaine O.
Bruce C.
Richard G.
Lorna J.
Jerry K.

Our Volunteers and Contributors

Eva Z.	Steve E.	Sejal C.
Syndee K.	Lacy K.	Phil S.
Mike S.	Lisha O.	Eric C.
Tom B.	Katherine K.	Mayank M.
Alan B.	Isabel C.	Irshad R.
Michele M.	Monica T.	Anu N.
Carol E.	Nate B.	Mark O.

Our Individual Donors

Bruce C.	Kerry K.
Mei and Allen O.	Lorna J.
Cayce H. for Claudia D.	Carol E.
Dipankar R. for Utsa S.	Rita H.
Saurabh U. for Utsa S.	Tom B.
Dolores T.	John L.
Karen Yvette S.	Joyce R.
Kristine & Jonathan S.	Heidi P.

OUR 2023 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



The City of Fremont (COF) and Alameda County Water District (ACWD) are our two major partners. Our community garden, The LEAF Center is located inside the City of Fremont’s California Nursery Historical Park in downtown Niles. Planters contain customized soil and automatic drip irrigation and are available for rent to our community. Our food garden, the LEAF Urban Garden is located on Mowry near Mission Blvd on ACWD land. Our volunteer gardeners build healthy soil on this land by using regenerative practices to produce food for donation to our local food banks.

Here is a list of our 2023 community partners:





OUR 2023 FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

Dedication ceremony held for Bob Thomas of the Thomas Family Foundation for their generous contribution toward building the infrastructure of the LEAF Urban Garden. Our founder and amazing artist, Bruce Cates, hand carved, then painted the Thomas Family Foundation sign out of redwood.

Here is a list of our 2023 financial partners:



Bob and Bruce

Bob with LEAF Team and Mela, the scaredy-dog.



OUR REGENERATIVE FOOD GARDEN



PO BOX 2816,
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Aerial shot of our LEAF Urban Garden, a beautiful example of a healthy productive ecosystem using regenerative gardening practices.