



# NEW YORK RESTORATION PROJECT

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



## From Our Executive Director

The past two years in our beloved city have felt anything but stable. Life under COVID has been incredibly disruptive for us all, but when I have moments of doubt or despair, I remember what grounds me. I try to focus on what is solid and reliable.

The work we do at New York Restoration Project is one of those things.

Throughout the pandemic, we have welcomed record numbers of people to our 80+ acres of parks and 52 gardens. Some garden group memberships have even grown by almost 150 percent! We've also received a steady stream of applications to our Gardens for the City program, which builds new gardens for partner organizations including schools, NYCHA properties, harm reduction centers, and houses of worship. All told, we built nearly two dozen new green spaces this past year alone.

I have been especially proud to welcome our first staff members uniquely dedicated to supporting urban agriculture citywide. As food production experts, our urban agriculture team has dived headfirst into assisting our 700+ community

gardeners cultivate over 18,000 sq. ft. of raised beds across the city. They have also expanded their reach by advising our current and past Gardens for the City partners.

One of the greatest advancements we made over the past year was returning to safe in-person gatherings. Although we pushed back the start of the season out of an abundance of caution, we still rounded out the year by hosting almost 80 public programs for more than 2,500 community members including food distributions, poetry readings, bookbinding workshops, mural unveilings, and movie nights. In October, we also threw our annual Hulaween gala in-person and fully vaccinated. It was a thrill to see so many of our supporters in one place sporting disco glam for the night's Boogie Frights theme!

While it's impossible to know what the pandemic might present next, at NYRP, there's no question that New Yorkers continue to need our parks, gardens, and services more than ever before. Safe spaces to get outside and breathe fresh air couldn't be more vital than they have been over the past two years and we owe it to our gardeners, staff, volunteers, board, and supporters like you for making this work possible.

Thank you for your dedication to New York Restoration Project, and by extension, our city. I look forward to working with you in 2022.

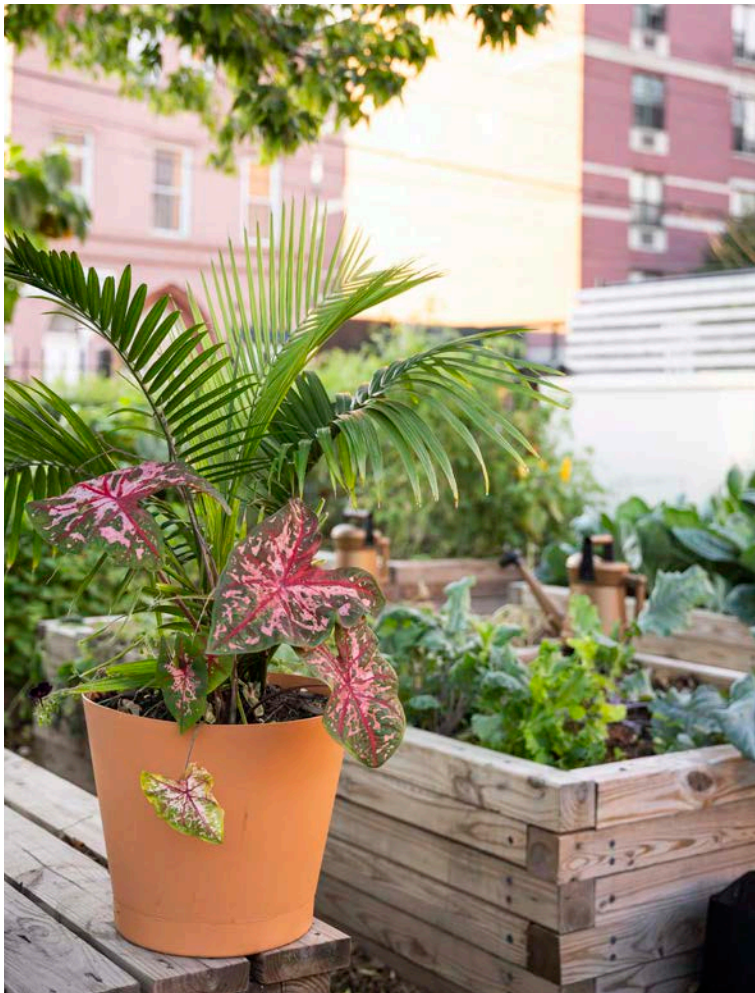
With gratitude,



**Lynn B. Kelly**  
Executive Director



**Bathgate Community  
Garden, Tremont,  
The Bronx**



## From Our Board Co-Chairs

We have seen over the past two years how our resilient city has adapted to its new normal, and at NYRP, we are proud to be part of positive change.

In 2020, we witnessed how food insecurity ravaged our city and how isolation and social distancing negatively affected the mental health of many New Yorkers. Adapting our work to these growing needs, this year we were proud to offer an abundance of fresh fruit and vegetables from our spaces. As ever, we continued to steward accessible green space for New York City residents to safely connect with their community.

As it became safer to gather this past spring, NYRP returned to hosting community workshops and events. And, with COVID-19 safety measures in place, we were even able to host our annual Hulaween gala in-person after moving the event online last year.

In addition to a busy year of in-person programming, we also:

- Removed **105,000 pounds of trash** from parks
- Composted **85,000 pounds of organic materials**
- Planted **4,000 perennials and shrubs**
- Planted **250 trees**
- Worked with over **700 urban gardeners** to cultivate nearly **18,000 square feet of raised beds** full of fresh fruits and vegetables
- Hosted **78 public programs** for over **2,500 community members**
- Built **22 new green spaces** at schools, community organizations, and public housing campuses around the city



The Dorothy Strelsin  
Community Garden, Lower  
East Side, Manhattan



Darcy Stacom



Helena Durst

NYRP has succeeded this year thanks to our strong leadership, passionate staff and volunteers, and dedicated donors. As our city continues to heal and adjust, NYRP is committed to working with our communities to tackle issues of environmental and social injustice and do our part to aid in New York City's recovery.

Thank you for championing our mission to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to clean and enriching green space. Despite the challenges we have faced, your support has continued to make a difference in our communities around this beautiful city.

With gratitude,

Darcy Stacom and Helena Durst  
Co-Chairs, Board of Trustees





# Mission and Values

**New York Restoration Project believes that access to nature is a fundamental human right.**

We work to ensure that all New Yorkers have equitable access to green space. For over 25 years, NYRP has invested in and stewarded parks and gardens throughout the city's five boroughs to strengthen communities, promote food sovereignty, and counter environmental and social injustice.

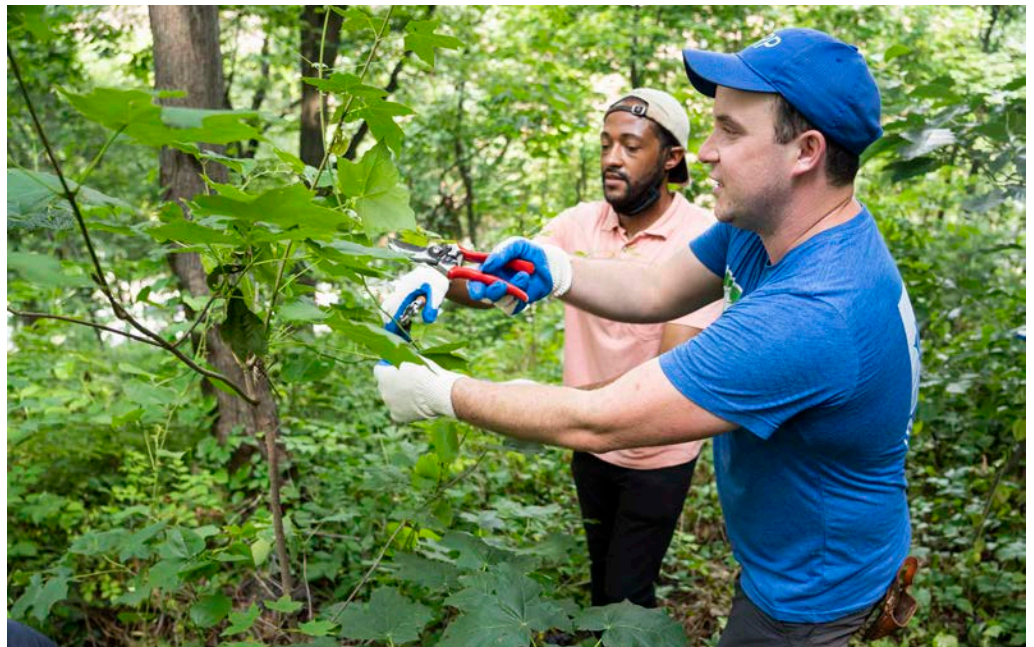
Effectively carrying out our mission requires collaboration, synergy, and understanding of the communities we serve on many different levels. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are embedded into our core identity and we deeply value the unique perspectives, knowledge, and resources that each member of our team and extended community brings to NYRP.



Garden members from Bathgate Community Garden in The Bronx attend a mural unveiling and movie night.



A volunteer assists our Northern Manhattan Parks Landscape Manager, Chris McArdle, in Highbridge Park.



A volunteer helps our Gardens for the City team fill new raised garden beds with fresh soil at the New Roots Community Farm in the South Bronx.





# Revitalizing Open Space

New Yorkers want to be outside. While 2021 brought some reprieve from the pandemic, the demand for places to simply sit in the shade or spread out in the grass has never been greater.

"We've received tons of applications related to heightened concerns around food insecurity. Schools also want to start growing food and implementing outdoor curriculum," explains Jason Sheets, our Director of Garden Horticulture & Citywide Greening Projects. Sheets leads our Gardens for the City (GFTC) program, which builds and rehabs green spaces in low-income neighborhoods. "Our school partners are especially realizing that teaching kids how to grow food is really important in addition to just having a place to be outside," explains Sheets.

GFTC has built roughly 350 green spaces throughout New York since it began almost a decade ago,

including 22 new gardens this year alone. These ranged from transforming city parkland into educational gardens and installing new food-producing plots in a church courtyard, to building a garden from scratch on NYCHA property and reviving an outdoor classroom for students with disabilities that had been closed for over a year.

In October, we completed our biggest green space renovation ever at New Roots Community Farm in the South Bronx. The International Rescue Committee owns the half-acre farm that offers critical services to refugees, asylees, and immigrant communities in addition to nearby residents.

Over three weeks, we engaged over 100 volunteers; built 26 new raised garden beds; installed a 60-foot-by-16-foot-high tunnel; upgraded an existing greenhouse; and planted 131 new perennials, 50 shrubs, and 9 fruit trees. We also installed a new



The half-acre New Roots Community Farm in the South Bronx, our largest Gardens for the City renovation to date.



In May, NYRP turned the Bruckner-Mott Haven Community Garden in the South Bronx into a space for residents to grow fresh, healthy, and culturally relevant produce.

PHOTO: JASON SHEETS



NYRP helped turn an abandoned lot behind the Hunts Point Recreation Center in The Bronx into a new garden for Garden Kitchen Lab, a NYC Parks Department program. Students garden and prepare the food they've grown while learning about healthy eating habits.



shade structure and a 3-bin compost system while adding over 60 cubic yards of fresh soil and wood chips. “We can increase our seed saving project and there are gardeners that want to grow specific, culturally appropriate crops from their homeland,” explains Sheryll Durrant, Food and Agriculture Coordinator at New Roots. “We want to see if they can be grown in this kind of climate.”

At the same time we built these partner gardens, NYRP’s own Bathgate and Aberdeen Community Gardens opened. Following two of our largest, most complex garden renovations to date, we welcomed neighbors back to the spaces for the first time in over two years.

The 10,000 sq. foot Aberdeen location in Bushwick, Brooklyn had been a storage space before renovations, so the neighbors at the first organizing meetings became the group’s de facto founding members.

The 18 local residents hit the ground running by growing food, hosting events, and creating partnerships all in one season. Throughout the summer, the group organized outdoor movie

screenings, open mic nights, and partnered with BK Rot, a bike-powered food waste hauling and composting service, to increase sustainable organic waste disposal in the area by holding weekly compost drop-off days. Their efforts garnered the “Rookie of the Year” acknowledgment at our virtual Gardeners’ Gathering which assembles our 700+ community gardeners every fall.

Bathgate in the Tremont section of The Bronx was our “Community Hub” acknowledgment of the year. The garden group used their newly renovated 15,000 sq. feet of space to increase food production and provide resources for neighbors. Throughout the season, the group grew produce to donate to the La Familia Verde Farmers Market, hosted a large community health fair, and organized an unveiling of the garden’s new mural by local artist, Dister.

As we head into 2022, there’s more interest in our spaces and services than ever. Applications for our GFTC program are at a record level and some garden groups have more than doubled in size. “People have really realized how much more important parks and open spaces are,” says Sheets. 🌱

### THANK YOU

to our 22 Gardens for the City partners who invited us into their spaces to build more than 25,000 sq. feet of raised garden beds in 2021



We returned to P.S. 811X in The Bronx this year, which serves students with disabilities. We renovated their campus garden thanks to funding from the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation.



A birds-eye view of the completed renovations at our Aberdeen Community Garden in Bushwick, Brooklyn. The main features include a gardening area with new raised garden beds, a solar powered shade structure with picnic tables, and three composters.



Bathgate Community Garden's main features include new raised garden beds, a large lawn for holding community gatherings, a stage for events, and a seating area featuring picnic tables and a mural.



# Bathgate Community Garden

Bette Midler founded NYRP in 1995 to restore open spaces in New York City’s highest need communities across all five boroughs. A capstone of this work has been the renovation of Bathgate Community Garden in the Tremont section of The Bronx, the largest property in our trust.

Bette made a personal commitment to renovate the space which, at 16,000 sq. feet, feels more like a park than a garden. During the planning phase in 2018, NYRP hosted meetings with Tremont residents including community-based

organizations and representatives from nearby schools to gather feedback on the garden’s design and build a larger constituency for the space.

The design firm Sawyer|Berson generously donated their services to this project and actively participated in the community meetings. The renovation was finished in early 2021 and the stunning garden now includes 22 raised growing beds, ornamental plantings, mature trees, a lawn area, and a shade structure.

➔ Bathgate before renovation.



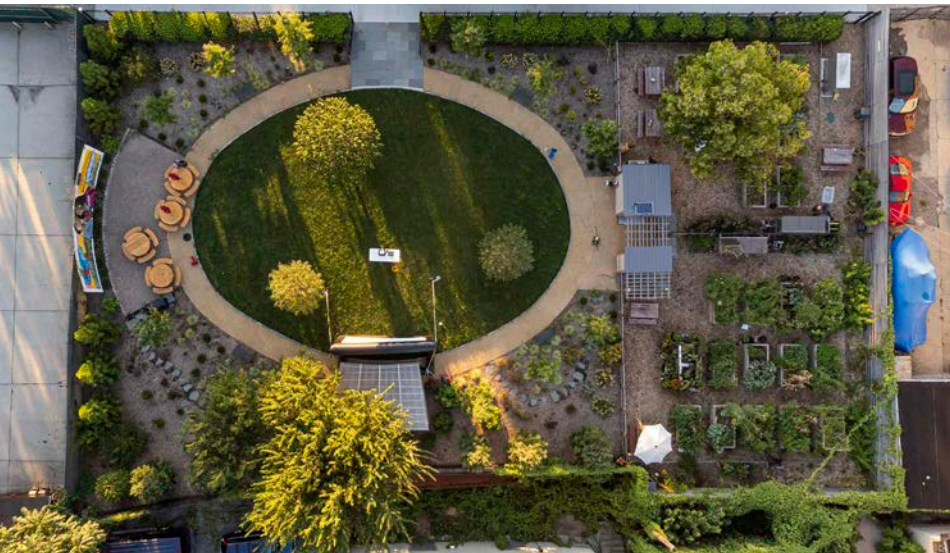
➔➔ The renovation included planting fully grown trees.



➔ Bathgate community gardener Leviticus Edgerton enjoying the newly renovated space.



↓ A birds-eye view of Bathgate in 2021.



↑ Bathgate community gardener Nicole N'diaye tending to raised beds.



# Cultivating Environmental Leaders

We were more than ready to reconvene with community members in our parks and gardens this year after a pause on all in-person programming in 2020.

Throughout that chapter, our spaces functioned as essential hubs for food production and distribution, community resource sharing, and places to get outside. Before COVID hit however, our gardens and parks had also been consistently active with over 130 public events a year including weekly yoga and fitness classes, local music performances, art exhibitions, and volunteer days.

2021 reassuringly felt like those past years. Throughout this season, our 700+ community

gardeners wasted no time organizing almost 80 events to meaningfully reconnect their communities to their spaces. Highlights from this season included jazz concerts, community block clean-ups, outdoor movie screenings, neighborhood plant swaps, and creative movement workshops. "This year our spaces brought people out who were never active in gardens before," reflects NYRP's Engagement Manager Jessica North. "Our gardeners and residents searched for creative ways to gather safely."

The situation was similar in our 80+ acres of Northern Manhattan parkland. While both Highbridge and Sherman Creek have had record levels of use throughout the pandemic, in 2020 we had to put most volunteer events on hold for public safety.



This summer, our partner LEIMAY organized a recipe exchange and bookbinding workshop at our Rodale Pleasant Park Community Garden in East Harlem.

PHOTO: BRANDON PERDOMO



A community member carving pumpkins at our Bathgate Community Garden's annual Fall Festival.

PHOTO: TARA DAS



A City Cleanup Corps (CCC) crew member working with our team to manage invasive species in Highbridge Park. The CCC is a municipal COVID recovery program designed to empower citizens by creating green jobs across the city.



Students from the Washington Heights Expeditionary Learning School learn water sampling techniques at Sherman Creek Park as part of this summer's Environmental Justice and Urban Ecology Summer Research Program.

PHOTO: MICHAEL YERDON



**THANK YOU**  
to our nearly **two dozen** community partners who presented 78 public programs for more than 2,500 community members throughout our spaces this year



**THANK YOU**  
to our **42 corporate**  
and **foundation partners**  
who have supported  
our essential work  
throughout the  
pandemic

Thankfully this year we were able to host weekly volunteer days where community members joined our staff for invasive species removal, tree planting, gardening, litter removal, and wetland stewardship.

With local school groups eager to move away from virtual learning, our parks also provided a safe and inviting classroom alternative. NYRP Director of Northern Manhattan Parks Jason Smith helped facilitate and design the Environmental Justice and Urban Ecology Summer Research Program with students from the nearby Washington Heights Expeditionary Learning School (WHEELS). Through this program, students developed their basic field ecology skills and learned tools to identify and analyze the environmental injustices they encounter in their neighborhood while also reclaiming their right to enjoy the parks. "I didn't even know this park was so big... a huge park right next to my house!" explains Crisbelly Lopez, WHEELS Class of 2024 Youth Leader.

Additionally, NYRP hosted a course from PACE University where students performed a social assessment of public engagement along our

Harlem River waterfront. The assessment found that 68.4% of respondents valued the park most for nature, followed by 42.1% that valued the sense of safety and well-tended landscape created by NYRP's presence.

For the benefit of all our parks and gardens throughout the city, a highlight of the year was restarting our Corporate Partnership Program after a long pause. Through it, 21 corporate supporters provided 1,652 hours of volunteer support and financed projects including beautifying neglected school grounds, rebuilding raised garden beds for community groups, and completely overhauling a half-acre urban farm in the South Bronx that serves local asylees, refugees, and residents.

"It was great to watch this work return. Everybody was satisfied with their goals," reflects Jason Sheets, Director of Garden Horticulture and Citywide Greening Projects. "Just working with volunteers, we completed a huge and very gratifying project. It's just great to see that everybody had a good experience getting back to work." 🌱



Our Adopt-a-Bed partner Papai's Garden hosted a natural dye workshop using marigolds from our Riley Levin Children's Garden.



Kele Nkhereanye, a gardener at our Willis Avenue Community Garden in East New York, teaches community members how to prepare a delicious kale and apple salad using garden ingredients.



In March 2021, NYRP hosted a virtual panel discussion with accomplished leaders in the environmental justice movement about what it takes to use the tools of government to make change. Entitled "Turning Red Tape Green: Making Government Work for Environmental Justice," journalist Bill McKibben (left to right) moderated the conversation with youth climate activist Vic Barrett, Roosevelt Institute Director of Climate Policy Rhiana Gunn-Wright, and Deputy Director of Advocacy and Organizing of Ironbound Community Corporation Maria Lopez-Nuñez.





# Building Urban Resilience

Perhaps no time in recent history has tested the economic, social, and environmental resilience of New York City more than the past two years. COVID combined with record-breaking and violent weather has pushed the city's limits. Pantry lines are longer, summers are hotter, and storms are more severe.

Underserved neighborhoods have borne the heaviest brunt, including many where we work. While solutions to these larger problems exceed the bounds of any one organization, we have seen NYRP's parks and gardens play a critical role in the communities we serve.

In early 2021, we hired our first-ever urban agriculture specialists to help meet our gardeners' increasing demand for food production. Urban

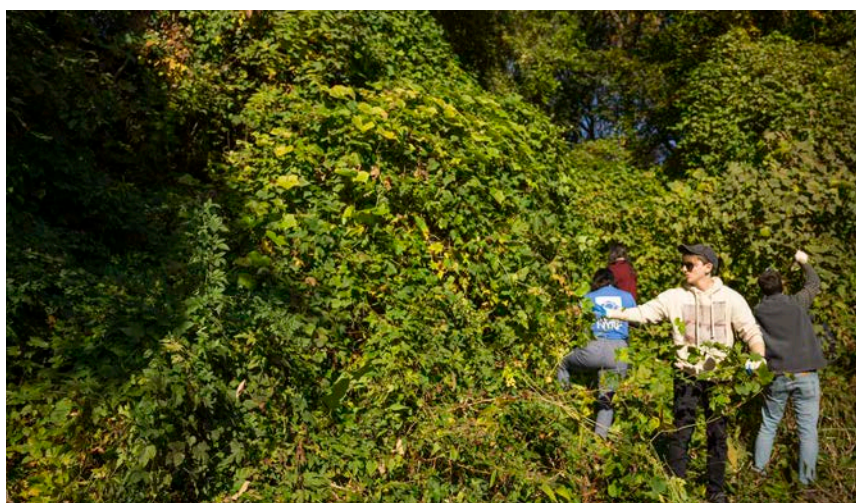
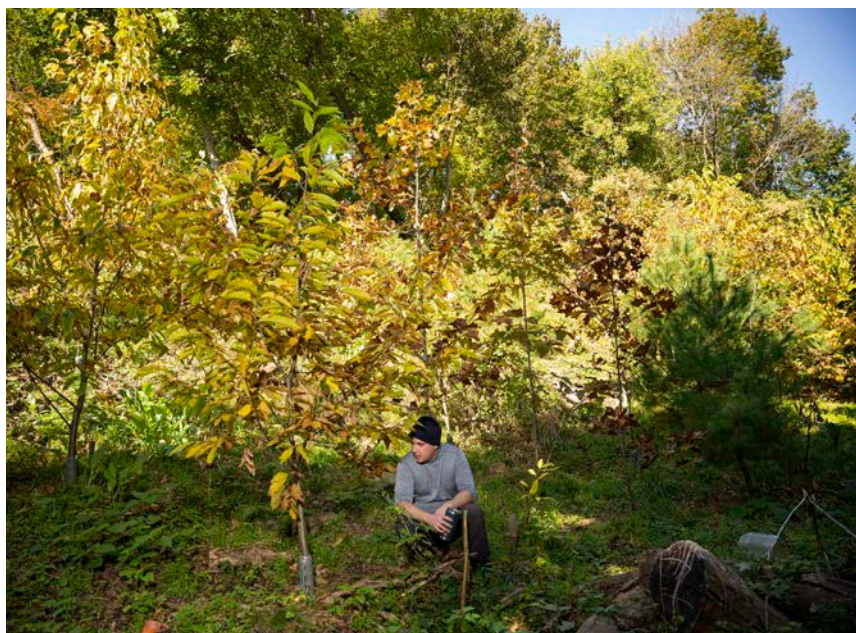
Agriculture Manager Corey Blant and seasonal Coordinator Monti Lawson began the summer with a plant giveaway that reached over 20 gardens and distributed more than 1,500 seedlings across the city. They also designed a five-workshop pilot series with lessons including seed starting, herb growing, pest management, food preservation, and winterizing garden beds.

"Our community gardeners come with a wide range of background knowledge. Some are experts in certain aspects of urban agriculture and others are just starting, but everyone is just so eager to learn," explains Blant. "It's important to weave together this pre-existing knowledge throughout our network and use this as a tool for strengthening our gardeners' skill sets."

In our parks, we continue to maintain and monitor the health and resilience of several distinct ecosystems. The Sherman Creek Park waterfront along the Harlem River is one of Manhattan's last remaining wetlands and a cornerstone of the local neighborhood. It is threatened by climate change-induced erosion and sea level rise (the abutting Harlem River Drive flooded during Hurricane Ida) and to help protect it, we installed a living shoreline that integrates an artificial oyster reef and native plantings.



Landscape Manager of Northern Manhattan Parks Chris McArdle, pictured here, helps lead our American chestnut restoration research in Highbridge Park.



Volunteers remove invasive vines from young trees in Highbridge Park.



NYRP staff remove invasive plants from Highbridge Park.





Seagirt Boulevard Community Garden members in Far Rockaway, Queens harvest fresh parsley from their raised beds.



A Rodale Pleasant Park Community Garden member in East Harlem prepares a garden bed for the summer season.



"The most exciting thing about the living shoreline and big news from this year is that it's working," says Jason Smith, Director of Northern Manhattan Parks. "With the help of researchers from Baruch College, we've been tracking the growth and establishment of oysters on the living shoreline and using that to help make recommendations for other oyster restoration projects around the city," explains Smith.

In addition to the routine maintenance of Highbridge Park, one of Manhattan's last forests, our team has been using the park as a venue to help revive a functionally extinct tree. The American chestnut once thrived along the East Coast before a blight decimated the species almost a century ago. In 2017, we partnered with the USDA Forest Service, American Chestnut Foundation, and NYC Parks Department to plant 300 hybrid American chestnut trees in the park. The experiment is now the largest urban trial of its kind in the country.

"The Highbridge planting is unique in its purpose and its extent, setting the stage of not just, 'Hey, here's a chestnut, isn't that cool?' But really, let's make it a part of this urban forestry community," explains Sara Fern Fitzsimmons, Director of Restoration for The American Chestnut Foundation. "Urban forestry has been around for a long time, but urban forestry in the realm of restoration of tree species is new. This is a unique and innovative project that NYRP is putting together, and I can't wait to see it blossom into other similar work." 🌱



**THANK YOU**  
to our **600+** volunteers  
who contributed over  
**2,000 hours of work**  
throughout our  
parks and gardens  
this year



Student researchers from Baruch College seed ribbed mussels into our living shoreline along the Harlem River in Sherman Creek Park.





1

In 2021, NYRP worked with community gardeners to cultivate over 43,000 square feet of raised garden beds to grow fresh, healthy, and sustainable food in every borough.

## Urban Agriculture

2

We hired our first staff members specializing in food production before the growing season started. Our Urban Agriculture Manager, Corey Blant, and seasonal Coordinator, Monti Lawson, supported NYRP garden groups and dozens of community partners citywide in launching or deepening their work.



3

Our team initially prioritized building relationships with all our community gardeners across the city. Understanding gardeners' needs is the first step in helping them set and meet future goals in their spaces.



4

Our crew kicked off the growing season with the first of multiple plant giveaways held throughout our gardens. They also helped gardeners draft crop plans, acquire materials, and develop workshops.





# 5

Our team routinely checked in on all our gardens. At the height of the growing season, they organized a series of workshops on essential skills including trellis building, plant propagation, and food preservation.

PHOTO: COREY BLANT



# 6

We also launched the Adopt-a-Bed program at our Riley-Levin Children's Garden in Inwood. Participating community groups including Amaya's Book Reads, Papai's Garden, and WHIN Food Council received free supplies and support from NYRP. In addition to tending beds in the garden, the groups also hosted events including natural dyeing tutorials, healthy eating workshops, and gardening skill shares.



# 7

Beyond our 52 gardens, our urban agriculture staff supported our Gardens for the City team with community outreach and instruction for partner groups. Highlights included potato planting and composting at P.S. 811X's outdoor classroom in Hunts Point and installing a 60' x 16' high tunnel at New Roots Community Farm in the South Bronx.



# 8

In the fall, our team kept gardens active by teaching ways to extend the growing season into colder months including sowing cover crops, planting cold-tolerant varieties, and building winterized structures to protect beds.

PHOTO: COREY BLANT







Thanks to generous support from The Walt Disney Company, we have restored and protected the Harlem River shoreline at Sherman Creek Park with an oyster reef and native grass installations.



A community gardener from our Fannie's Garden at Paradise on Earth in The Bronx harvests fresh mint from a raised garden bed.



## 2021 Leadership

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 Andrea Woodner



New York Restoration Project  
 Founder Bette Midler  
 PHOTO: PHIL BORGES



## Operating Revenues \$6,463,508

**OTHER  
(IN KIND, INVESTMENT  
INCOME)**  
\$448,419

**CORPORATIONS**  
\$229,900

**GOVERNMENT**  
\$872,485

**SPECIAL EVENTS  
(NET OF DIRECT COSTS)**  
\$2,255,405

**INDIVIDUALS**  
\$1,854,999

**FOUNDATIONS**  
\$802,300

## 2021 Financials

*All figures are based  
on audited financials.*

## Operating Expenses \$6,672,456

*This statement of functional expense does not include work that has been capitalized. In FY21, NYRP made renovations and improvements valued at \$938,120 to our community gardens and parks. As described in this report, these capital improvements are designed to ensure that NYRP's green spaces will be functional, accessible, resilient, and beautiful for years to come.*

**ADMINISTRATION**  
\$1,076,344

**GARDENS & PARKS  
CAPITAL PROJECTS**  
\$134,470

**FUNDRAISING**  
\$1,697,859

**GARDENS & PARKS  
OPERATIONS**  
\$2,924,056

**COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT  
& PROGRAMS**  
\$839,727



# Supporters

This past year was truly like none other. We are grateful for our generous donors who ensured that we could continue working when our city needed us most.

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Susanne and  
Douglas Durst  
The Durst Organization  
EarthShare New York

**THANK YOU**  
to the **85,000 people**  
who bought tickets to our  
2020 virtual fall fundraiser  
*In Search of the  
Sanderson Sisters:  
A Hocus Pocus  
Hulaween*

Attendees at our 2021  
Boogie Frights Hulaween gala:



NYRP Trustees Todd DeGarmo,  
(left) and Samuel Ashner



NYRP Trustee Michael Kors (left)  
and Hulaween 2021 honoree  
Lance Le Pere



NYRP Trustee Erhard Marius  
(left), NYRP Board of Trustees  
Co-Chair Darcy Stacom (center),  
and Ruth Marius (right)

PHOTOS: BFA





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Foundation



Volunteers from  
BNP Paribas assist  
NYRP staff with shoreline  
restoration along the  
Harlem River at Sherman  
Creek Park in Inwood.

PHOTO: MICHAEL YERDON



Volunteers from  
Discovery Inc. upgrade  
a foot path along the  
Harlem River Greenway.  
PHOTO: MICHAEL YERDON



**THANK YOU**  
to the  
**2,822 individuals**  
who donated  
to support our  
work in 2021



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Caryl B. Ratner  
Katharine J. Rayner  
Related Companies  
Joshua Rider  
Timothy A. Robert  
Marjorie Rosen  
The Estate of  
Nancy Rosenthal  
Clifford Ross and  
Nicolette Donen  
Janet Ross

May and Samuel Rudin  
Family Foundation, Inc.  
S&P Global  
Alex Sapir  
Sawyer|Berson  
Stephen Scanniello and  
Dane Twining  
Ingrid Scheib-Rothbart  
Robin B. Tost  
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Hector Serrano  
Stephen Shapiro  
The Timothy C. Shepard  
and Andra Georges  
Philanthropy Fund  
David M. Sherman

The Shubert  
Organization  
Wendy Silverstein  
and Family  
James and  
Marilyn Simons  
Joshua Sirefman and  
Sarah Kim  
SL Green  
Aida Slabotzky  
Iris and Michael Smith  
Patty Smyth and  
John McEnroe  
Henry T. Snee  
Richard and Donna  
Soloway  
Spirit Halloween  
Darcy Stacom, CBRE  
Stavros Niarchos  
Foundation (SNF)  
The Steedman  
Family Foundation  
The Harold and  
Mimi Steinberg  
Charitable Trust  
David Steinhardt  
Allison Stern  
Jon Recor and  
Daniel Stewart  
The Dorothy  
Strelsin Foundation  
Strong Foundation  
of New York  
Taconic Investment  
Partners  
The Walt Disney  
Company, Inc.

Third Bridge  
TIAA  
Tiger Baron Foundation  
Tishman Speyer  
Deirdre Towers  
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Companies, Inc.  
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Turner Broadcasting  
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A group of volunteers from  
UBS lend a hand in our  
Dorothy Strelsin Memorial  
Community Garden on the  
Lower East Side.

PHOTO: KRISTIN ELLINGTON



*This alphabetical list includes donors who gave \$1,000 or  
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Volunteers from  
Bloomberg participate  
in tree ring care along the  
Harlem River Greenway.  
PHOTO: MICHAEL YERDON





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