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Self Guided Garden Tour Map and Location Information  
Columbus Ohio 2024 Black Farming Conference

Maroon Arts Group Community Garden  
**Location: 935 Mt. Vernon Avenue**  
Julialynne Walker

This garden is an outgrowth of the previous activities of Maroon Arts Group (MAG) to meet the needs of the community. It is open to the community as part of an intergenerational learning space.

Q: Which gardening or growing program/s have you participated in? How did you find out about them?

A: MAG has benefitted from several grants from the Columbus Foundation that supported beautification and an initiative to develop urban growers on the Near East Side through the use of large scale containers. Many participants from this program have gone on to develop in-ground growing and the practice was the impetus for a subsequent grant with a project known as "We Grow: NES." Volunteer groups have assisted with maintenance of the garden and in the process learned more about food security in Columbus in general and the Near East Side specifically. MAG also led weekly garden inspirational and maintenance sessions where community members could learn about gardening and nature fundamentals.

Q: What resources do you still need or want to see made available to growers of food/flowers and farmers?

A: Water, electricity and labor remain key necessary resources that many urban growers lack.

Q: Looking forward: what are you most excited about the 2025 growing season? What about in the next couple of years?

A: Community involvement is key for the current health of the community as well as the future of farming. Ensuring that the youth of the community are tied to programs both on-site and at their schools is a key objective. Succession planting so that the beds are consistently full is a goal for 2025. Finally MAG's infrastructure currently consists of five raised beds, a small greenhouse and a small shed. It would be useful in meeting the above objectives to add additional infrastructure.

Q: Please type any other details you are excited to share.

A: This space is also shared with the Bronzeville Growers Market, a weekly farmers market held from July to September and the only African American owned farmers market in Central Ohio. Supplies for the customers are sometimes obtained from the garden either before or during the market. Overall the Maroon Arts Group space is the result of a local competition called "Parcels to Places," an initiative to turn city owned lots into productive spaces. MAG is the ONLY success from that program. Land is a finite resource within the city and opportunities for expansion will only occur with the cooperation of the city in sharing city controlled properties.

Julialynne Walker can be contacted at [info@bronzevillegrowersmarket.com](mailto:info@bronzevillegrowersmarket.com)

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Mamie Mack Community Garden  
**Location: 456 N. Garfield Avenue**  
Julialynne Walker

Mamie Mack Community Garden (MMCG) was initiated by The Douglas Foundation (TDFI), who named the growing space after the founder's grandmother who formerly resided there. Located in Bronzeville, a historically Black neighborhood on the Near Eastside in Columbus, Ohio, it began a collaboration with Partners Achieving Community Transformation (PACT), The Ohio State University and the Growing and Growth Collective. This collaboration has focused on the fight to improve health and wellness, end hunger, and eliminate food deserts and food insecurity for families in this historical community of Bronzeville. MMCG's is designed to demonstrate the use of different types of raised beds and to produce seedlings for distribution to individuals, community gardens and schools.

Q: How did you get into growing food or flowers? What was your inspiration to start? Did you grow up on to grow food or flowers? When did this organization originate?

A: This garden was established in response to the need for fresh produce on the Near East Side of Columbus.

Q: Which gardening or growing program/s have you participated in? How did you find out about them?

A: Mamie Mack Community Garden has increasingly become part of a wider network of community gardens such as the Growing and Growth Collective, Greater Columbus Growing Coalition, and Community Gardens Network. In addition, MMCG has received consistent support from volunteer organizations such as besa, Franklin Park Conservatory and the Mission Continues. Exposure and involvement in one has led to participation in others which has brought access to extremely useful resources. Access to area garden programs specifically has increased our knowledge of plants and garden maintenance.

Q: What resources do you still need or want to see made available to growers of food/flowers and farmers?

A: Land comes first. MMCG's lot was part of the city's Land Bank program which has had fewer and fewer lots available each year (due in part to increased housing development). Community gardens as a whole are under increased pressures that limit their role in local food production. Water is essential to a successful garden. As a free standing space stored water is crucial to our success.

Q: Looking forward: what are you most excited about the 2025 growing season? What about in the next couple of years?

A: Being able to fully implement the objectives for which this garden was designed - growth of seedlings for area residents, schools, churches and other gardens - and being able to share the space in a structured manner, especially with youth.

Q: Please type any other details you are excited to share.

A: MMCG has served as a focal point for the area for individuals who garden or began gardening.

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Bethany Bronzeville Community Garden

**Location: 204 N. Garfield (rear)**

Julialynne Walker

Q: To start, we would love to hear a bit about who you are in your words! What do you do at your garden/organization?

A: I am the founder/manager. I conceptualized the garden in 2013, implemented the layout and have managed the planting, maintenance and harvesting ever since with the assistance of a rotating group of volunteers.

Q: How did you get into growing food or flowers? What was your inspiration to start? Did you grow up on to grow food or flowers? When did this organization originate?

A: My nuclear and extended families have always had some relationship to growing food - from backyard spaces to small farms - which provided images that have sustained me over time. We visited a paternal aunt's farm in Blacklick and considered it a day long adventure. Members of my family once held mini family reunions in Cleveland to witness the annual flowering of my grandmother's night-blooming cereus. Late summer was the start of canning season for my mother and whatever didn't come from family gardens was purchased at farmer markets and brought home in wood baskets with wire handles. In addition, I was aware of related occupational options such as being a veterinarian or animal dietitian from my summer jobs at the Columbus Zoo. I was also fortunate in having growing spaces in most of the homes that I had as an adult. Upon my return to Columbus after an extended period away, I was fortunate to be able to work the neglected land attached to Bethany Presbyterian Church, a historic African-American church. Initially the produce was to benefit the community lunch program which was itself initiated during a period 18 years ago when there was no hot meal being served on the Near East Side of Columbus. As I became more involved with area groups such as the Greater Columbus Growing Coalition and other area pantries, I began to understand the broader

policy dimensions behind the Near East Side continuing to experience the effects of redlining - not as history but as a present day reality. I was able to view the presence of high caloric, fast food chains as a food swamp that literally drags area residents into unhealthy eating patterns due simply to access. And finally, I heard clearly the many voices of children who visited the garden who asked in all innocence when shown a tomato - "What is that?" In 2017 I was asked to be part of a Farm Services Agency grant for gardeners who wanted to become more accurate record keepers. This experience really broadened my understanding of what was available as resources for historically underserved growers in the United States. It also affirmed a possible role for me as an instructor/facilitator/lecturer in the area. Current barriers to fresh produce on the Near East Side include, but are not limited to, a lack of grocery outlets that provide fresh foods, tenuous access to transportation, perceptions of residents as to benefits and cost barriers. Our programs address these by providing affordable foods to various community-based outlets, such as farmers' markets (BGM), pantries (seed sharing) and pop-ups (community events). Additionally, partnerships with health and nutrition experts enabled us to foster nutrition education in this high-need part of Columbus.

Q: Which gardening or growing program/s have you participated in? How did you find out about them? How have these programs benefited you and your garden/growing space? Why do you think these programs are important?

A: We strongly encourage participation in any program that allows for access to growing spaces. Bethany Bronzeville Community Garden (BBCG) is a member of the Greater Columbus Growing Coalition, a membership group of individual and institutional gardeners that has educational monthly programs. This has been a very beneficial resource in identifying other growers, providing access to plants and seeds and providing support when needed for growing queries. BBCG has benefitted from the Community Growers Network, a grant funded, two year project of area farmers. BBCG received advice, resources and labor for limited projects. BBCG has served as a resource for area summer programs under institutions such as Broad Street Presbyterian Church, King Arts Complex, Columbus State Community College and Columbus Urban League. While the first three were for short day or half-day sessions on identification of plants and garden maintenance, the relationship with the Columbus Urban League was for workforce development. Upper grade high school students were hired for 2/3 employment and skill development. BBCG also works closely with besa and ServeOhio (both local nonprofit that promotes volunteerism), Earth Day Columbus and Franklin Park Conservatory, serving as a volunteer worksite for individuals and workplace teams citywide interested in gardening. BBCG is a partner with Central State University under a Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education grant to grow African Indigenous Botanicals. BBCG chose okra but due to the late arrival of the seeds and the unfortunate 2024 weather patterns, we did not achieve the anticipated crop targets.

Q: What resources do you still need or want to see made available to growers of food/flowers and farmers?

A: Land! Land!! Land!!! While BBCG is fortunate to have access to land, it is as tenants at will with no contract or tenure. Churches are the last non-profit institution within urban areas with large tracts of land. It would be beneficial for all to develop a program that negotiates access to these properties. This could be a model that could be followed nationwide.

Q: Looking forward: what are you most excited about the 2025 growing season? What about in the next couple of years?

A: Succession planting with old favorites and new, untried cultivars. Completion of the SARE grant Strengthening the relationship with area schools. Transitioning to new leadership.

Q: Why does the world need more people like you?

A: Without healthy produce there is no healthy future. Many of the current ailments experienced by all sectors of society are being traced to chemicals routinely used in the growing and preparation of food. We can each contribute to reversing the mentality that finds the current state of affairs acceptable.

Q: Please type any other details you are excited to share.

A: BBCG serves as a base for the Bronzeville Growers Market. Bronzeville Growers Market LLC (BGM), a farmers market that serves the residents of the Near East Side of Columbus, Ohio, celebrates its sixth year of providing nutritious, accessible, affordable food to area residents and communities beyond through a model of vertical integration for urban agriculture. BGM serves the general public, female-headed households, veterans, seniors, immigrants and young adults from the surrounding primarily African-American community. A smaller market target is employees of nearby institutions such as University Hospitals East, Columbus State Community College, State Farm Insurance and the Columbus Museum of Art. Current barriers to fresh produce on the Near East Side include, but are not limited to, a lack of grocery outlets that provide fresh foods, tenuous access to transportation, perceptions of residents as to benefits and cost barriers. Our programs address these by providing affordable foods to various community-based outlets, such as farmers' markets (BGM), pantries (seed sharing) and pop-ups (community events). Additionally, partnerships with health and nutrition experts enabled us to foster nutrition education in this high-need part of Columbus. OSU Wexner James Mobile Education Kitchen has played a key role since the first summer in demonstrating recipes utilizing fresh produce and providing the recipes for at home use. BGM is also a partner with Home Grown, the senior benefits program for fresh produce. FarmSHARE was a federal program conceived at the inception of the COVID pandemic that supported BIPOC food producers, markets and distributors and is coordinated locally by the Columbus Department of Public Health Center for Public Health Innovation and supported by the Ohio Farmers Market Network and The Kroger Co. Zero Hunger I Zero Waste Foundation. This program specifically identified

BIPOC farmers willing to serve BIPOC constituencies through mechanisms managed by BIPOC representatives to address historic inequities that were reinforced by the pandemic. For BGM this has meant that we received fresh produce on a weekly basis from one of the few African American female certified farmers in the state of Ohio who we would otherwise be unable to purchase from. We then sold all produce for \$1 a pound to our neighbors. FarmSHARE provided payment to the farmer (that included transportation costs as she delivers) and we had a steady supply of produce. In addition, we were able to discuss with her which items should be increased or decreased on a weekly basis. While FarmSHARE has ended BGM has only raised prices to \$2 a pound with general community and other donor support. There are 13-14 weeks for each BGM market season and to develop awareness on issues relevant to eliminating the social determinants of health, many weeks are devoted to a specific theme. These themes are Youth, Health, Seniors, Gardening, and Arts. Activities generated by the market and partners include storytelling, health tests, nutritional information, nature crafts, live music, voters' education and poetry slams. Bronzeville Urban Growers (BUGs), the final leg in the model, is a network of backyard growers on the Near East Side who were supported with the basic tools of production and mentoring. Bronzeville Urban Growers has existed for three production cycles: 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and now 2022-2023. Overall, 24 area families have been instructed in backyard production through use of supplied growth kits, seeds, starter plants and mentoring. Many of the families have continued with backyard food production, with some moving to in ground production through raised beds. Others have dropped out of the process, preferring to spend their energies with other pursuits. This model served as the inspiration for a collective that is implementing the We Grow: NES project. Finally, Bronzeville Growers Market has also supported access to healthy food through hosting the Bronzeville Agracademy (BA), an online gardening course. For the Bronzeville Agracademy, over 200 participants through the city, state and country have participated each year during the four cycles since spring of 2020. This has enabled participants to experience local food production as appropriate for their specific geographic area. While the first two years focused specifically on growing techniques, in 2022 fundamental information on African contributions to contemporary agriculture through techniques, indigenous botanicals and inventions, were added to the curriculum. This focus on African Indigenous Knowledge Systems proved to be inspirational as it provided a context that enabled participants to view the world more holistically. When the Agracademy was in person, the MAG garden site was one of the gardens visited for observation and for discussion with local community members. OSU Wexner's Healthy Community Center will be the in person site for the fall 2024 class.

Julialynne Walker can be contacted at [info@bronzevillegrowersmarket.com](mailto:info@bronzevillegrowersmarket.com)

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Julialynne Walker Gateway Learning Garden at the King Arts Complex  
**Location: 835 Mt. Vernon Ave**

Growing and Growth Collective (GGC) was founded in June 2020 by a group of Near East Side residents concerned with concentrated poverty and food insecurity. GGC transformed into a network of volunteers and five green spaces, under the guidance of Partners Achieving Community Transformation (PACT), which leverages urban agriculture as a means of social action for improved health outcomes, and deepens community engagement and economic empowerment with Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) in mind. As a collective, GGC brings together novices, experts, and anyone in between. It helps community members build land-based skills, acquire and maintain property for personal sustenance and food-oriented entrepreneurial endeavors, and learn about the benefits of specific foods for good health. The gardens make fresh produce available to community members in a convenient and affordable way.

Q: How did you get into growing food or flowers? What was your inspiration to start? Did you grow up on to grow food or flowers? When did this organization originate?

A: Purpose built raised beds were established to provide the learning and growing environment. Participants at the King Arts Complex summer camps are engaged with curricula appropriate for each age.

Growing and Growth Collective can be contacted at [growingandgrowthcollective@gmail.com](mailto:growingandgrowthcollective@gmail.com)

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Broad Street Community Garden / Fresh Roots 614  
**Location: 760 E Broad Street, Columbus Ohio 43205**  
Tracy Ross/ Jada Williams

*Broad Street Community Garden*  
Responses by Tracy Ross

Q: To start, we would love to hear a bit about who you are in your words! What do you do at your garden/organization?

A: At Broad Street I'm the Director of Neighborhood Outreach and present garden manager.

Q: How did you get into growing food or flowers? What was your inspiration to start? Did you grow up on to grow food or flowers? When did this organization originate?

A: BSPC established a garden in 2011 to provide nutritional produce to our food pantry shoppers and educate shoppers and members about local, sustainable agricultural. The garden expanded by adding additional raised beds and expanded opportunities for community members to enjoy. Growing up in Detroit with family roots from the south, everyone had small backyard gardens.



Q: Which gardening or growing program/s have you participated in? How did you find out about them? How have these programs benefited you and your garden/growing space? Why do you think these programs are important?

A: We are a member of the Growing and Growth Collective and have partnered with other Near Eastside growers through the We Grow NES program. Our food pantry also initiated the Fresh for All program to buy fresh produce from local farmers throughout Central Ohio. We have learned so much through these networks and community partnerships over the last 13 years.

Q: Looking forward: what are you most excited about the 2025 growing season? What about in the next couple of years?

A: For the 2025 growing season I most excited about our new volunteer garden manager who will begin next season, strengthen our community partnerships and our institution's work advocating for food justice for all.

Q: Why does the world need more people like you?

A: Because we so desperately need folks working on behalf of the community common good and not just oneself. The world needs more of us! I hope that's the legacy I leave behind.

#### *Fresh Roots 614*

#### Responses by Jada Williams

Q: To start, we would love to hear a bit about who you are in your words! What do you do at your garden/organization?

A: Fresh Roots 614 is an organization that offers farm fresh produce and edible garden curation, bridging the gap between real people and fresh food.

Q: How did you get into growing food or flowers? What was your inspiration to start? Did you grow up on to grow food or flowers? When did this organization originate?

A: I got started in this journey after having a dream that propelled me into growing my own food after never growing anything before in the beginning of 2023. I decided that I was going to try it out and see what happens and I was able to grow in a GGC community garden. I was able to produce and sell 100 pounds of produce back to the community and I am continuing in that direction!

Q: Which gardening or growing program/s have you participated in? How did you find out about them? How have these programs benefited you and your garden/growing space? Why do you think these programs are important?

A: I have participated in We Grow: NES. I stumbled across them through a friend of a friend. This program changed my life, it provided me with the capital and support to get my farm and

business off the ground, without it I would not have had such an amazing foray into this community.

Q: What resources do you still need or want to see made available to growers of food/flowers and farmers?

A: Land Access!

Q: Looking forward: what are you most excited about the 2025 growing season? What about in the next couple of years?

A: I am most excited about providing more opportunities and education at the farm to help encourage our community to get involved. In the next couple years, I am most excited to continue to impact the community and make a difference day in and day out.

Q: Why does the world need more people like you?

A: The world needs more people like me because the earth deserves regeneration and more people who are passionate about the earth and feeding its people would provide that.

Tracy Ross can be contacted at [tross@bspc.org](mailto:tross@bspc.org)

Jada Williams can be contacted at [hello@freshroots614.com](mailto:hello@freshroots614.com)

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Vincent Walters Urban Farm  
**Location: 225 N. Monroe Avenue**  
Contact: Jodi R. Spencer

The Vincent Walters Urban Farm's mission is to create a learning community focused on the idea that sustainable agriculture is a part of African American heritage. We are creating "A Cultural Heritage Learning Place" focused on Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Our goal is to contribute to food sovereignty for BIPOC communities in our local Columbus area while learning about foodways from cultures around the world. We foster a value of cultural knowledge in relation to food and health outcomes and seek a deeper understanding of how these things are interconnected. We are very keen on history and culture rather than farming or technical topics because there are already great local resources for those. Currently we grow seedlings and produce to sell to pantries, local restaurants and grocery stores, friends and family. Funds earned will help to rehab the house with a commercial kitchen and other creative spaces. The home and farm are named after the individual who operated a music Academy on the property for 37 years. He was all about community and I plan to build on his legacy by creating a hub for Agriculture innovation, small businesses, and programs that are therapeutic and educational for the community.

Q: How did you get into growing food or flowers? What was your inspiration to start? Did you grow up on to grow food or flowers? When did this organization originate?

A: I've always had a deep connection with nature and the power of plants, especially through their cultural and healing aspects. My inspiration to start growing food and flowers came from a desire to explore how plants can tell stories, nurture communities, and promote food sovereignty. I was particularly inspired by how agriculture can transform lives and create positive change, which led me to blend horticulture with cultural education and healing practices. I wanted to empower others through hands-on experiences with plants and cultivate a deeper understanding of our food systems. Growing up, I didn't have a traditional farming background, but I was surrounded by the knowledge of plants and their cultural significance, especially within my community. That early exposure sparked my interest in how plants could be used for more than just food—they could heal, teach, and inspire. Over time, I pursued this passion, learned more about sustainable agriculture, and eventually started growing food and flowers on a larger scale. The vision for my organization, The Vincent Walters House, started taking shape when I began researching more about Vincent Walters to register the home historic based on his life and the architecture of the house. During this time I was managing urban farms and exploring the intersection of cultural heritage and agriculture. It evolved as I saw the potential to combine storytelling, horticultural therapy, and community engagement. The organization officially started once I realized how much this approach could benefit not only individuals but also entire communities. The property was officially added to the registry in 2023

-[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent\\_Walters\\_House-Walters\\_Music\\_Academy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent_Walters_House-Walters_Music_Academy)

Q: Which gardening or growing program/s have you participated in? How did you find out about them?

A: The programs I've participated in, such as the Food Sovereignty Workshop at Ohio State, NRCS grants and the We GROW grant, have significantly enhanced both the infrastructure and sustainability of my urban farm. For example, the EQIP grant allowed me to build two greenhouses, enabling year-round cultivation and creating more opportunities for community engagement and workforce training. The OSU Food Sovereignty Workshop and We GROW program provided access to valuable networks and technical assistance, ensuring the long-term viability of my growing space. These programs are essential because they empower small and historically underserved farmers, like myself, by providing financial support and technical resources that would otherwise be inaccessible. They promote food sovereignty, encourage sustainable agriculture practices, and support local economies. By enabling community-focused projects like my urban farm and educational initiatives, these programs foster resilience, education, and a stronger connection to the land, especially in urban settings where agriculture can be transformative for youth and reentry participants. They are crucial for building equitable and sustainable food systems that benefit everyone.

Q: What resources do you still need or want to see made available to growers of food/flowers and farmers?

**Affordable Land Access:** One of the biggest challenges for small and urban farmers is securing affordable land to grow on. More accessible leasing programs or land grants for urban agriculture would enable more people to get started and expand their operations. **Technical Assistance and Mentorship:** While there are great programs offering financial support, ongoing technical assistance and mentorship programs would help farmers navigate the complexities of sustainable farming and soil health. Having access to experts who can provide guidance in these areas would be invaluable. **Grant and Loan Programs with Fewer Barriers:** Although programs like the NRCS and FSA are great, simplifying the application processes and providing more assistance in applying for these grants and loans would encourage more people to pursue farming. Removing some of the bureaucratic hurdles would be a major step forward. **Infrastructure Funding:** Access to funds for building infrastructure—greenhouses, high tunnels, irrigation systems, and cold storage—is critical, especially for urban farms. More programs that help cover the upfront costs of such projects would help farms become more sustainable and productive. **Cultural and Educational Programs:** It's important to see more programs that integrate cultural heritage and education into agriculture. These programs help foster a connection to the land and empower communities by preserving traditions and promoting food sovereignty. Expanding these initiatives would have a lasting impact, particularly in urban areas. **Access to Markets and Distribution Channels:** More resources for small farmers to access local and regional markets would help them compete with larger operations. Whether through farmers' cooperatives or digital platforms, increasing opportunities to sell locally grown food and flowers would boost income and visibility.

Q: Looking forward: what are you most excited about the 2025 growing season? What about in the next couple of years?

A: I'm incredibly excited about expanding the urban farm operations and fully utilizing the greenhouses I've been building. For 2025, I'm planning to implement a more detailed, year-round planting schedule that will allow for diverse crops and greater productivity, especially during the fall and winter seasons. In the next few years, I'm excited about solidifying The Vincent Walters Urban Farm as models for integrating cultural heritage, food sovereignty, and urban agriculture. Over the next few years, my goal is to create a legacy of empowerment, not only through the food we grow but through the impact we have on people's lives, fostering food sovereignty and a deeper connection to the land.

Q: Why does the world need more people like you?

A: The world needs more people like me because I'm committed to empowering others through the transformative power of plants, food, and community. I believe in creating spaces where people can reconnect with the land, understand the cultural heritage behind the food they eat, and find healing and empowerment through growing and nurturing plants. My work is about more

than just farming—it's about building food sovereignty, fostering resilience, and giving people the tools and confidence to create positive change in their lives and communities. We need more people who are passionate about using agriculture as a vehicle for social justice, education, and healing. People who understand that access to healthy, locally grown food is a right, not a privilege. People who see the value in preserving cultural heritage and teaching the next generation how to grow food, care for the earth, and build a sustainable future. The world needs more advocates for food justice and sustainability who are willing to roll up their sleeves, work alongside their communities, and create meaningful change from the ground up. By having more people dedicated to these values, we can foster stronger communities, healthier ecosystems, and a more equitable world.

Jodi Spencer can be contacted at [jodispencer51@gmail.com](mailto:jodispencer51@gmail.com)

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**Omega Community Enrichment Foundation**

**Location: 899-901 Old Leonard Ave**

Zachary Hill

The Foundation was formed for the express purpose of improving the Education, Health, Finance and Welfare outcomes in Underserved Central Ohio communities. One of our primary focuses is to provide academic scholarships to low income primary and secondary school students.

Contact: Zachary Hill

Q: What resources do you still need or want to see made available to growers of food/flowers and farmers?

A: More education out reach with the Youth/ coordination with school science programs

Q: Why does the world need more organizations like you?

A: Together we could make greater improvements to your communities. Post Covid we are better suited to provide more assistance to the Bronzeville community of which we are a part. We are looking to expand our capacity.

Zachary can be contacted at [zach.scholarship@gmail.com](mailto:zach.scholarship@gmail.com)

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**Bird and Bee Sanctuary**

**Location: 211 N Monroe**

Dana Moessner

This garden was created to provide a sanctuary for birds, bees and people. A physical space that could serve as a reminder of the need to appreciate nature. Dana Moessner can be contacted at [danamoessner@yahoo.com](mailto:danamoessner@yahoo.com)