

# THE Garden's EDGE

Issue 15  
Winter 2025



[gardensedge.org](http://gardensedge.org)

## Dear Garden's Edge Family,

When we met to decide what to highlight in our newsletter this year, a theme emerged that is very significant to us. The idea behind our organization's name, The Garden's Edge (TGE), refers to the **edge effect** in nature, a transitional zone where two different habitats meet, such as a forest and grassland or river and ocean, creating a unique and important microclimate, like a mangrove. These edges are often places of increased biodiversity, abundance, and resource distribution.

When looking at aerial pictures of families' homes at Qachuu Aloom, you can see these edges clearly: **green islands filled with chirping birds, pollinators, fruit trees, and shade.** I loved to visit Maria Elena's home and urban forest garden because it always felt a few degrees cooler than the dusty streets outside her front door.

The gardens we support in Guatemala are living edges, where food, seeds, trees, and farm animals help sustain people, but also help the watersheds, birds, and pollinators.

The edge effect can also apply to cultures coming together, like the work we do with Seed Travels or Solidarity trips. People learn, share, and help each other. **I feel so inspired to see the many ways our work spirals out from Guatemala, touching the hearts of people in their gardens, kitchens, and community work as far away as New York, California, Washington State, and Kentucky.**

Our work is NOT about "helping" communities in Guatemala. It's about collaboration and sharing ways of living that remind us we are part of nature and that we can work together to create more vibrant local economies. We experiment with solutions like

the Sand Dam and Creative Solutions Projects that hopefully become examples of how to work together to face the environmental and societal challenges of today and of the future. Lessons learned in Guatemala can be applied in our own homes and community work.

I hope you enjoy reading about the way our work pollinates, how the seeds travel, working their magic. Today more than ever we need to come together to share and learn. **Please consider joining our family of annual or monthly donors. Together we will continue to find hope at the edges.**

*Maltiox Chawe' | Gracias | Thank you*  
--Sarah Montgomery

### Thank you wonderful supporters!

Baker Creek Seed Company

CC Culver, Owl Peak Farm

Emily Sandall Foundation

End World Hunger 2030

Gates Presbyterian Church

Metabolic Studio

Scott Evans Foundation

Undaunted Carnival Foundation

All our individual donors!



**Thank you to all our monthly donors!** If you haven't signed up, this is a great way to support our work. **Visit our website to sign up or send your annual donation today for our 2026 programs!**

## Seed Travels

In May, Sabina Ajcot traveled with her Maya Kaqchikel family to share traditional recipes with the guardians of the White Corn Project on the Seneca Nation. They honored the corn, land, and memory of their peoples. It was an act of community, unity, and ancestral memory.

The elders say: **“Without corn, we die. Caring for corn is caring for life.”**

In September we hosted Guatemalan naturopathic doctor and midwife Anabella Pérez for a knowledge exchange with midwives and doulas.



Maya Kaqchikel and Seneca Nation ancestral knowledge exchange around nixtamalization of corn.



Anabella Pérez on a visit to the Maraki Birthing Center and Ithaca Doula Collective in the Finger Lakes Region, traditional homelands of the Gayogħó:nq'.



Fall Amaranth harvest at Stone Bend Farm, celebrating with awareness and wisdom.

**Amaranth, growing from a tiny seed into something powerful.  
Amaranth represents strength, resilience, and spirituality.**



This year the **End World Hunger Foundation** helped Qachuu Aloom protect their fresh water by building a well house at their demonstration gardens.

**Thank you!**

## Donor Highlight: Arabella Paulovich (aka Arabella Amaranth)

Monthly and annual donors play a huge role in the stability of our organization, helping to create a sustaining budget. Our donors often become like family; we see you as pollinators helping new seeds form in the world.

Arabella Paulovich is 26 and lives in Kentucky. In 2023, she interviewed Aurelia about her work with Amaranth for the publication, *Taste*. She then signed up to be a monthly donor, saying, **“It sounded like work that I want to be a part of and invest in.”**

Arabella works at a farm and elementary school where they plant, grow, and cook food with youth. After joining our 2024 Solidarity Tour to Guatemala, she planted and harvested amaranth with her coworkers and gave away seeds to people in her community!

She shared how inspiring it is to see youth at our programs in Guatemala reconnecting with plants, growing food, and sharing knowledge. It impressed her to see elders and young people learning together and nurturing a shared bond with the Earth. **“I really love how the youth have power at your organization,”** said Arabella.

She feels hopeful and inspired by the solidarity in our work. This collective effort, combined with the work her own community is building, highlights the importance of coming together to create meaningful, lasting change for the future. Arabella hopes that The Garden’s Edge continues inspiring people. **This work isn’t just local; it’s a movement of healing for all. The exchange that the Garden’s Edge hosts help more people connect, learn, and grow, spreading care for the Earth and each other across the globe.**

## Sand Dam Research and Seed Rematriation

Dennis Baldwin is a Geography PhD student at the University of Texas studying ancient Mayan water storage systems in Guatemala’s Peten region. **He learned about the Garden’s Edge Sand Dam Projects and was excited to see if there were similarities to the storage systems of the past.** On his visit, he discovered that, while there are differences between ancient Maya water management practices and the sand dam technology, he hopes to draw connections between past and present community-based strategies for water storage.

**He was also inspired by the seed bank at Qachuu Aloom, which currently houses 50+ varieties of native seeds grown by over 120 Mayan farmers.** When he returned home, Dennis’ mother, Denise Costich, former head of the Maize Germplasm Bank CIMMYT in Mexico,

told him that **this seed bank houses several varieties of corn from Rabinal.** Thanks to this fructiferous connection, plans are underway for the rematriation of more seed varieties lost during Guatemala’s 36-year armed conflict and genocide.



## Finding Hope at the Edges with The Garden's Edge Community



After traveling to Guatemala for the 2024 Solidarity Tour, **Clara Swarthout** collaborated with TGE staff Sabina and Rebecca on three events in Ithaca. She presented about our work, shared lessons from the tour, and continues passing the seeds and hope on to others.



"At the farm I work on, we all have funny names that are your first name and your favorite plant, so I am **Arabella Amaranth!**"



**Renee Wolters** (ABQ) shared Qachuu Aloom's Amaranth seeds with her sister in 2006. Above, it is growing strong in her western Wisconsin garden in 2025.

**A sign of hope and resilience after devastating loss:**

Leigh, a longtime TGE collaborator, planted this Amaranth 8 years ago in Los Angeles, but it never came up. After losing her home in the Altadena fire, it germinated and stood strong on her empty lot. We love you Leigh!



Monthly donor **Tami Brunk** packed Manzano in her car to make the 1,000-mile journey from ABQ to her family in the Missouri Ozarks. Her nephew (11) proudly raised the seeds for 2 seasons and just gifted new seeds back to Tami!

Monthly donors **Mary Linders** and **Peter Plimpton** proudly

stand next to the Guatemalan corn they planted in Seattle after being gifted seeds on a Guatemala Solidarity Tour.



## Scholarship Students

This year we supported 9 youth to finish middle and high school. They also participated in classes hosted by Qachuu Aloom, where they learned about film, photography, running a bakery coop, sewing, weaving, and gardening.

## Celebrating Community Health

Across our communities, young people are stepping up in powerful ways, learning and sharing traditional medicine practices like massage, herbal remedies, and acupuncture. This work doesn't replace modern medical care; it completes it.

By blending ancestral wisdom with modern medicine, these youth are helping create a holistic vision of well-being – honoring body, spirit, and the natural world. Their dedication reminds us that healing is more than curing illness. Healing is about reconnecting with our roots, our community, and the earth that gives us life.



Young healers learning and practicing therapeutic treatments.

**Support these young healers as they build a future rooted in tradition, compassion, and balance.**



“When I had facial paralysis, I couldn't find treatment nearby. When I heard about these therapies, I came without hesitation. Although I haven't fully recovered, I have improved considerably. For us this program is accessible and valuable.”

-Elida, Bachan.



“This program has helped me a lot, I was in pain and could barely move my arm. The treatments brought me relief. I have been coming to these therapies for a year, I am grateful for your support.”

-Elvy, Sis.

## Municipal Solidarity Market



Qachuu Aloom is partnering with three other organizations in Rabinal to establish an agroecology network. This year, the mayor designated a special area for them to sell organic foods, seeds, and hand-crafted goods!



## Creative Solutions Projects

### Aurelia Xitumul and Bixal Ya (Song of the Water): Creative Solution Project

Aurelia's expanding home apothecary showcases how women's entrepreneurship strengthens communities. She is now producing more natural creams, salves, shampoo, and tinctures that she sells across Guatemala. In her home garden she carefully cultivates medicinal plants, ensuring that she uses the best ingredients. Her success creates local jobs, promotes traditional plant medicine, and inspires other women to pursue their ideas. **With support from The Garden's Edge, Aurelia proves that investing in women means investing in sustainable livelihoods and community well-being.**



## Tomato Seed Rematriation Continues to Flourish



Seed Rematriation means returning ancestral seeds to their original caretakers. It is more than recovering lost seeds; it is about restoring culture, knowledge, and connection to the land.

This year we partnered with survivors and descendants from Río Negro. Their Association is named 13th of March in commemoration of the date of a brutal massacre in their village.

We worked with them to expand the Maravilla tomato seeds rematriation work. **They created a plant nursery and gave 2,500 tomato seedlings to families!** Many recognized this variety that had disappeared almost 30 years ago during the war.

There was a shared understanding of the importance of nurturing these seeds—not just for sustenance, but as a symbol of **resilience** and **cultural continuity**. We hope more families will cultivate these tomatoes so that they continue adapting to the local climate without the need for chemical fertilizers.

# THE Garden's EDGE

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   The Garden's Edge

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## In Partnership with People to Protect Seeds, Water, Soil, and Culture

This year, we will be inviting **all of our annual and monthly donors** to join a Whatsapp group where we will share stories and pictures of the work we do and gardening and seed saving tips. You will be able to share and ask questions as well.

**I want to support the work of The Garden's Edge. I have enclosed my tax deductible gift in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

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Small, regular donations to The Garden's Edge provide more funding flexibility to respond to our partners' emergent needs and opportunities.

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