



Growing Together: What We Heard at Seedy Saturday

At this year's Seedy Saturday, CRFAIR hosted a live community consultation and heard from more than 100 attendees about their experiences growing food. Over the course of the day, we gathered 128 responses across three questions that explored what's helping people grow, how it's impacting their lives, and what's needed to support more growers in the region.

What we heard was thoughtful, personal, and deeply rooted in the values of connection, health, and resilience.

What's Helping People Grow?

For many, growing food is not a solo journey – it's something nurtured by community and shared wisdom. In fact, 27% of responses emphasized the importance of friends, family, mentors, and fellow gardeners as key supports in learning and staying motivated.

Access to growing space (such as backyards, allotments, or community gardens) and learning resources (like books, online content, and workshops) each made up 19% of responses. People also named specific local programs and organizations – like CRFAIR, Get Growing, Growing Together, UBC Farm, and the Compost Education Centre – with 17% of respondents crediting them for tools, seedlings, compost, or education that helped them get started or grow more successfully.

The Impact on Health and Well-being

We asked folks to let us know what they thought was the most important thing that they gained from growing their own food. The mental health benefits of gardening stood out strongly, with 46% of respondents describing it as a powerful source of stress relief, joy, mindfulness, and emotional healing. People spoke of weeding as "Zen," watching seeds sprout as uplifting, and spending time in the garden as a form of therapy.

Gardening also brought people closer to the land and themselves – 20% said they felt more connected to nature, while 17% highlighted how growing food improved their physical health and nutrition, especially by increasing access to fresh, local produce. Others spoke of the joy of sharing food with others, passing on skills to children, and the sense of pride that comes from eating something they've grown themselves.



What's Needed to Support More Growers?

The third question asked people to imagine what could make food growing easier, more accessible, and more widespread in their communities. A clear priority emerged: more access to land and growing spaces, mentioned in 32% of responses.

People want to see more community gardens, boulevard gardens, school plots, food forests, and revitalized backyard sharing program to help those without space of their own.

24% of people emphasized the need for basic resources – compost, seeds, tools, and transportation for heavy materials – with some suggesting free or low-barrier beginner kits to reduce start-up costs.

Others (17%) highlighted education and skill-building, including workshops, guides, and peer mentoring. There were also creative ideas around community-building, from gardening Facebook groups and block parties to demo orchards and tool libraries – all with the goal of making food growing more visible, shared, and supported.

What This Means Moving Forward

These conversations remind us that growing food is about much more than just vegetables – it's about building resilience, joy, and belonging. The stories and insights shared at Seedy Saturday show that gardening can nourish not only bodies, but communities and ecosystems, too.

As we plan for the future, the Good Food Network is here working together alongside community members and partners to address the key gaps that were named: space, access, knowledge, and connection. Together, we can grow a stronger, more just, and more food-secure region.

