In 2022, Future Harvest’s Beginner Farmer Training Program continued to serve as a critical resource to new farmers in the Chesapeake region.

This year’s cohort of over 90 trainees spanned three states plus Washington DC. 65% of trainees identify as female and nearly 50% identify as Black. They had big dreams, ranging from increasing access to healthy produce in their neighborhoods, to revitalizing long-dormant or conventionally farmed land, to establishing a workplace accessible to people with disabilities.

Our job is to help these new farmers make their dreams a reality so that we can build a more resilient, healthier and better-nourished Chesapeake foodshed.

Grace Leatherman
FUTURE HARVEST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NEW IN 2022

FARMER STIPENDS

Future Harvest was able to provide ten $2,000 stipends directly to graduating farmers who participated in the program, thanks to the generosity of the private donors and the Tipper-Gurley Fund. These funds were used to offset the costs associated with starting a farm, and the costs associated with travel for the Beginner Farmer Training Program (BFTP).

NEW PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Future Harvest hired a new Beginner Farmer Training Program Director, Joanna Winkler, in March of 2022. Joanna has worked with Future Harvest since 2015 when she served as Field School Manager, and again from 2017 - 2022, directly with the BFTP under Sarah Sohn’s leadership. During this time, she also started her own 25-acre vegetable farm with her husband, in Upperco, MD, where they use only organic growing practices. Her experience, knowledge, and long-term involvement with the BFTP makes her well-prepared this role. Joanna is excited to continue working with beginning farmers to create high-quality programming that connects them with the resources that they need to succeed.

EXPANDED CURRICULUM

Our online classroom curriculum continues to expand and evolve. In 2022, for the first time in the history of the program, we offered three different levels of coursework to match the experience levels of trainees. This allows Future Harvest to provide continued, new and different engagement for trainees who advance through all three levels of the program. It also allows us to tailor the material, for example, offering support on how to read soil tests for Level 2 trainees while providing an introduction to soil properties for Level 1 participants.
NEW IN 2022

NEW PARTNERS

As part of our USDA grant funding, we have been able to engage new partners with the program. These partners bring crucial expertise to trainees and contribute to a robust and in-depth program experience. One of these partners is Julia Shanks Consulting. Julia is the author of The Farmer’s Office: Tools, Tips and Templates to Successfully Manage a Growing Farm Business. She offers trainees expert support in financial analysis, business planning, and record keeping. Julia has helped beginning farmers prepare for financing and bookkeeping, write business plans and more for over twelve years. In 2022, she led a 4-part, dynamic workshop for our trainees and offered one-on-one coaching for select trainees.

FIFTEEN FIELD DAY EVENTS

These hands-on events took place throughout the region and serve as opportunities for trainees to gather and build their networks. Many of the field days were created specifically with trainees in mind, happening on newer farms so that trainees may immediately relate to systems, experiences, and see attainable goals. Some of the events we held this year were:

- High Tunnel Production at Deep Roots Farm in Upper Marlboro, MD
- Harvesting Skills and Systems in Farm-to-School Programs at The Penn Farm in New Castle, DE
- Post-Harvest Handling and GAP Certification for Urban Farms at Whitelock Community Farm in Baltimore, MD
Future Harvest has worked with more than 400 trainees since the BFTP was founded in 2009. We are pleased to provide updates on several standout trainees that we have had the pleasure of supporting over the years.

Notably, many of these participants continue to share knowledge gained during the program with others, disseminating their farm and business acumen throughout the Mid Atlantic.
BEGINNER FARMER TRAINING PROGRAM
GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

Denzel Mitchell Jr.
CLASS OF 2012

With the help of a chef and food historian, Denzel has brought a nearly-forgotten heirloom, Baltimore’s Fish Pepper, back to the Chesapeake region’s culinary palette. He, his family, and cadre of supporters operated Five Seeds Farm from 2008 until 2016. From 2012 - 2017, Denzel mentored several new farmers, organized farmers’ markets, advised others in starting small farms, community gardens, food co-ops, and food businesses.

Denzel has also taught and mentored young people at several Baltimore City public schools and after-school programs, spent a year as the production manager at Real Food Farm, served as the Farms-To-School Coordinator at Great Kids Farm, and the Brownfields Coordinator for Baltimore City’s Office of Planning. He was the farm manager at Strength To Love 2 for three seasons, served on the production committee of several urban farms, and on the board of directors for the Friends of Great Kids Farm, Belair-Edison Neighborhood, Inc. and currently Acres4Change. Today, Denzel is a co-Executive Director of the Farm Alliance of Baltimore.
After completing all three levels of the BFTP and year-long Level 3 mentorship with expert farmer Gail Taylor of Three Part Harmony Farm, which serves as a BFTP training space, D'Real has launched his own enterprise in Brandywine, MD. Moonstone Farmstead produces eggs, poultry, and firewood.
Josh Rosenstein
CLASS OF 2012

Josh has taken the farming knowledge that he gained in the BFTP to found Edible Eden Baltimore Foodscapes. His company offers design packages, garden installation and maintenance, and workshops around Baltimore.

Aleya Fraser-Parris
CLASS OF 2014

After farming in Baltimore and on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, Aleya moved to Trinidad and is now the co-owner of a cacao company. She also works with Chesapeake Harvest as a food safety educator and consultant, helping farmers throughout the Mid Atlantic improve their food safety systems.
Elizabeth Snow (Lamb)
CLASS OF 2018

Liz Lamb serves as the Community Farming Program Manager at The 6th Branch, and manages both affiliated farm sites. Her farming career began in Baltimore City in 2017 at Whitelock Community Farm, while participating in the BFTP. She spent several years working at Butterbee Farm, a cut-flower wholesale operation in the Baltimore County. She couldn’t be happier to be back growing vegetables and flowers - and building relationships - in the Communities of East Baltimore.

Thelonius Cook
CLASS OF 2015

Thelonius operates Mighty Thundercloud Edible Forest in two locations: a half acre at his home in Hampton, and seven acres on the Eastern Shore in Birdnest, Virginia, where his father grew up. His farm is named after permaculture techniques and the nickname his father’ gave him. With a background and first career in IT, Thelonius was exposed to sustainable farming while living in Tanzania and Ethiopia. Upon returning, got a Master's in Sustainable Development from JMU. Bringing African culture to the states, Thelonius now plants cultural niche products like callaloo, hibiscus, turmeric, and ginger. He is planting guilds of fruit and nut trees - that support pollinators in addition to their future production, producing in two high tunnels, and on ten 75’x75’ plots. The edible forest focuses on regenerative practices that strengthen soil fertility, enhance biodiversity, and reduce the environmental footprint of agriculture.
Kimberly Raikes  
CLASS OF 2016

Kimberly’s farming passion began with a family farm in Fort Mitchell, Virginia. From there, through our BFTP program, she went on to be the first intern for Baltimore’s oldest Black-owned farm, The Greener Garden Urban Farm, and then the Black Church Food Security Network Garden Coordinator. She has completed the Weed Warrior and Tree Keeper courses at Baltimore Recreation and Parks, as well as Level 1 of the Future Harvest BFTP, and a Master Gardener certification from University of Maryland Extension. In 2017, she made many achievements for the Down South Afro-ecology Encounter in Durham, North Carolina, leading her to her current position as the Farm Manager at Whitelock Farm.

Stuart Jones  
CLASS OF 2018

Stuart trained with The Greener Garden Urban Farm in 2018. He has been managing Real Food Farm in Baltimore City since then, and growing produce for their mobile market, farmers market, and senior distributions.
Farmer Chippy’s farm, **Plantation Park Heights Urban Farm (PPHUF)**, was born out of a group of Caribbean/American citizens’ desire to affect change and have a positive impact on the lives of young adults that reside in the Park Heights community in Baltimore, Maryland. After a number of consultations and meetings with other community groups, Farmer Chippy and the PPHUF team decided that instead of attempting to repeat or compete with the organizations or non-profits, it would be better to form partnerships and share resources so as to achieve the same goals. The farm is thriving and he has become a leader in Baltimore’s urban farming community.

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**Dr. Heber Brown**

CLASS OF 2018

In 2015, Dr. Heber Brown launched the **Black Church Food Security Network** which advances food security and food sovereignty by co-creating Black food ecosystems anchored by Black congregations in partnership with Black farmers. He is the recipient of numerous awards and is currently working on his first book which explores the historic relationship between Black churches, Black farmers, and faith-based food sovereignty.

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**Farmer Chippy**

CLASS OF 2018

Farmer Chippy’s farm, **Plantation Park Heights Urban Farm (PPHUF)**, was born out of a group of Caribbean/American citizens’ desire to affect change and have a positive impact on the lives of young adults that reside in the Park Heights community in Baltimore, Maryland. After a number of consultations and meetings with other community groups, Farmer Chippy and the PPHUF team decided that instead of attempting to repeat or compete with the organizations or non-profits, it would be better to form partnerships and share resources so as to achieve the same goals. The farm is thriving and he has become a leader in Baltimore’s urban farming community.
Gerilyn is a farmers at Bon Secours Urban Farm, a non-profit farm in Baltimore, Maryland, dedicated to improving health outcomes. They serve their community by focusing on youth gardening, nutrition education, food distribution, and a mobile farmer’s market. The farm sits on a 1/8-acre that was previously 14 vacant lots, and now contains a nursery, two hoop houses, and a community garden. Gerilyn has been farming for more than four years in Baltimore and the surrounding areas. She got her start working in school gardens and at Great Kids Farm.

Atiya Wells CLASS OF 2020

Backyard Basecamp was founded by Atiya Wells, BFTP graduate and pediatric nurse with a passion to introduce, educate, and connect families in Baltimore - especially People of Color - to local outdoor spaces. While learning more about our natural world, she often noticed that she could count the number of BIPOC folks in the room on one hand. Diving into research and history, she learned that ancestral wounding and historical trauma are key players in the lack of diversity in nature-based programming. She has dedicated her time and work to (re)introducing BIPOC folks to nature by starting with nature walks in their own neighborhoods, and eventually embarking on a journey into the many wild spaces across Baltimore.
Jordan is the Production Manager at Backyard Basecamp. He graduated from Level 1 of the BFTP in 2020 and will be returning for Level 2 in 2023. He hopes to learn more about pasture management with a mentor farmer in Level 2.

Shoshana manages the produce operation at Clark's Elioak Farm in Howard County, MD. She advanced through the levels of the BFTP in 2020 and 2021. She continues to be actively involved in the BFTP community through our online networks and just started her own farm, Communitas Farm.

Vanessa is the Education Coordinator at the Baltimore Orchard Project. There, she guides community resources towards food justice. Originally serving as an AmeriCorps youth educator at Civic Works Real Food Farm, Vanessa is excited to collaborate with neighbors and other organizations to work towards collective community empowerment.
Raven is currently working to establish 9 Ether Farm in South Baltimore. Her vision is to become a full-scale agribusiness that focuses on training new farmers, agriculturalists, and the local community in soil conservation and restoration, sustainable agriculture, and land management. She aims to normalize a healthy lifestyle by reconnecting people with mother earth.

Floyd worked at the Cherry Hill Urban Community Garden in Baltimore, Maryland, for several years. He currently works to build high tunnels on farms throughout the region, allowing farmers to extend their growing seasons to work toward a year-round sustainable food system.
We hold so much gratitude for our members, donors, and funders who make our work of strengthening farming and the regional food economy; protecting our land, water, and air; and providing nutritious food that sustains the region’s communities, possible. From all of us at Future Harvest, our deepest thanks.

2022 STAFF LIST

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