

Strengthening Fresno's roots through soil



BACKGROUND

This case study spotlights how the Yosemite Village Community Garden and Urban Farm Incubator is using TCC funding to increase resident access to tree coverage, healthy food, and open green space. For additional information about the Yosemite Village Community Garden, as well as Transform Fresno's other Urban and Community Forestry projects, see [page 71](#).

Interviews for this story were conducted in April and June 2021.

Member of the Yosemite Village Permaculture Community Garden and Urban Farm Incubator waters corn, sunflowers, and zinnias in 2020. Photo credit: Chris De León, Fresno Metro Ministry

PATRICIA HUBBARD was born and raised in Riverdale, a little town just outside Fresno and has lived in the city itself since 1996. Solidifying her roots here, Hubbard's three children and siblings also live in Fresno. But her feeling of connection to the place has grown since getting involved with the Yosemite Village Community Garden and Urban Farm Incubator (Yo'Ville Community Garden).

“The people that I garden with, the volunteers, staff and other gardeners, are like a family or community.”

PATRICIA HUBBARD

Hubbard first heard about the garden after someone knocked on her door and handed her a flyer. Already familiar with gardening in her backyard, Hubbard signed on to volunteer. While she expected to help grow the garden, she has been pleasantly surprised by the relationships she's developed. For her, the community connection is the most rewarding part of being involved with the garden.

After having a successful first year with a garden plot, Hubbard expanded in her second year. She joined the Yo'Ville Urban Farm Incubator program, giving her a half acre of land to tend. She has also gained new skills. “There's an ongoing process of learning,” she says proudly, as she



Patricia Hubbard at the Yosemite Village Permaculture Community Garden and Urban Farm Incubator

Photo credit: Jesse Martindale, Fresno Metro Ministry

describes how she has become familiar with planting new species of plants. She also credits TCC's investment in the Yo'Ville Community Garden as allowing her to learn the business and financial side of running a farm.

Looking ahead, Hubbard is proud that the produce grown in the garden will benefit more neighbors via the new Farmer's Market. “In a community like ours, with limited options for fresh vegetables, healthy food, this is so important.” Hubbard added.



Chris De León at the Yosemite Village Permaculture Community Garden & Urban Farm Incubator.

Photo credit: Jesse Martindale, Fresno Metro Ministry

CHRIS DE LEÓN is the Community Garden Manager and a staff member at Fresno Metro Ministry, the lead project partner at the Yo’Ville Community Garden and Farm. Having moved to Fresno when he was 4 years old, his love for Fresno runs deep. But he also recognizes the health disparities stemming from the lack of access to healthy food and healthy green spaces, and a concentration of environmental pollution in Southwest Fresno.

For De León, who had wanted to be involved in a community garden since he was in high school, the Yo’Ville Community Garden is a dream come true. Like Hubbard, De León feels that the most rewarding part of working in the garden is that it brings the community together. When COVID hit, he reports, “we saw a surge in residents applying to the garden because more people wanted outdoor space, a place to be outside of their homes. I think the garden helped a lot of the residents who live nearby to have an outlet and somewhere they can go to be together that is safer.”

The garden has also generated communitywide benefits that specifically address food insecurity in Southwest Fresno. “The Yo’Ville Community Garden is creating a local food system,” De León explains. “Fresno residents are able to buy fresh produce that’s organically grown on-site. They can walk over to the back of the site and meet the farmer that’s growing the food, see the practices they’re utilizing. Ultimately, it’s about caring for the land, our fellow community members, and our bodies,” he stated.

“The garden provides much needed green space and space for residents to grow their own food and learn how to start a small-scale urban growing operation.”

CHRIS DE LEÓN

MIGUEL AVENDAÑO is one of the community members that Chris De León recruited to start a half-acre urban farm at the Yo’Ville site. Avendaño has years of experience growing food. He moved to Fresno in 2003 for agricultural jobs and has worked throughout the Central Valley since. He appreciates the abundance of work opportunities, and he, his wife, and two children have established a solid foundation in Fresno.

In 2021, Avendaño joined Yo’Ville’s Urban Farm Incubator program. The farm incubator provides the land, shared tools, access to water, and learning opportunities for new small farmers wanting to grow in ecologically sustainable ways. Avendaño shares, “I am producing organic vegetables, using methods that won’t damage the environment and our health.”



Miguel Avendaño and son at the Yo’Ville Farm Stand.

Photo credit: Chris De León, Fresno Metro Ministry

Avendaño is producing enough to sell and supplement his income with the produce he grows at the community farm. He partners with other farmers from the farm incubator to run a farm stand, where they sell their produce every first and third Saturday of the month. “My primary goal is to grow my farm in three years,” Avendaño says. “It would not be possible to start from zero without support from the incubator.”

“In five to 10 years, my goal is to have many acres planted, to have employees, to be growing and selling fresh, organic produce wholesale. It will give my family a more comfortable and stable life.”

MIGUEL AVENDAÑO