# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT




LEAF

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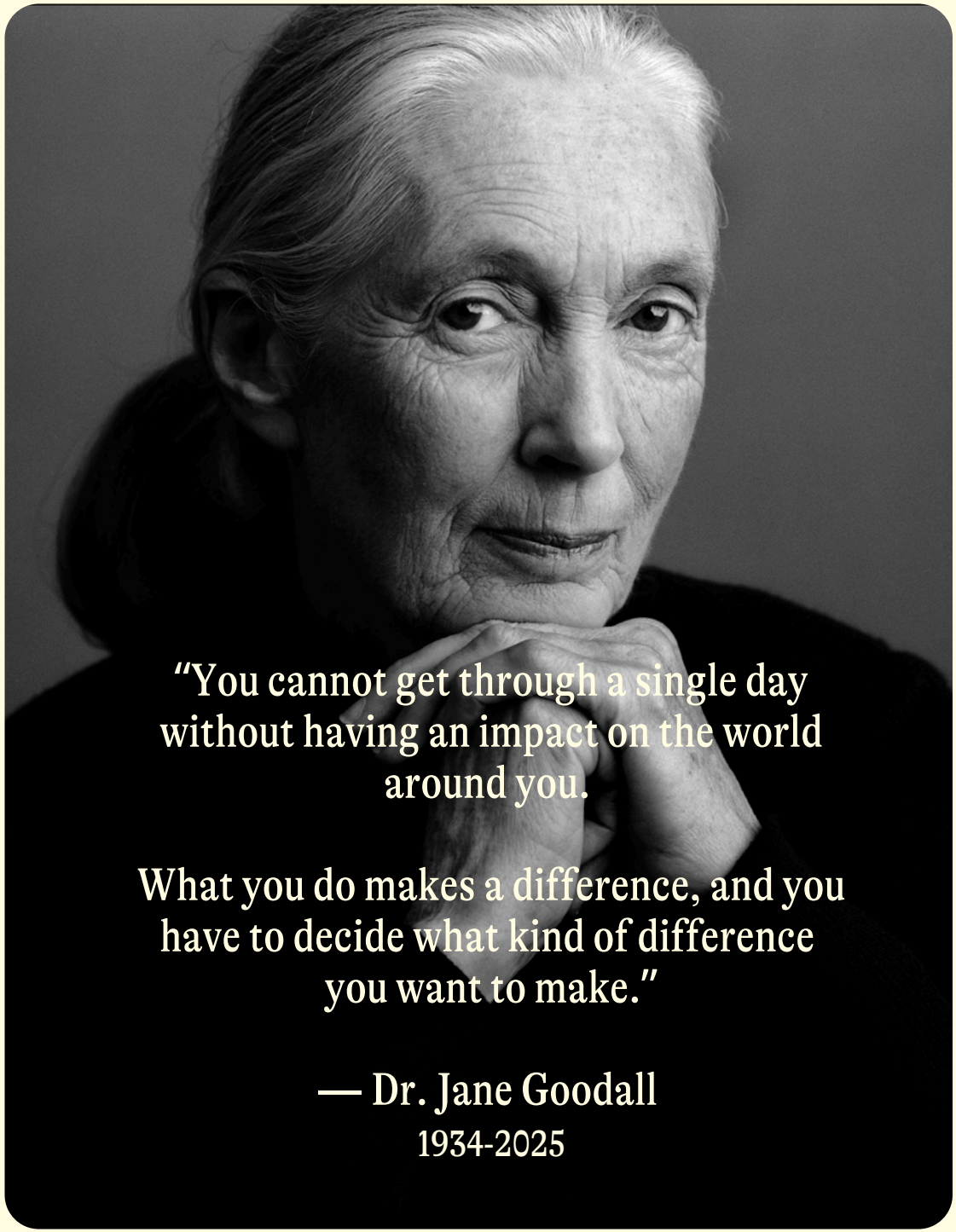
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# OUR VISION

A world where every community has the knowledge and resources to work in harmony with nature to cultivate a healthier planet.

# OUR MISSION

LEAF is an educational nonprofit whose urban gardens serve as living classrooms, soil science labs, and community spaces that empower people to learn, connect, and grow together.

# OUR VALUES

## Connected

We foster strong relationships between people, communities, food systems, and the planet, creating a sense of belonging and shared responsibility for a sustainable future.

## Regenerative

Honoring both traditional wisdom and scientific innovation, we restore ecosystems, build living soil, and grow food using evidence-based, climate-resilient practices that sustain the earth for future generations.

## Empowering

We empower people with the skills and knowledge to grow food, care for the land, and make sustainable choices that benefit their communities.

## Equitable

We work to ensure that access to healthy food, education in sustainable living and community activities in outdoor spaces are available to everyone, regardless of background or resources.

## Collaborative

We believe sustainability is a shared effort, so we co-create solutions with partners, volunteers, and community members–sharing resources, learning together, and building resilient systems through collective action.

2025

# We Grew Together




*Elaine, our Executive Director, hosting StopWaste at the LEAF Urban Farm.*

2025 was a year of growth for LEAF: We broke ground on the new LEAF Urban Farm, expanding the site to 1.3 acres. We completed the landscape design and began construction of our educational and production gardens.

We branched out by expanding our educational offerings at our gardens and the Fremont library, launching family days at the LEAF Urban Farm, and welcoming teams from Bay Area companies to volunteer. We've deepened our research partnership with UC Merced. And we've cultivated community by offering more family-, art-, and wellness-focused events.

We also grew stronger as an organization. We defined our five-year strategy, clarifying our strategic program areas - EDUCATE, GROW, RESEARCH, CONNECT - and refreshed our brand.

But we also had to grow resilient when we were broken into eight times, and had to deal with the Medfly quarantine during the growing season, which meant the quantity but not the quality of our food donations were lower this year.

2026 is going to be an exciting year. Under the motto, 'Cultivating Minds,' we are further expanding our educational programming with a renewed focus on educating young people. The gardens will provide more outdoor spaces for our educational programs; we are forging new partnerships with educational institutions and the local libraries; and we are planning more events for people to learn, connect and grow together - *read our outlook on page 27!*

We're so grateful to our volunteers, team, partners, collaborators, funders, and our community, who gave us their positive energy, time and resources to grow.

Thank you for being part of growing together with us.

Elaine, Executive Director & Board President

# METRICS

## Our Impact in 2025

**110+**

Educational & Community Events

**7,250+**

Volunteer Hours at our Urban Gardens

**3,615 lbs.**

of Food Donated to Food Banks

**1,150+**

Attendees at LEAF Events

**5**

Educational Partners

**3**

Research Partners

# MAJOR INITIATIVES




## EARTH DAY

**Every LEAF Day is Earth Day!**



## STUDENTS FOR LEAF

**Our flagship summer program**



## GROW TOGETHER

**Celebrating the expanded LEAF Urban Farm**

MAJOR INITIATIVES

# LEAF Earth Day

April 19, 2025, was Earth Day–at least for Fremont! Together with our partners, the City of Fremont and Washington Health, LEAF celebrated the 55th anniversary of Earth Day, a global initiative for environmental protection.

LEAF filled 20 booths on the grass area adjacent to the Fremont Downtown Event Center with over 50 volunteers and partners. We shared knowledge about being kind to the earth and each other by building healthy soil, rescuing food, recycling goods, and bringing the community together.




*Bruce, our Founder, sharing stories about LEAF!*

Our LEAF Earth Day Recycling Campaign, led by the Girl Scout Coyote Hills Service Unit, Youth4Good and American High School Interact Club, diverted 155 lbs of bras, socks and school supplies from the landfill by sending them to recycling partners:



80.2 lbs of Socks
to Smartwool




60.4 lbs of School Supplies
to Staples



14.8 lbs of Bras
to Bra Recyclers

MAJOR INITIATIVES

# Students for LEAF

Students for LEAF, our flagship summer program, welcomed eight middle and high school students to our garden for hands-on learning and community service. Students spent the summer with their hands in the soil, mastering regenerative agriculture techniques and forging lasting connections. They engaged in the following activities:

- Soil health research
- Citizen science
- Beekeeping
- Harvesting and propagation
- Cooking
- Landscape design
- Botanical illustration

> *"Students for LEAF was a truly unique experience for my peers and myself to learn all about sustainable agriculture and more from dedicated master gardeners. I have never taken a program that is as immersive and welcoming, filled with interesting people I never would have met otherwise. For me, it was more a valuable, special experience than any of the summer classes held at big-name universities. One word that captures the program is positivity."*
>
> Arushi, Students for LEAF participant



MAJOR INITIATIVES

# Grow Together 2025

In September, we celebrated the expansion of the LEAF Urban Farm with Grow Together, welcoming more than 70 community leaders, partners, neighbors, volunteers, and supporters for an evening of connection and inspiration. Guests toured the farm, enjoyed farm-inspired refreshments, and heard from keynote speaker, Sheena Vaidyanathan, founder of Tera Farm, and community partners advancing this work alongside us. Thanks to generous sponsors–including Fremont Bank and Republic Services–and our broader community, we raised critical funds to expand our educational and food donation programs.












# OUR PROGRAMS



## EDUCATE

**people about healthy soil and caring for the planet**



## GROW

**and share healthy produce with people facing food insecurity**



## RESEARCH

**and advance soil science**



## CONNECT

**people to food, the land and each other**

# EDUCATE PEOPLE

## Hands-On Environmental Learning

Education is at the heart of everything we do because lasting change starts with understanding. When people learn how healthy soil supports nutritious food, climate resilience, and community well-being, they can turn knowledge into action–caring for the planet and creating a more sustainable future together.

## Our Educational Impact in 2025

**56**
**Youth Education Events**

**19**
**Student and Scout Projects**

**8**
**Students for LEAF Graduates**



EDUCATE

# Youth Education

Through hands-on learning, we nurture curiosity, confidence, and a sense of responsibility for the planet, helping young people see themselves as capable leaders in building a more sustainable and equitable future.



## California School for the Blind

In 2025, our partnership with the California School for the Blind entered its third year. Every week, students visit the LEAF Community Garden to tend to their two planter boxes. Led by our garden educators and volunteers, they learn about growing from seed, garden maintenance, worm composting, and beekeeping, among other things.

*"We have students who have never been in a garden before. [One] lives in an apartment and this was his first time being around plants. He has the hugest smile every time he comes here. We also have a student who's considering doing landscape design as a career, and when it became time to show interest in what jobs he wanted this year he was like, 'I want to go back to LEAF. That's where I want to be.'"*

-Kate McGrath,
Teacher at California School For The Blind

EDUCATE

# Youth Education



## Family Days at the Garden

Last year, we introduced Family Days, monthly weekend gatherings for families at our LEAF Urban Farm. Parents, grandparents, and kids explored the garden: meeting wriggly worms, discovering colorful pollinators, creating nature-inspired art, and experiencing the farm with all five senses. These events give families a safe space to create shared memories while helping the next generation build a hands-on connection to food, soil, and the land.



## Internships

We welcomed our first grant-sponsored interns to LEAF: an educational intern to assist with our youth programs, and a sustainable food systems intern to assist in restarting our nursery and designing our educational and production gardens. Their work strengthened our capacity to deliver hands-on education and maintain our growing LEAF Urban Farm during a year of expansion.



## Student and Scout Projects

In 2025, we worked with students and scouts on 19 infrastructure projects for our Urban Gardens, including shade structures, picnic tables, benches, planter cages, and murals. These projects enhance our gardens while providing both students and scouts with valuable opportunities to develop leadership, project management, and practical, hands-on skills.

EDUCATE

# Classes and Workshops

**Throughout the year, we offered educational classes and workshops, led by local experts and held at our Urban Gardens and the Fremont Main Library.**



## Talkin' Dirt Online and LIVE

Talkin' Dirt Online and LIVE connect gardeners, growers, and enthusiasts in a community rooted in regenerative practices. The online series of monthly webinars fosters interactive discussions, while in-person classes at the Fremont Main Library provide practical learning led by a UC Master Gardener.



## Weekend Classes & Workshops

Our summer classes and workshops featured local experts leading interactive sessions in which participants got their hands dirty to learn topics such as composting, plant propagation, fruit tree pruning, beekeeping, and honey harvesting. Through hands-on experiences in our garden, our participants gained skills and knowledge to apply regenerative agriculture practices in their own homes.

# GROW AND SHARE PRODUCE

## From Our Gardens to Local Families

Everybody should have access to fresh, healthy produce. Yet, 1 in 4 Alameda County residents experience or are at risk of hunger.* That's why our volunteers work year-round to plant, nurture, and harvest fresh, seasonal produce to donate to our food bank partners: Tri-City Volunteers (TCV) in Fremont and Daily Bowl/Centro De Servicios in Union City.

## Our Food Security Impact in 2025

**3,615 lbs.**
**of Food Donated to Food Banks**

**7,250+**
**Volunteer Hours at our Gardens**

**40**
**Planter Beds Rented Out to the Community**

*https://www.cafoodbanks.org/food-insecurity-data/

GROW

# LEAF Urban Gardens



## LEAF Urban Farm Expansion

We officially broke ground on our expanded cultivation area and began shaping two new spaces: an education garden designed for hands-on learning for kids, and a production area focused on growing even more fresh food for donation.

We regenerated the soil with layers of compost and cover crops, installed a new irrigation system, started building 48 new planters, and completed a welcoming kitchen patio.

Thank you to all our volunteers, partners and donors who helped us ‘Grow Together’ in 2025!



## LEAF Community Garden Thrives

The LEAF Community Garden truly fulfilled its purpose of providing growing space for people without access to a yard. All forty of our 4'x12' raised planter beds are now fully rented for the season–resulting in a waitlist for the first time ever.

Beyond individual gardening, the garden provided space for the community to gather, including yoga and meditation sessions, personal development workshops, BBQs and potlucks. The garden is now also available to rent for private celebrations.

GROW

# Grow and Share Produce




## Seedling Sale

2025 marked the long-awaited return of our annual seedling sale! We cultivated a variety of vegetables in our rebuilt LEAF Nursery, working with our food bank partners to select culturally relevant crops that reflect the diverse food traditions of the families we serve here in the East Bay.



## Dealing with the Medfly Quarantine

From September 2024 through August 2025, Alameda County was under a Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly) quarantine that restricted the movement of 260 host plants, including fruits, flowers, vegetables, and nuts. In response, we removed all host plants from our farm, no longer accepted gleaned fruit and grew only vegetables like leafy greens, brassicas, legumes and herbs. While the quarantine temporarily restricted donations of summertime favorites like tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and squashes, we grew vegetables that our food bank partners' clients requested and were happy to receive.

# RESEARCH AND ADVANCE SOIL SCIENCE

## Studying the Importance of Healthy Soil

We focus on soil science to explore the benefits of regenerative agriculture. Through collaborations with research institutions, we study soil health in real-world urban gardens and generate data-backed evidence that regenerative practices can restore ecosystems, grow food sustainably, and offer a credible alternative to conventional agriculture.

## Our Research Impact in 2025

**3**

**Soil Science and Research Partners**

**1**

**Research Paper Submitted for Publication**

RESEARCH

# Soil Science Partnerships

In 2025, we collaborated with educational and research institutions to advance applied soil science. Our partners contributed testing equipment, methodological expertise and analytical capacity, while LEAF's Urban Farm served as a living laboratory for field-based research on soil health and regenerative agricultural practices.




UC MERCED

We partnered with UC Merced to test the effectiveness of regenerative agriculture practices in generating heathy soil over time. This work has led to the submission of a research paper titled, "Regenerative Agriculture Supports Soil Health and Biodiversity in an Urban Landscape" in Discover Sustainability.

> "*What I love about working with LEAF is that it brings science to life. We're not just talking about soil health, biodiversity, and regenerative agriculture in theory– we're testing it, measuring it, and seeing the impact firsthand in a real community setting.*"
>
> – Dr. Josh Garcia, assistant professor in the Department of Life & Environmental Sciences at the University of California, Merced

STOPWASTE

LEAF actively participated in StopWaste's compost testing program, which evaluates the effectiveness of different composting methods across compost facilities and farms including ours. LEAF's compost scored best overall, even scoring higher than a commercial compost facility!

ALAMEDA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

ACRCD provided LEAF with soil testing, technical assistance and financial support to increase the use of compost at the LEAF Urban Farm.

# CONNECT

## Build Community: Stronger Together

We believe caring for the earth starts with caring for each other. By opening our Urban Gardens to the community, we create safe spaces for people to learn, connect, and grow together.

> *"LEAF's dedication to fighting food insecurity and educating people on sustainable living has led to a supportive community in the wider Tri-City area."*
>
> **- Aisha Wahab, California State Senator**



CONNECT

# Build Community



## 2025 Benefit in Concert

2025's LEAF Benefit in Concert brought the community together for a joyful day of live music, shared food, and collective impact. Gardeners, neighbors, local artists, volunteers, and supporters gathered at the Stump Stage, aka our founders' Bruce and Lorna's front yard in Niles, raising funds to support LEAF's food donation, education, and community programs.



## Community Art

In 2025, local artist, soil scientist, and long-time LEAF volunteer Zoe Caron led two community art projects at the LEAF Urban Farm. With the help of volunteers, we completed a vibrant mural of California natives on our education container and began a large-scale soil food web mural on our storage container. Designed in an inclusive, paint-by-numbers style, these guided mural painting days made art accessible to all ages and skill levels.

CONNECT

# Build Community



## Wellness and Community Events

Last year, we introduced mindfulness and growth programs to invite the community to slow down, recharge, and connect with nature. We hosted yoga and meditation sessions in the gardens, as well as personal development workshops for all ages. These gatherings nurtured well-being and deepened our sense of connection to ourselves and the earth.




## Corporate Volunteering

We welcomed small and large teams from local businesses and corporations to the LEAF Urban Farm for corporate volunteering, including Western Digital, Seagate, Ivalua, and StopWaste. Projects included harvesting produce for donation to local food banks, planting and propagating, and building key infrastructure such as benches and raised beds.

> *"The structure of our corporate volunteering event with LEAF worked really well. We had the opportunity to learn about LEAF with a brief intro, tour the farm, and then experience two different projects. And we all enjoyed the honey tasting at the end. I would highly recommend volunteering with LEAF to other companies and teams."*
>
> **-Heather Howell, Director, Culture & Community at Seagate Technology**

SUPPORTERS

# Thank You to Our Community

At the core of LEAF is a vibrant community of dedicated individuals who generously share their time, skills, and passion to advance our mission. From hands-on work in the gardens to behind-the-scenes support, our volunteers are the backbone of all we do to shape and sustain LEAF.




## Our Board Members



**Elaine Owyang**
President &
Executive Director



**Bruce Cates**
Founder &
Vice President



**Lorna Jaynes**
Secretary
& Legal



**Paul Phipps**
Treasurer



**Jerry Kuhlmann**
Director of
Infrastructure



**Richard Godfrey**
Director of
Community
Outreach



**Mela**
Chief Happiness
Officer



**Sawyer**
Chief Relaxation
Officer

## Our Strategic Team and Advisory Board



**Bettina Grab**
Director,
Development,
Partnerships &
Marketing



**Katherine Kravitz**
Educational
Program Manager
& Grants Manager



**Anu Natarajan**
Advisor,
Development &
Strategic
Partnerships



**Utsa Ray Singh**
Advisor,
Education &
Financial
Analyst

SUPPORTERS

# Our Funders

We are deeply grateful to our financial supporters –grantors, foundations, and individual donors– whose generosity fuels our work. Your investments strengthen our educational programs, sustain our urban gardens, and allow us to reach more people each year.

Thank you for standing with us and helping bring our mission to life.

THOMAS FAMILY FOUNDATION

ALTAMONT EDUCATION ADVISORY BOARD

USDA

SPROUTS FARMERS MARKET

TE CONNECTIVITY

FREMONT BANK FOUNDATION

FREMONT BANK

STOPWASTE

WD

REPUBLIC SERVICES

Ava Community Energy

SUPERVISOR DAVID HAUBERT DISTRICT 4

Niles (Fremont) Rotary Club

SEAGATE

ALAMEDA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

KAISER PERMANENTE

# Our Community Partners

LEAF's impact grows stronger through collaboration with our dedicated community partners. United by a shared commitment to education, food security, and environmental stewardship, we are honored to work alongside them to create meaningful, lasting change.

Fremont

HCWD

TCV FOOD BANK + MOBILE PANTRY

Daily bowl

California School Bond

California

UCMERCED

Stanford EARTH

OHLONE COLLEGE

ALAMEDA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Scouting America

Girl Scouts in the Tri-City area

YOUTH4GOOD

BACS

ZOE CARON ART

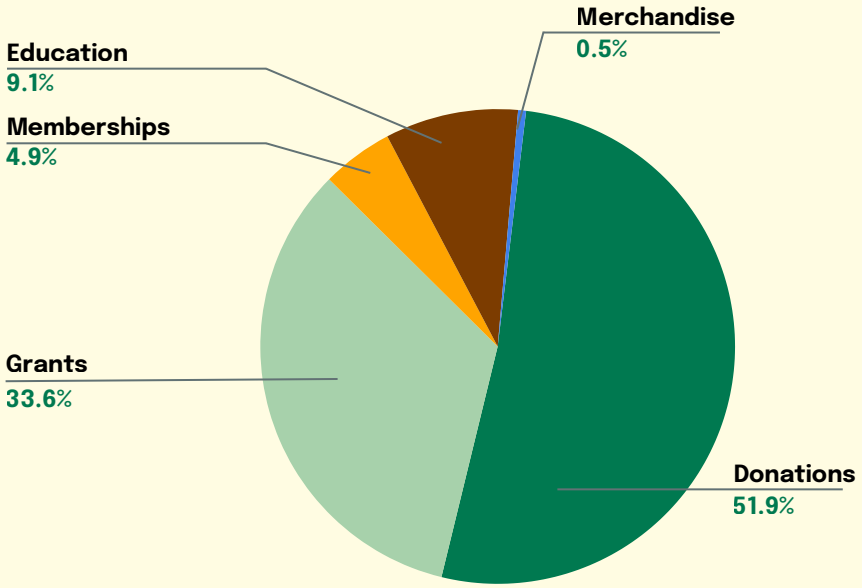
Eat the bag brush strokes

Tri-City Ecology Center

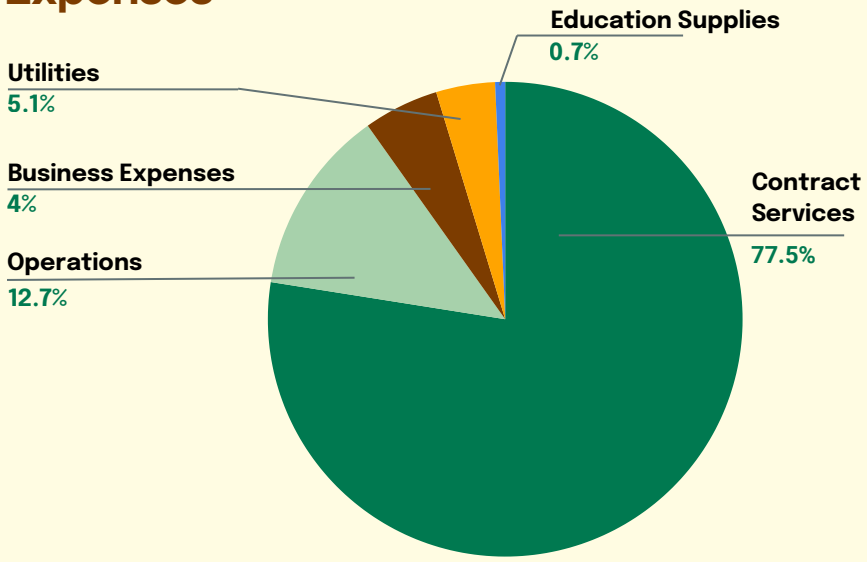
Urban Forest Friends

# Financials

## Revenue




## Expenses




## Revenue $179,310

The organization maintained strong revenue performance in 2025, reflecting continued community support and alignment with our mission. These resources allowed us to sustain core programs while supporting meaningful growth and expansion across our initiatives.

## Expenses $187,048

Expenses this year reflect a strategic investment in scaling our operations and deepening program impact. Resources were directed toward contracted services, infrastructure improvements, and expanded program delivery across our garden and education initiatives. These investments were intentional, positioning the organization for greater efficiency and long-term sustainability.

## Net Result -$7,738

The organization operated at a modest deficit in 2025, reflecting a deliberate decision to invest in growth and capacity-building. This approach allowed us to accelerate key initiatives while leveraging prior financial strength.

## Financial Position and Outlook

The organization remains financially stable, supported by strong reserves and minimal liabilities. With a solid foundation in place, we are well-positioned to move into 2026.

# Let's Cultivate Minds

We are really excited for 2026: After building the foundations of our farm in 2025, we are now focusing on cultivating the minds of younger people.

We are expanding our educational programs to include new partners: Stanford University, California School for the Deaf, Friends of Children with Special Needs, Fremont Unified School District, and the libraries in Fremont (Main and Centerville), Union City, and Newark. We have added new creative reuse and wellness classes, along with new days and times of the week, to make them more accessible to all.

We invite you to join us on this journey:

**Volunteer:** Grow your own knowledge of regenerative agriculture, support hands-on workshops, mentor young learners, or lend your skills at our Urban Gardens.

**Attend our Events:** Join a class, workshop, or community gathering.

**Partner:** Collaborate with us to educate future generations about sustainable living.

**Shop:** Buy local honey from our garden or worms to boost your compost.

**Donate:** Help us to expand our impact and build a more sustainable future together.

Let's cultivate minds together!




LEAF
fremontleaf.org