



## Alumni

# Gerald McIntosh, III Class of 2016

**Years farming:** 2

**Certifications:** DC Dept. of Park and Recreation Compost Trainer, Agroecology Trainer

**Focus:** Organic fruits, vegetables, and culinary herbs  
Certifications

**What initially led you to farming?** Financial hardship led me to farming. The increasing cost of food products in the neighborhood grocery store and the overwhelming amount of time needed to commute, work, and achieve the income to purchase these products made it difficult to survive. My frustration grew after losing my bike patrol security job and dropping out of the computer engineering program at Prince George's Community College. Farming showed me how to utilize all my work experience in customer service, sales and marketing, life skills, organization, and intellect I gained from all my training to produce healthy food for myself, my family, and for my community while collecting an income. Farming enabled me to feel free and independent. Volunteering in the city at different farms I gained insight from master farmers and began to established myself as a Farmer.

**Can you share some of the goals you had when working at THEARC Farm in DC and some of your own long-term farming goals?** A goal I had for THEARC was to increase youth and community involvement in garden skill classes and to introduce weekly evening classes where the community could learn how to grow their own food. A long term goal was to expand to at least twice its current size and generate jobs within the community, using the increased space to host a 12-month garden training/apprenticeship for teenage boys and girls. After the training the youth would be eligible for employment on the farm. My ultimate goal as a farmer is to expand to an homestead with my son and produce many organic added value products and manage a full-diet CSA.

**During your time in the BFTP, which learning opportunities most helped you become a better farmer?** The Future Harvest CASA Conference was the learning opportunity that most helped me become a better farmer during my time in the BFTP. Connecting with other farmers helped me build solid relationships within a network of professional farmers that I would not have otherwise had. Through that experience I gained peers as a resource for advice on troubleshooting and for suggestions on growing methods. The workshops and panel discussions were led by speakers and master growers that shared information on ways to increase small scale farm production. Listening to the panel conversations and classes really helped me with production on my farm and inspire my creativity to innovate and try new growing methods.

**What would you say is the hardest part about farming? And the most rewarding?** The hardest part about farming is land access, finding affordable, usable land large enough to produce food for multiple families. In DC there is limited growing space and even the distribution of community plots is not managed the most efficiently. The most rewarding part is knowing the food produced on my farm is contributing to a CSA Program is the most rewarding part of being a farmer. I am able to connect direct with a variety of people in the community from doctors to families that live in the shelters near by. Interacting with the families who appreciate my produce strengthens my relationship with the community. It amazes me to see the customers leave my farm with a bag full of organic produce, knowing that they understand where their food was produced and how much energy went into growing it. It's fulfilling to know they will enjoy it and that I played a role in restoring the health of many.

**What is your favorite tool and why?** My favorite tool is my hands because I use them for almost everything on the farm. I use them to dig, measure, plant, prune, harvest, spread organic fertilizers, weed, guide plant growth and anything else needed to assist the health of the plant and soil.

**What advice would you give to aspiring farmers?** My advice to aspiring farmers is to learn as much as they can from all types of resources such as college courses, books, farm related panels, group discussions. They should attend conferences and trainings, communicate with peers, and work closely with mentors in apprenticeships to apply their knowledge in effective ways. Research your growing space and stay committed to biodiversity. Organize gardening groups and develop a support system to help with your journey as a farmer.