Alumnus Anthony Hattinger, Garden Production Manager, Central Detroit Christian (CDC).
Hatinger, who has a BA in Religious Studies with a minor in Horticulture and specialization in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, is the Garden Production Manager for Central Detroit Christian (CDC) and oversees garden production at several of CDC’s for-profit businesses that employ more than 100 people. His job is giving him the opportunity to put his knowledge from MSU into real-world, community-building experiences.

“I was able to understand cross-cultural ties in organizations and in people. And, I was learning about all these different religions, learning all these different cultures,” he said. “Now, I get to use my education in a different sort of way, to create an urban discipleship.”

As the Garden Production Manager, Hatinger nurtures the area with fresh food products and restoration materials, and the profits made from the sale of these resources are redistributed back into the community.

“We’re teaching ag-tech skills, market skills, sales skills, and weaving a tapestry to attack food access issues on a variety of levels,” he said.

Central Detroit Christian is a faith-based nonprofit organization that serves Detroit communities by pairing education and employment with economic development efforts to reinvigorate local neighborhoods.

As a result of CDC’s work – and Hatinger’s knowledge – Detroit community members are excited about gardening and learning new, stimulating practices.

“The impact this gardening work has had in the neighborhood has a lot of different roots. People want to start their own gardens; they want to start their own composting programs,” Hatinger said. “It’s a spirit of cultivation that’s happening within people.”

One of Hatinger’s main responsibilities is overseeing the CDC Farm and Fishery, an indoor self-sustaining aquaponics center that brings fresh fish and vegetables to a neighborhood severely lacking in fresh foods. The facility is the first and only licensed fish farm in the Detroit area and just one example of how new, innovative ideas are helping to nurture Detroit communities.

“(Detroit) has always been a place of innovation and a place of great challenges,” Hatinger said.

Being in Detroit and getting hands-on experiences working with a misunderstood area has had a big impact on Hatinger, too.

“There’s a lot of spiritual and emotional shifts that Detroit has had on me,” he said. “My experiences here have changed a lot about how I want to live my life and how I want to be a leader for the next generation. It’s been a blessing.”