One of the highlights of a very challenging year in 2020 was working closely with our small team of Lead Orchard Volunteers (LOV’s) at the new POP Learning Orchard at The Woodlands. Because pandemic safety precautions made larger public work days impossible, this ongoing group of dedicated volunteers was essential in establishing this new demonstration orchard and in growing 1,400 pounds of produce for emergency food distribution. The LOV team formed a real bond at weekly work days. Staff and volunteers all highly valued the rare opportunity for social time in a safe outdoor setting, the chance to build horticultural skills, and the ability to serve the West Philadelphia community through the harvest and distribution of much needed fresh produce to families in need.

One of my favorite memories of the whole year was the day the full Woodlands orchard team planted pawpaws together last fall. Each team member got to plant one of eight paw paw cultivars. Pawpaws are a special fruit for POP, being one of our favorite, easy to grow, and delicious native fruit trees. This year Orchard Director Alkebu-Lan Marcus was featured in a New York Times article about pawpaws and also wrote an article about local pawpaw collector and breeder Ted Weeden for POP’s blog. After the pawpaws were planted, each team member read aloud to the rest of the team about the origin and characteristics of the variety they planted.

Planting fruit trees is always a powerful experience, connecting us both to our roots and the past and to a better, more beautiful and bountiful future. Our pawpaw planting day built an even more intimate bond between our team and the trees as well as each other. By being planters of trees, we help others share the same profound experience. We hope all POP partners, volunteers, and supporters find the same pride and joy in seeing our city of fruit continue to grow and provide for generations to come.

POP is thankful for renewed funding from the Claneil Foundation, Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation, and Patagonia, and for new institutional support from the William Penn Foundation, MOM’s Organic Market, and Whole Foods Market. Together with our partners, volunteers, and wider community, POP will continue to support community-led food sovereignty efforts and access to green spaces in Philadelphia.
In 2020, POP held 197 orchard plantings, trainings and work days.

- 1,472nd fruit tree planted
- 2,954 pounds of fruit harvested
- 1,408 pounds of produce donated

Planted a total of 132 new fruit & nut trees, 356 berry bushes & vines, and 1,529 perennials & groundcovers.

As Covid-19 caused a shut down of our environmental center and cancelation of programming, such as summer camp, we were in low spirits at the Tree House. Installation of our fruit trees and the subsequent work that needed to be done, kept our team busy, and together. Our bodies became stronger, inside and out, as we worked to dream of a food forest a reality for our visitors, especially our kids, to learn and grow with.

—Christina Moresi
Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, Wissahickon Environmental Center
2020 in Review

**450 volunteers**

 Partners reported that 4,355 tasted something grown in a POP orchard, 512 participated in educational programs, and 3,583 used one as a gathering space.

**31 blog posts**

 **113 attendees at September’s Orchard Celebration & Open House**

 "Spending time in the food forest was especially cathartic this year in the midst of the pandemic. I loved observing the plants and insects, being nurtured by some of the edible and medicinal plants I harvested there, and connecting with other volunteers while pruning, weeding and planting."

**NEW ORCHARD PARTNERS**

 Depaul USA

 POP Learning Orchard at The Woodlands

 Wissahickon Environmental Center

Reduced numbers and participation were a result of Covid.
Over the past year, POP staff, interns, and volunteers created more online resources to connect people to the natural world, including those to promote the POPHarvest program. While group harvesting was not an option last year, POP encouraged gleaning of common city fruits like juneberries and mulberries, publishing maps with the locations of these trees and asking our followers to contribute their findings. The juneberry map alone has been viewed nearly 6700 times! We published blog posts on gingko and knotweed as well as herbal allies like yarrow and bee balm, to continue offering educational resources on common plants with edible or useful properties.

Even when access to some sites was limited, people were able to harvest and enjoy the fruit grown in POP orchards. Orchard caretakers from LoMo shared that neighbors “reached over and through fences to harvest raspberries and figs” from the South Philly HS orchard, which was closed to public access throughout the pandemic. A 9 year old girl, who had been visiting the 8th & Poplar Farm since she was little, expanded her horizons by confidently climbing up an orchard ladder to harvest Asian pears. Volunteers bonded around the harvest of figs and plums at Mill Creek Urban Farm, and neighbors in Strawberry Mansion relieved the year’s stresses through visits to the beautiful orchard down the street.

Many more partners shared how their own years (and lives) were impacted:

“From the start, our garden crew learned from POP and us to take care and manage our orchard and vegetable plots. They also love to be able to bring home healthy fresh fruits and vegetables for their families. We also shared any extra harvest to other neighbors since our soup kitchen is closed this year due to the Pandemic.”

MEEI LING NG
UBC Garden of Eden

“Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, we were closed for much of the year. During the closure we assisted St. Christopher’s Foundation with food distribution to the local community. The boxes that we distributed were full of organic vegetables. On several occasions we added strawberries from our orchard and fresh herbs from our garden. It was such a nice touch!”

CAROLANN COSTA
Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House
“Throughout the pandemic we have continued to host monthly volunteer days. While we needed to cap attendance to keep them safe, the orchard served as a great way to work while still socially distancing. Everyone could mulch their own tree and stay safely away from others. **Multiple people told me what a lifeline these volunteer opportunities were for them during their isolating time at home.** We had many repeat volunteers who really looked forward to coming out and volunteering with us every month.”

**NINA BERRYMAN**  
Weavers Way Farms

“They had to cap attendance to keep them safe. Everyone could mulch their own tree and stay safely away from others. Multiple people told me what a lifeline these volunteer opportunities were for them during their isolating time at home. We had many repeat volunteers who really looked forward to coming out and volunteering with us every month.”

**JOHN ESKATE**  
KleinLife

“Throughout the course of the summer, I was able to meet neighbors and introduce them to the herbs, plums, and pears we harvested... Neighbors were quite appreciative and surprised. We developed a small, loyal following. A chef stopped by early in the summer; she wanted a sampling of all the herbs, so she could try them in different recipes! It was a great community building experience!”

**—Susan Haidar**  
Cobbs Creek Community Environmental Center

“Aside from our visitors loving our strawberries every June, this year was marked with the first fruits of our Methley Plum tree, and a bountiful harvest of Chicago Hardy Figs. **It’s so rewarding to share the fruits of our small orchard with our community members through our Farm Market.**”

**READ MORE 2020 PARTNER STORIES HERE**
In April 2020, POP and partners at The Woodlands were thrilled to officially announce the POP Learning Orchard at The Woodlands. To commemorate the occasion, The Woodlands published a digital tour, Historic Foodways and the Food Growing Future, that details the past and future edible landscape of The Woodlands. Throughout the spring and summer, POP staff and a core group of Lead Orchard Volunteers worked to plant nearly 60 fruit and nut trees, dozens of berry bushes, and hundreds of pollinator plants and other edible and useful perennials.

Because the fruit and nut trees will take years to mature and become productive, and in recognition of the rapid increases in poverty and hunger due to the pandemic, POP used the space available in this new demonstration orchard to plant a variety of annual crops. Orchard Director Alkebu-Lan Marcus, former farm manager at Mill Creek Farm, led these efforts that resulted in over 1,400 pounds of kale, collards, squash, melons, and herbs to two local mutual aid groups, BunnyHopPHL (co-founded by POP board member Jena Harris) and Food Not Bombs. POP further coordinated the harvest and donation of an additional 300 pounds of kale, figs, and other produce grown at the Penn Park Farm & Orchard.

In the fall, the POP team continued work at the Learning Orchard, expanding the pollinator plantings and berry beds, moving its edible plant nursery from its former location at the Awbury Ag Village, and installing a new access road and deer fencing: read a full year-end summary on POP’s blog and see a video of the nursery prep here! Funding for the POP Learning Orchard at The Woodlands was provided by the Junior League of Philadelphia, Inc.
Programs: Lead Orchard Volunteers

POP piloted a new effort in 2020, the Lead Orchard Volunteer (LOV) program, with support from the William Penn Foundation. Through this program, POP recruited and trained individual volunteers and aimed to create volunteer teams based at one specific site year-round. LOV were placed at orchards in their own neighborhoods when possible, and eligible for seasonal stipends in recognition of their year-round efforts to assist POP partners and staff in maintaining these spaces.

Each year, through the annual partner survey, POP hears from our partners that the most valuable service POP provides is the hands-on support and training offered at seasonal staff visits. By creating a long-term commitment to learn the plants and seasonal care needs, and cultivating relationships with POP partners, LOV teams will enhance the ongoing support that POP is able to offer, resulting in healthier and more bountiful orchards that welcome all neighbors.

To assist site partners, LOV, and other orchard caretakers, POP released a new Community Organizing Toolkit, the collaborative development of which was led by Orchard Director Michael Muehlbauer. We hope this toolkit and the accompanying monthly orchard care task list and its other resources will result in more productive orchards that do better at improving neighborhood food security.
Programs: Growing Together

POP launched its Growing Together campaign in June 2020, to uplift and promote the work of our many community partners. Throughout the year, POP will feature the work and accomplishments of these partners, especially those led by and serving Black communities and communities of color, in our emails and social media posts. As this past year made clear, our society continues to be plagued by inequity and injustice. POP core values include education, justice, permanence, regeneration and beauty. POP lives these values through our work of creating permanent food-growing green infrastructure – community orchards – in the city of Philadelphia, and through the Growing Together campaign we hope to promote the good work of our partners as we all continue fighting for a more just and equitable world.

To kick off this new campaign, in June 2020 POP chose to highlight Urban Tree Connection (UTC), a nonprofit whose mission is “to build a neighborhood rooted food and land system through community leadership development and land based strategies in West Philadelphia.” Each June, we will ask the public, and POP’s board and supporters, to make a contribution in solidarity to one of our partner organizations. In 2020, members of POP’s board made contributions totaling over $1,000 to invest in UTC’s work; we hope to see the level of support grow in 2021 for this year’s partner. As the campaign continued, we featured Norris Square Neighborhood Project through social media and a walking map tour of the Norris Square and Fairhill neighborhoods; Bartram’s Garden; Share Food Program; the Wissahickon Environmental Center and their new food forest; and the Overbrook Environmental Education Center. 2020 Communications and Outreach Intern Ngoc Pham, a student in the Growth and Structure of Cities program at Bryn Mawr College, researched and wrote of many of these posts highlighting partners throughout the last year.

This time of crisis has made clear the need for mutual aid and solidarity, and POP will continue to think of ways to uplift partners as we work together to advance food and land sovereignty. The Growing Together campaign is also proving to be another good way to connect and build relationships by helping our partners share the full extent of their work with POP’s community; we intend to continue enhancing these efforts through additional blog posts, video interviews, and other updates that invite our followers to read, listen, learn, and become involved.
Partner Highlight: Urban Tree Connection

Urban Tree Connection (UTC) works to build a neighborhood rooted food and land system through community leadership development and land based strategies in West Philadelphia. POP has been working with UTC to design the Pearl St Orchard, and this space adjacent to the active community garden will be restored and expanded in 2021. In 2020, UTC grew nearly 5,800 pounds of sustainable chemical-free food, delivering it at low or no cost to their Haddington neighbors through direct distribution and their pilot Free Food Share Project. UTC was also featured in the launch of POP’s Growing Together program in 2020.

PHILADELPHIA ORCHARD PROJECT MAP:

PEARL STREET ORCHARD

- POP community orchards
- Supported sites
In September 2020, POP held a modified version of its annual event, this year holding an online Orchard Celebration and an open house at The Woodlands. You can watch additional videos from the online program, including remarks from 3rd District Councilmember Jamie Gauthier, on POP’s YouTube channel. This year, POP honored the 2020 LOV cohort with the annual Golden Persimmon volunteer award in recognition of their dedication throughout the pandemic. Co-Executive Director Phil Forsyth presented the award to Woodlands LOV Sara Ray, who accepted it on behalf of the entire 14-member cohort.

Chris Bolden-Newsome and Ty Holmberg were also honored with POP’s 2020 Purple Fig Award (view award presentation here) for their many accomplishments and long orchard partnership via the Sankofa Community Farm at Bartram’s Garden. As co-directors of Sankofa Farm, Chris and Ty have created a remarkable intergenerational, spiritually rooted, African Diaspora-focused program dedicated to community food sovereignty and natural agriculture. POP and Sankofa first partnered in planting the orchard at Bartram’s Garden in 2011 and have continued to collaborate in caring for and expanding the most diverse community orchard in the city for a decade.
Financials 2019-2020

INCOME

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<td>Foundation Contributions</td>
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<td>Corporate Contributions</td>
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<td>Direct Costs - Special Event</td>
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CONSOLIDATED EXPENSES

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<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
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CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

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<td><strong>Change in Net Assets</strong></td>
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Additionally, POP received two loans through the CARES Act: PPP & EIDL. Both were forgiven in FY 2020-2021.

Above: POP commissioned a painting from UBC Garden of Eden caretaker Meei Ling Ng which was turned into cards sent to thank POP donors.
People

**BOARD LIST**

Anne Taylor
President

Angelina Conti
Vice President/President-Elect

Bertina Whytehead
Treasurer

Michelle Lawson
Secretary

Chloe Cerwinka
Rose Cuozzo

Tony Dorman
Michael Drennan
Marci Green
Jena Annise Harris
Craig Johnson
Daniel Keyes
Nate Kleinman
Loretta Lewis
Julie Ulrich

**POP STAFF LIST**

Sharon Appiah
Orchard Assistant

Phil Forsyth
Co-Executive Director

Kim Jordan
Co-Executive Director

Alkebu-Lan Marcus
Orchard Director

Michael Muehlbauer
Orchard Director

Corrie Spellman-Lopez
Education and Outreach Coordinator

**INTERNS**

Joe Dizenhuz
Education and Outreach Intern

Kermit O
Orchard Intern

Simone Shemshedini
Orchard Intern

**2019-20 FOUNDATION AND CORPORATE SPONSORS**

Anonymous
Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church
Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Foundation
Claneil Foundation
David C. Isenberg Family Fund
Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation
Family Mayer Foundation
GSD Foundation
Hardy Plant Society
Jody and John Arnhold Newman’s Own Foundation
One Tree Planted
Old City Coffee
Patagonia
Patricia Kind Family Foundation
Philadelphia Chapter of the Garden Club of America
Riverwards Produce
Rosenlund Family Foundation
Tito’s Handmade Vodka
Tree Philly
Weavers Way
William Penn Foundation

**2019-20 MATCHING GIFTS**

Chubb Charitable Foundation
GSK

Susquehanna International Group
Vanguard