Now in our 16th year, the Philadelphia Orchard Project (POP) is an established part of the movement to develop more sustainable, equitable, and ethical local food systems in our city. Community orchards are now growing in neighborhoods across Philadelphia, with 66 sites in 24 zip codes. An additional eleven community orchards – some initially planted by POP in collaboration with community partners and some planted by others and maintained with POP’s assistance – have been lost since we began our work in 2007. The reasons for these losses have differed, among them being a change in desired use by the community partner; sale of land for development; or school closure. But we are not deterred, and vow to continue our work towards a more beautiful, bountiful, and sustainable city, in solidarity with partners current, past, and future.

This remains a time of great promise for previously unimaginable levels of investment from the federal government through the Inflation Reduction Act which provides hundreds of millions of dollars for communities to pursue green solutions to climate change. It comes at a time when the City has published its approved Tree Plan and finds itself well-positioned to pursue many of those audacious goals and plans over the next five years. Will this help realize POP’s vision of a fruit tree in every neighborhood?

Will the Urban Agriculture Plan’s completion lead to a push for reforms around land disposition that recognize the myriad health and environmental benefits of community gardens, orchards, and green spaces? We continue to dream.

On a brisk spring day in early 2022, a group of Impact100 members from the Environmental committee met with POP’s staff, board, and volunteers at the Learning Orchard to hear our vision for the future of the organization. At the time we were still completing our strategic planning process, and it left us feeling vulnerable to say that we didn’t know with complete certainty how the new funds would be used. In June 2022, at the end of our fiscal year, POP was honored to receive a $100,000 grant from them that demonstrated their belief in our mission. We’re grateful for Impact100’s commitment, and for renewed support from the Claneil Foundation for the next three years, because this type of trust-based philanthropy has been transformational for POP and other grassroots organizations. Through this support and the ongoing hard work of our staff, partners, and volunteers, POP will continue our great strides towards our vision of a city of fruit for all.
The core work of POP is education and knowledge-sharing around food and the environment. POP gives communities direct experience handling perennial food-producing plants, often through an orchard work day, workshop or harvest event. POP aims to inspire and empower community members with the resources, knowledge, and connections to continue the work in their own neighborhoods. Orchards become transformational spaces where community members enjoy a sense of “I can do this too.”

Near-term, the focus is on internal rather than external growth, strengthening existing programs and growing relationships with ongoing orchard partners and the communities they serve. POP will invest in deepening relationships with partners, volunteers, and community educators using goals that are rooted in diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

POP will prioritize plants that thrive in the Philadelphia region and will be resilient in a changing climate, and advocate for policies that advance environmental justice and help protect our planet from climate catastrophe.
2022 IN REVIEW

Planted 1,562nd fruit tree

Donated over 1,300 pounds of produce

287 orchard plantings, trainings and work days

Partners harvested 6,264 pounds of fruit

Planted a total of 40 new fruit & nut trees, 244 berry bushes & vines and 1,310 perennials & groundcovers

1,107 visitors and volunteers at the POP Learning Orchard

809 total volunteers

NEW ORCHARD PARTNERS

Life Do Grow Orchard at Urban Creators

FDR Park Orchard

Fernhill Food Forest
“It was so great to see our youth interns choosing, designing layout and planting new shrubs and herbs in the space after losing some valuable plant life the year before. They were most proud of this accomplishment and excited to see them grow over the coming years.”
- Lu Thain, The Village

“This year we were lucky enough to put on several workshops under the shade and beauty of our farm’s 3 cherry trees! Living and learning within our garden’s living infrastructure has been invaluable to the spirit of our community gatherings.”
- Hannah Thompson
POP’s community partners reported that **6,576 people used an orchard as an outdoor gathering space**. They also estimated that **4,656 people tried fruit grown in a POP orchard.** While these numbers still haven’t rebounded from pre-pandemic years, the stories we hear from orchard volunteers, partners, and program participants points to the **joy and fulfillment to be found in these neighborhood green spaces.** Read more from POP’s **2022 partner survey here!**

“Someone came by who grew up with a fig tree in their grandma’s yard and hadn’t had any since she was a kid. She got to pick fruit from our tree and told me stories of her grandmother. I am grateful to have a space for those experiences and stories to exist in.”

-Carly Freedman, CHOP Garden at Karabots
Multiple partners reported what POP staff also experienced at the Learning Orchard: a late spring frost severely impacted pome and stone fruit crops, resulting in low or no pears, plums, or peaches. Extended drought conditions also left local wildlife desperate for sustenance.

As one partner shared, “This year we had a freak late frost while all the trees were in bloom. It devastated our production and what little fruit was on the trees was ravaged by the animals expecting more.” Squirrels, groundhogs, and birds were constantly scouting for food and sources of water, impacting many community orchards and gardens across the city. POP’s most upsetting crop loss happened when the field full of nearly-ripe watermelons was feasted on overnight by very hungry critters, leaving no fruit untouched to harvest or donate.

“I feel that the greatest impact of our Orchard is it attracts a multitude of different pollinators, from native bee species, to wasps, to butterflies. Since we are an environmental center, this helps us demonstrate the value of native plants and herbs in tackling the crisis of pollinator and insect decline. In addition, our garden is very beautiful. People comment on this all the time. It is next to our driveway, so folks coming to all our programs benefit from its beauty.”

- Susan Haidar
POP’s educational efforts continued to engage partners, volunteers, and members of the public via in-person and online workshops, skill-shares, and publications. Some highlights of the past year included plant spotlights on Asian pear, sorrel, Northern bayberry, and passionflower (also known as maypop seen at left).

The POP team visited Little Pond, a new food forest (and community arts center) tended to by a longtime POP volunteer, Anisa George.

It was the third full growing season for the POP Learning Orchard.

Read the Learning Orchard year in review on POP's blog!
POP published a new pruning video series in early 2022 which can be seen in full on YouTube. The series was filmed by Ander Kazmerski, produced by Marc Steiner, and edited by POP staff.

Almost half of POP’s partners that responded to our annual partner survey had seen the videos and expressed interest in more videos, while most of the remainder didn’t know about the videos prior to our survey, but intend to watch them.

Through a partnership with Oak Lane Maple, POP staff learned about the process of sap collection and sugaring and held a virtual workshop on the topic. With permission from The Woodlands, a total of 6 sugar and red maple trees were tapped and eventually turned into syrup at the Sugar Shack. This was a great learning opportunity but the logistics of collecting and transporting sap to its destination outside the city - during the busiest weeks of the winter pruning season - means it probably won’t become a regular winter practice for our team.

We were introduced to Nicole from Ampersand Textile, whose enthusiasm for natural inks and dyes resulted in an exciting collaboration and discovery: the bark stripped from the pruned branches of fruit trees can be used to make art! The process was shared on POP’s blog and Instagram to encourage experimentation and play. We welcome anyone interested in collaborating on a workshop with POP to contact us: learn more about this opportunity on our website.
We continued to build participation in the program through offering seasonal stipends, with a 40% increase in the number of LOVs receiving these, and saw that nearly all of 2022 LOVs (24 of 26) were from the same or adjacent zip code to the orchard they supported, up from 74% the prior year. These increases support POP’s goal of engaging nearby neighbors in ongoing orchard care.

Nafeesah Cannady has been a Lead Orchard Volunteer with POP since 2021, initially at the Union Baptist Church Garden of Eden and currently at the POP Learning Orchard. What does she feel is the most rewarding aspect of being a POP LOV?

“Accepting and embracing the fact that I don’t know everything. I really enjoy that POP goes out of its way to teach and do workshops and do one on one field days. I think that’s all important and solidifies that we never stop learning. It’s changed my mindset to be more enthusiastic about learning as much as I can. Also I enjoy the fact that I can pass it on to people in the community, adults who read in the garden, kids who come by– they’re always included!”

-Nafeesah Cannady

Andrew Figueiredo, after being introduced to the organization through serving as a Learning Orchard LOV, has since joined POP’s board.

“I love meeting people and seeing familiar faces at POP. Especially coming out of the pandemic, it’s refreshing to work alongside people from every background in person on shared tasks.” - Andrew Figueiredo
POP STAFF

Phil Forsyth Co-Executive Director
Kim Jordan Co-Executive Director
Sharon Appiah Orchard Director
Erika D’Andrea Orchard Coordinator
Cortina Mallozzi Fundraising and Communications Assistant
Deja Morgan Community Outreach Coordinator
Simone Shemshedini Orchard Coordinator
Corrie Spellman-Lopez Education Director
Carolina Torres Orchard Coordinator

CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS

Marci Green President
Jena Harris Vice President
Danny Keyes Treasurer
Rose Cuozzo Secretary
Maku Ali
Angelina Conti
Tony Dorman
Elán Drennon
Andrew Figueiredo
Gillian Golson
Craig Johnson
Nate Kleinman
Michelle Lawson
Loretta Lewis
Brian Olszak
Inella Ray
Julie Ulrich
FINANCIALS

INCOME

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CONSOLIDATED EXPENSES

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CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

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POP appreciates the support received during the fiscal year July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022. Full financials are available on POP’s website.
A list of POP’s current institutional supporters can be viewed at: phillyorchards.org/donate

51 sustaining monthly donors making an average gift of $34