Welcome

Message From the Board President

When I think back on 2023, the first word that comes to mind is Growth. With new infrastructure, staff members, funding, board members, initiatives, and community partners, it was a busy and exhilarating year to see our mission take shape in new ways.

One of our biggest highlights was the completion of two high tunnels at our Learning Orchard. After years of planning, fundraising, and permitting, the high tunnels became a reality. Volunteers from the neighborhood and POP community spent months building the structures alongside POP staff in what can best be described as an old-fashioned barn raising. Thanks to funding provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and the Junior League of Philadelphia, the high tunnels will allow POP to grow more nursery materials and experiment with growing a food forest and perennial crops that are typically raised in a warmer (Zone 8) climate.

Adding to our list of “firsts” in 2023, we received local, state, and federal funding for the first time -- from the City of Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the People’s Garden Initiative of the United States Department of Agriculture. We are so grateful to receive this recognition, which has allowed POP to increase the hands-on support we provide to community partners, engage more with youth, increase Spanish language accessibility for our educational materials, and expand propagation of climate adapted plants at our nursery.

Responding to the growing needs of our organization, POP hired additional staff, bringing us to 10 (½) employees. And for the first time, we have a dedicated Communications Director to deepen our engagement in the communities we serve and amplify the impact of our collaborative efforts.

With gratitude,

Marc Green

2023: Year in Review

Planting the Future, Growing Together

The POP Learning Orchard at The Woodlands completed its fourth season of production in 2023, with annual crops continuing to complement the increasingly productive orchard yields. An early Spring drought ended up resulting in bountiful fruit and berry harvests. Produce grown at the Learning Orchard was donated to Food Not Bombs, used by program partners Get Fresh Daily, and sampled at POP harvest festivals. We welcomed many volunteers and visitors, including youth from the Norris Square Neighborhood Project. This Fall, construction was completed on two high tunnels which will allow us to explore techniques for growing in the changing climate.

We planted our 1,610th tree!

NEW ORCHARDS PLANTED IN 2023

Get Fresh Daily
West Philly Peace Park

2023 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

34 community education workshops
785 volunteers engaged in orchard care
45 fruit & nut trees
122 berries & vines
1,054 perennials & groundcovers
231 plantings, training, work days

With gratitude

Partners harvested over 11,700 pounds of fruit - almost twice as much as last year!
Orchards Connect
Us to Nature, Food, Each Other, and Ourselves

POP Plants and Supports Community Orchards

We partner with community groups to plan, plant, and maintain orchards filled with useful and edible plants in formerly vacant lots, community gardens, schoolyards, and other spaces, primarily in low-wealth neighborhoods where people have limited access to fresh fruit. We provide design assistance, materials, and training. Partners own, maintain, and harvest the orchards, expanding community-based food production, environmental benefits, and opportunities for nature education.

Imagine a Philadelphia where everyone has access to fresh food, clean air, and peaceful green spaces.
By investing in POP, you support **68 orchards** in **24 zip codes** across Philly.

Read more about our work at [PhillyOrchards.org/programs](http://PhillyOrchards.org/programs)

“**It’s great to see the work you do come back in harvest. It is even greater to see neighbors smile with gratitude after receiving what’s harvested.**”

Neury “Tito” Caba
Historic Fair Hill
Programs & Partners

From parkland to schools to community art centers, POP-supported orchards provided space for exploration and joy in 2023. Neighbors took part in workshops and other programs, tended to the plants in their gardens and orchards, enjoyed the bounty of the harvest, and at times struggled with climate impacts, pests, or squirrels. Here, we highlight a couple of partner stories: read more on our blog!

One highlight of the year was our collaboration with Big Picture Alliance, an organization that doubles as a video production studio and a youth program. Together we created a series of videos, including “Bloom Where You Are Planted,” which premiered last summer at One Art Community Center. The film uplifts the story of Philly’s community orchards through spotlights on three of our partners: Sankofa Community Farm at Bartram’s Garden, Union Baptist Church Garden of Eden, and The Village of Arts and Humanities.

Watch the spotlight on UBC

It’s what we’re all about: a collaboration that crosses zip codes, generations, and cultures to share stories that inspire others to grow together.

“Before the orchard, this space on the corner of 52nd and Pine was unused. Building the orchard expanded our garden space in front of the school where our main garden is located to span the entire block on 52nd Street from Pine to Osage creating an undeniable green space on this well-traveled corner. We added a pergola for shade covering, picnic benches and ferns, and hosted many workshops in that space. The raspberries along the fence brought many smiles and joy to our community.”

Jiana Murdic
Get Fresh Daily
I loved the opening greeting to the elderberry and the prayer/meditation. It shows we must honor and respect the land and yield its natural benefits. I also enjoyed hearing in general about herbal medicine.”

Participant of **Harvesting the Healing Power: An Afro-Herbalism Workshop on Elderberries** led by community educator Yaya Vallis

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**POP Shares Knowledge**

through offering **hands-on workshops**, developing **educational resources**, and working together with **our partners**.

We are a learning organization. While we educate, we strive to continue learning and share that knowledge with the city. Read more at [PhillyOrchards.org/orchard-education](http://PhillyOrchards.org/orchard-education).

- **34 Workshops**
- **500+ Participants**
- **22 Articles**

On topics such as... Successes and Pitfalls with Peaches, Herbal Salve-making, **How to drink black walnuts**.
Youth

We regularly work with partners who have ongoing gardening programs for youth, host summer camps, or welcome school field trips. Many partners are eager to learn how to best engage young people in learning about the environment and our food system, and we want to help them do just that!

“When the youth hear that we have apple trees and peach trees, they are surprised and excited. It’s almost like it’s hard to believe that those things would be growing here, but getting to share those spaces with them is a fun exercise in seeing what is possible.”

Ria Alfonso
Norris Square Neighborhood Project

10 Events
168 Participants

Partners include Village of the Arts, Urban Creators, NSNP, Roots Tree Crew, Historic Fair Hill, SummerSearch, Get Fresh Daily

Over the past year, POP collaborated with partners to hold 10 youth-centered events, half of which were workshops or orchard work days held at partner sites, with the other half consisting of tours and activities at the Learning Orchard. Youth from Urban Creators and The Village requested repeat workshops on mushroom cultivation. A newly-developed scavenger hunt was a highlight for some groups, which involved identifying various kinds of fruit trees, tasting fresh herbs, and using a mini-aspirator to observe insects.

POP received support from the USDA’s People’s Garden initiative to support growing and propagation efforts at the POP Learning Orchard. Through this grant, POP partnered with Get Fresh Daily by providing fresh produce for monthly cooking demonstrations and pop-up markets which reached youth, families, and staff from the West Philadelphia school where they’re based.

The majority of our partners have Youth Programs that engage with their orchards.

Of 45 partners who responded to our annual survey:
29 (64%) had youth programs that engaged the orchards.
9 (20%) had youth programs in the past, or are interested in having them.
Only 7 (15.5%) were not interested in having youth programs.
The Lead Orchard Volunteer (LOV) program has continued to grow in 2023. Deja Morgan joining the team as POP’s first Community Outreach Coordinator has expanded our ability to build deeper and more intentional relationships with our volunteers as well as our partners.

POP aims to use our reach and network to build capacity across the city by connecting our partner sites with enthusiastic volunteers from their own neighborhood and offering need-based stipends. This supports our partners while offering training and experience to community members.

In 2023, the POP team selected a subset of sites, mainly BIPOC-led with limited or no paid staff to help maintain their orchards. We were successful in working with partners to identify new LOVs and hold monthly work days with hands-on training, with new volunteers getting involved at FNC Poplar, Hamilton School, Strawberry Mansion, and Urban Creators.

"I love introducing visitors to the food forest, and working with volunteers to steward that small patch of earth."

LOV at Awbury Food Forest
2023 was a big year at the Learning Orchard which finally saw us complete the construction of two high tunnels adjacent to our nursery space. Thanks to POP’s long-term partnership with The Woodlands, since 2020, we have been able to plant a 1-acre demonstration orchard containing 90 fruit & nut trees; operate an edible plant nursery; host bee hives that help to pollinate our orchard and nearby plants; and build a solar system to power the nursery irrigation and high tunnel fans.

With milder winter temperatures and the absence of late freezes in 2023, the orchard experienced an unprecedented bounty. Beloved stone fruits, such as peaches and cherries, made their debut at the orchard with their inaugural harvests.

Pome fruit trees, such as apples and Asian Pears, continued their maturation, yielding enough fruit for POP staff to experiment with orchard techniques, such as fruit bagging, as an integrated pest and disease management tactic.

New additions were added to the perennial fruit yields, offering up the first harvests of Catawba grapes, Che fruit, maypops, and cucamelons.

The high tunnels were constructed in part by POP staff and volunteers, and completed by contractors when we realized that more help was needed. Volunteers from Citizens Bank helped with site preparation while a group from Spark Therapeutics assisted with getting the high tunnels ready for planting by flattening out the rough clay-ridden soil, then adding a thick layer of compost and wood chips.
POP is fortunate to have a long-term lease agreement and a degree of land security that many of our orchard partners and others across the city lack. In March 2023, POP joined 30 Philadelphia community gardens and nonprofits in calling on the Land Bank to end its 30-year mortgage requirement for community gardens and open spaces by submitting a letter to the Land Bank Board of Directors. The statement details the unnecessary barriers created by these mortgages, which contain ambiguous terms, put nonprofit organizations at significant risk, and fail to permanently protect community gardens and open spaces. Some of the main contributors to the letter were people from the Public Interest Law Center, Neighborhood Gardens Trust, Iglesias Gardens, Neighborhood Land Power Project (formerly Urban Tree Connection), and Urban Creators, who continue to lead ongoing organizing efforts.

POP raises this issue and participates in advocacy for reforms in solidarity with our partners and other stewards of these spaces, many of which were long neglected by the City or absentee property owners. We wish for them to have the security to keep greening and growing as POP is afforded at The Woodlands. It’s an issue of racial justice, environmental justice, health justice, and food justice. We as community members should get a say in what happens to land in our neighborhoods.

We continued throughout the year to engage with the “Gardens Group” on how to be better advocates for urban agriculture. This happened through a forum with then-candidate Cherelle Parker to highlight struggles with accessing land, and a series of workshops with land stewards and public space organizations to delve into how we can build power together. We look forward to working together with these groups, alongside local elected officials and City agencies, to create changes in land use policies that recognize urban agriculture as a desired long-term community use for land. We also hope to impress on local funders the importance of not only supporting urban agriculture organizations in their land stewardship, but for the type of community organizing that allows us to develop deep and meaningful relationships.

140+ known gardens and farms have been lost in Philadelphia since 2008 and the number continues to grow.

1/3 active gardens or farms are in areas with highest intensity of new construction.

2/3 active gardens and farms are in Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty, where over 50% of residents are BIPOC and over 20% live below the poverty line.

In roughly half of city’s Census Block Groups, fewer than 1 out of 10 food stores sell fresh fruits and vegetables.
Financials 7/1/22 - 6/30/23

Income

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<td>Foundation Contributions</td>
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<td>Corporate Contributions</td>
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<td>Government Contributions</td>
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<td>Sales of Product/Earned (Net)</td>
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<td>Program Fees</td>
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<td>Interest Income</td>
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Consolidated Expenses

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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
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Change in Net Assets

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<td>Total Net Assets, End of FY</td>
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<td><strong>Change in Net Assets</strong></td>
<td><strong>(59,010)</strong></td>
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Some of our Foundation and Corporate Supporters

- Alvéole Inc
- Anonymous
- Armstrong Foundation
- Blackbaud
- Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church
- Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia Foundation
- Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation
- Good Buy Supply
- Hardy Plant Society, Mid-Atlantic
- MOM’s Organic Market
- Patagonia
- Philadelphia Committee of the Garden Club of America
- Philadelphia Reinvestment Fund
- Leo & Peggy Pierce Family Foundation
- Primex Garden Centers
- Rosenlund Family Foundation
- Spark Therapeutics
- Gwynne Weinberg

Matching Gifts

- Apple
- Microsoft
- Oracle
- Prudential
- Netflix
- PwC

A list of POP’s current institutional supporters can be viewed at phillyorchards.org/donate.

POP deeply appreciates the support of our hundreds of individual supporters and additional foundation, corporate, and government partners.

Full financials are available on POP’s website or via Guidestar.
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Kim Jordan – Co-Executive Director
Sharon Appiah – Orchard Director
Julian D’Andrea – Program Coordinator

People
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