

## City Harvest

*Bringing Fresh Food Within Reach*

In many urban neighborhoods, it's much easier to find a fast-food restaurant than a supermarket. As a consequence, some families experience hunger or eat unhealthful foods simply because their choices, or their means, are limited. According to the Food Resource Action Center (*frac.org*), 18.5 percent of respondents surveyed at the end of 2009 reported having experienced "food hardship," the lack of resources to buy adequate food. Through its Philadelphia Green program, PHS helps address this problem by tapping the skills and energy of urban gardeners to make fresh produce more readily available.

The PHS City Harvest project is a unique partnership between PHS; the Philadelphia Prison System; SHARE (Self Help and Resource Exchange, a food distribution network); Weavers Way Co-op and Farm; and the Health Promotion Council of Southeastern Pennsylvania. It's quickly becoming a model for urban agriculture and a standout of the local-food movement within the region.

### How City Harvest Works

With training from PHS staff, inmates of the Philadelphia Prison System grow seedlings at a prison greenhouse in northeast Philadelphia, receiving valuable life-skills lessons in the process. Thousands of seeds are also started in a greenhouse at Weavers Way Farm in northwest Philadelphia. The seedlings are then transplanted into more than 40 participating community gardens throughout the city, as well as the prison's own garden.

Prison inmates and volunteer gardeners grow the plants to maturity and, with help from SHARE, the resulting produce is distributed to food cupboards, where clients can take part in tastings, nutrition workshops, and cooking demonstrations offered by the Health Promotion Council. Since the program was launched in 2006, City Harvest has produced more than **55,000 pounds** of produce—averaging 13,000 pounds each year.

PHS has supported community gardens through its Philadelphia Green program for more than 35 years, and City Harvest helps highlight the value of these gardens as neighborhood institutions. "City Harvest empowers gardeners to share the fruits of their labor with families in need, while offering inmates an opportunity to participate in a job training program and give back to their communities," says Joan Reilly, senior director of Philadelphia Green.



PHS's Lisa Mosca works with inmates in the prison greenhouse.



Seedlings at the Weavers Way Farm await transplanting in community gardens.

## Fresh Initiatives

In 2009 the USDA awarded PHS a \$300,000 grant to launch an entrepreneurial urban food-growing program in Philadelphia over three years as part of City Harvest, bringing fresh produce to even more city dwellers. The funding helps PHS establish a “Community Growers Alliance” of local food producers aimed at expanding the availability of locally grown fresh vegetables and fruits.

To support the Growers Alliance, Green Resource Centers and farmers markets will be created to encourage urban gardeners and entrepreneurs to grow and sell produce for supplemental income. The Resource Centers will distribute seeds, plants, lumber for raised beds, and other supplies to Growers Alliance members. They will also present workshops on gardening and cooking fresh vegetables.

“In the first year we’ve chosen 15 participating growers, two of which are youth initiatives,” explains Claire Baker, PHS program manager. “A total of 66 will participate over the three years of the grant. Growers are chosen on the basis of experience and likelihood of success, but we aim to include people of all ages, from all parts of the city, and from a wide range of backgrounds.”

Growers must attend workshops on sustainable food production and marketing. They are required to volunteer some of their time back to the program, work with the PHS team on crop planning, commit to the Growers Alliance for three years, and donate some of their produce to City Harvest.

The Community Growers Alliance supports one of the goals of the City of Philadelphia’s recently adopted sustainability plan, *Greenworks Philadelphia*. The plan calls for bringing local food to within 10 minutes of 75 percent of city residents, as well as creating an additional 86 fresh food outlets by 2015.

“We are thrilled with the opportunity to take urban food production to the next level at PHS and throughout the city,” says Joan Reilly. “This program will allow PHS and its partners to increase their growing capacity, boost the supply of fresh produce, and help individuals or groups earn money growing healthy food.”

Learn more about PHS and the City Harvest program at [PHSonline.org](http://PHSonline.org).



The Southwark Community Garden hosts a tasting and nutrition workshop.

### PHS City Harvest Funders

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*The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society motivates people to improve the quality of life and create a sense of community through horticulture.*

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) is a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1827. PHS produces the **Philadelphia International Flower Show**® and sponsors events, educational activities, and publications for gardeners at all levels. PHS’s urban greening program, **Philadelphia Green**®, works with citizens, city agencies, nonprofits, and other partners to plan, create, and maintain community green spaces, green streetscapes, and public landscapes.

Proceeds from the Flower Show, along with funding from foundations, corporations, government agencies, members, and individuals, help support PHS projects. To make a contribution, visit [PHSonline.org](http://PHSonline.org) or call 215-988-8800. Become a PHS member and enjoy year-round benefits, including tickets to the Philadelphia International Flower Show; visit [PHSonline.org](http://PHSonline.org) and click on “Membership.”

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