

Front Lines

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Gardening to Feed Neighbors

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Gardening took on a greater importance in 2020 as it helped to supplement food supply in hard-hit areas of the U.S. The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society began Harvest 2020 in May last year to mobilize people in the Greater Philadelphia region to grow food for themselves and their neighbors. That multi-faceted initiative resulted in more than 10,400 gardeners donating nearly 34,000 pounds of produce to hunger relief organizations in that area to combat food insecurity.

In the Greater Philadelphia region, almost 12% of households are food insecure and many food pantries

there experienced a 50% increase in demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative did the following to help:

- Equipped local gardeners with online education resources on food growing and harvesting
- Connected gardeners to local retailers and nurseries, many of whom offered home-delivery services, no-contact produce pick-up and online ordering
- Created an online library of learning guides for new gardeners
- Connected gardeners to each other for mentoring and resources
- Partnered with community-based nonprofits to support people in underserved communities to grow and share food
- Mobilized a network of distribution agencies to collect and share produce with local food banks

“COVID-19 amplified the need for people to learn to grow fresh and healthy food for themselves and their neighbors,” says PHS’s VP and Chief of Healthy Neighborhoods, Julianne Schrader Ortega. “PHS works with gardeners, volunteers and partner organizations to advance the health and well-being of our region, and their collective support was vital in our neighbors’ lives this growing season.”

For more on the organization, visit PHSONline.org. GP