This conservation aims to preserve various kinds of plants. Because many types of plants are rare, therefore it is necessary to do conservation so that these plants do not become extinct. We also urge everyone not to damage the environment so that the sustainability of plants is maintained.

To build a neighborhood rooted food and land system through community leadership development and land-based strategies in West Philadelphia.

OUR MISSION
This past November, I celebrated my fifth year as the Executive Director of Urban Tree Connection. I came to UTC as the Programs Director, wanting more than anything to be on the ground, doing real work with a community. I did not imagine that so soon after my arrival to UTC, I would step into a leadership role that would not only change the trajectory of the organization - it would also profoundly change me.

"Politics is the art of making possible the impossible" - Marta Harnecker

While building on a rich history that came before us, UTC is no longer the same organization. We have become BIPOC-led from board to staff, that together crafted a new mission statement, vision and values embedded with racial and economic justice. We are a place-based project, that is responsive to our community and seeks to be accountable to our growing membership and cadre of leaders. Most importantly, we are becoming a coordinated group guided by a shared purpose: to develop and uplift progressive Black working-class leaders. It is this conviction and clarity of purpose that sustains me, and us when things inevitably, get hard.

The work that we do is not led by one, it is the foresight, the will and the heart of a collective group of people. We are guided by evidence from our ancestors' struggles and wholeheartedly believe in the revolutionary potential of Black and Brown working-class and gender-oppressed people to transform society.
THE TEAM

Jen Ruiz
Office Manager

Devin Esch
Food Distribution Coordinator

Sarah Almendarez
Community Organizer

Mike Jones
Land Stewardship Coordinator

Nat Agoos
Lead Farmer

Rebecca Fruehwald
VISTA & Outreach Coordinator

Board of Directors
Lisette Enumah, Chair
Tara Rose Brown, Co-Chair
Dustin Klein, Treasurer
Ayanna Moore
Deb Bentzel
Khari Graves

OUTGOING:
India Blunt, Board Chair
Urban Tree Connection (UTC) is a place-based project in Haddington, West Philadelphia that creates space for Black working-class community members across ages to participate and take up leadership in building a community-governed food and land system. We ground this work in our organizational values of community self-determination, solidarity, mutuality, transformational, and collective wisdom.

Alongside organizers, activists, and political workers across the U.S. and Global South, we hold a vision of a Just Transition. In a just society, the political economy’s purpose is NOT for the accumulation of wealth and power for a few, but FOR the social and ecological wellbeing of all people, living things, and the planet.

We are committed to building alternative institutions and systems that:

- Regenerates resources rather than harmfully extracting them
- Organizes labor cooperatively rather than exploiting workers
- Fosters democratic participation in all aspects of social life rather than using military force and violence against its people
- Cultivates collective care and sacredness of life rather than individualism and alienation

Through the vehicles of food and land sovereignty, Urban Tree Connection’s primary purpose is to develop the progressive Black working-class leadership that our society desperately needs in this period of compounding crises. Through our collective work together, we are building our will, skills, capacities to usher in and lead a more just world.
We, the people of Haddington, recognize, honor and celebrate our right to real, locally grown food. We claim health, wellness and a regenerative (life-giving) relationship with the earth as part of our heritage. We nourish our minds and bodies through community care, cultural traditions and the sharing of knowledge across generations. We choose joy and self-empowerment as we work together to care for each other and our neighborhood.
This year NF Farm grew **4,430 pounds** of food. We achieved this through:

**Accessible Practices:** methods of growing food with more ease for Staff and community growers

- Starting plants in biodegradable peat pots
- Trellising plants in a way that is easy to use
- Planting thyme for pest management

**Ancestral Practices:** methods rooted in African and Indigenous farming traditions

- Rotating crops
- Growing plants together to act as companions
- Building up soil health through natural amendments
- Using natural pest management methods that encourage pollinators

**Partners**

- **Carversville Food Foundation** donated baby plants, of community-identified vegetables, herbs, and flowers for NF farm and community gardens
- **Star Roses and Plants** donated 20+ berry bushes that will be fruiting next season!

**Special Projects**

- High Tunnel and Tool Shed Murals
- An improved hand-washing station
- A new front-entry sign
This season we welcomed Yarrow (apprentice), and Dan, (community member, landscaper) at NF Farm. Here are their thoughts on the season:

“Urban farming is more than growing vegetables, it’s also a process of being in deeper connection with each other and the land. By growing our own food, we put power back in our hands. I felt myself grow as a leader providing insight on how we grew the food on the farm and why the farm practices that we use matter...when we treat the land with love, we are loving ourselves and each other.”

- Yarrow, Farm Apprentice

“I didn’t know the farm was there and I’ve lived across the street from it for the past 13 years. When I was invited to the farm this past season, it was a great surprise. I really enjoyed drinking tea made from farm herbs/flowers and chatting with the different people on the farm. Seeing UTC provide fresh veggies every week to our neighbors was eye-opening and made me really want to be involved. Over the Winter I will miss the comradery that I saw on the farm—everyone is really looking out for each other.”

- Daniel Hunter Jr., NFF Landscaper
Queen’s Community Garden was founded (~2010) as a space for neighbors to grow their own food. This season we successfully completed garden upgrades to increase accessibility and community engagement.

The Queen's Garden rebuild project was managed by Lead Garden Steward Nefertari, an avid gardener, teacher and business owner.

Rooted in community feedback we worked to make the garden accessible for people of all ages. It now features:

- New and raised garden beds
- Greenhouse and storage area
- New seating and gathering spaces
- Rainwater catchment system

This project came together through the labor and support of many people and partners, including:

- Sankofa Community Farm's youth (built raised beds)
- Glover Gardens (built elevated garden beds)
- E Asher Property Management donated their labor, built the rainwater catchment system
- Volunteers and neighbors (mulching, planting, small projects, etc)

Nefertari (middle) shares, that this experience allowed her to make the vision in her head a reality; and has given her confidence to take on even greater endeavors.
Pearl St. Garden & Orchard is one of UTC's oldest sites. This season it continued to be a site of community engagement and received a renewal.

During open garden days at Pearl St. Community Garden community members, volunteers, and staff participated in:

- Harvesting and food distribution
- Witnessing the growth and life cycle of different vegetables
- Building community relationships with neighbors

Additional produce grown at Pearl St. Garden was distributed weekly to neighbors. We made house visits to elders who couldn't physically walk to the garden. This season the produce included:

- Sweet Peppers
- Leafy Greens
- Tomatoes
- Thai Chili Peppers

The Pearl St. Orchard was renewed with the help of Philadelphia Orchard Project and Power Corps. The restoration has transformed the look and feel of the space and allowed us to gather an abundant fruit harvest.

Through these partnerships we were able to:

- Prune trees and test of diseases
- Lay out new landscaping
- Plant over 50 trees, herbs and perennials
Building on the success of working with block captains to distribute produce to neighbors at their homes in 2020, UTC developed the Food Sovereignty Shares (FFS) Program. FSS aims to develop the leadership of neighbors, build an engaged membership through a ‘share’ food distribution model, and raise consciousness through food sovereignty practices.

Highlights

- Coordinated with 4 block captains or FSS Leaders to recruit 45 families, ‘members’ across 4 blocks
- Distributed 958 boxes of produce (grown at NF Farm) over 22 weeks to FSS members
- Created *The People’s Forum*, a weekly newsletter that connected members to our programs and events

FFS Members were encouraged to practice direct participation:

- Volunteering at the farm and community gardens
- Submitting a recipe through *The People’s Forum*
- Attending a UTC event or cooking class
- Assisting the Food Sovereignty Share Leaders and staff with distribution on their block

32.4% of the membership directly participated in exchange for their food shares. This is a significant step towards building a participatory food system with actively engaged members.
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY SHARES (FSS) LEADERS

Meet the 4 community leaders that helped distribute food, build connections, and make the FFS Program possible. They, together with Staff developed our food sovereignty statement featured on page 4.

Lisa J (right), FSS Leader on Stewart St, the block with the highest % of member participation this season! This is thanks to Lisa’s organizational skills and commitment to following up personally about events and participation opportunities with members. We’re lucky to have had her organize with us for the last two years, and are excited to see what the future holds.

Lisa Q, FSS Leader for N. Frazier St. New to UTC, Lisa stepped up by taking on a leadership role. It’s clear how much Lisa cares about food sovereignty in her neighborhood and works hard to get others on board. We’re grateful for all the times her and her daughter, Mila came to directly participate this season.

Ellissa, FSS Leader for Master St. She started off as a Free Food Share member last year, and this year became involved by helping craft the Food Sovereignty Shares program, volunteering weekly on the farm with us, and taking the lead on Harvest Days. She truly models what direct participation is for the members on her block and her passion for the farm is infectious.

Criss, FSS Leader and block captain, on Haddington Ln. She worked with us last year on the Free Food Share Project and returned in 2021 to make the FFS Program a success. Criss has a wealth of knowledge about resources and events in Haddington.
Though the FSS program we built a membership model with 45 food sovereignty members receiving weekly food shares in exchange for sharing their time and participation.

Meet 3 FSS Members who were recognized as Members of the Month for going above and beyond in their participation:

**Ms. Cheryl** (right) showed up every Friday to support Food Sovereignty Leader Lisa (left), with getting food share boxes to their neighbors. She even brought out snacks and drinks to our staff to keep us healthy and hydrated!

**Mila** is our youngest Food Sovereignty Shares member at 8 years old! She excitedly helped her mom and our team go door-to-door on her block every Friday to deliver members' share boxes. She did this because she “likes to see people happy and with food.”

**Ms. Mary** participated twice weekly during Harvest Days at the farm and helped with distribution on her block. We are so grateful for the joy that she brings to the farm and her caring nature! She shares stories of her family’s experiences on their farm in the south, and keeps us updated on her journey with meditation and aromatherapy.
UTC was invited to participate in the University of Pennsylvania’s Urban Health Lab (UHL)’s *Nature and Well-Being Project* in partnership with Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS). Together, we engaged neighbors in a redesign process of Memorial Garden.

**Phase 1**

PHS worked with UTC to identify basic infrastructure needs to improve the site. PHS removed tree debris and an old stage that had fallen apart, installed new fencing and reseeded the grass to create an open park space.

**Phase 2**

- UHL and UTC created a community survey to identify neighbors’ use, concerns, and hopes for the space + how it could be beneficial
- UTC surveyed neighbors around the garden and invited them to future meetings
- UTC, UHL and PHS held two community meetings to create the redesign

**Phase 3**

We are now in the process of implementing the redesign with upgrades as suggested by community members (*walking paths, leveled grounds for open play spaces, artwork, lighting, signage, and a community shed for event and recreational materials*). Memorial Garden will reopen in the Spring with a kick-off event.
DIRECT PARTICIPATION

HARVEST DAYS & 4TH SATURDAYS

Harvest Days (weekly) and 4th Saturdays (monthly) were held at NF Farm from June to October. These events created opportunities for neighbors to experience the farm and hold space together.

HARVEST DAYS

- Learning food safety protocols and how to properly harvest a variety of vegetables
- Learning how to clean, package and box produce for distribution

Over the season, direct participation transformed community members from volunteers to leaders. As they grew their knowledge and skills, they were able to lead various aspects of the harvest day and instruct new volunteers on how to complete tasks.

4TH SATURDAYS

- **Political Discussions** allowed community members to deepen their understanding of revolutionary struggles

- **Food Sovereignty Farm Tours** with Yarrow highlighted UTC’s food sovereignty practices, from the history of the farm to the type of crops we grow and regenerative growing practices we use.

- **Community-care and Well-being workshops**: Staff, Chef Sherimane, and herbalist Trece, led hands-on educational workshops on natural ways to improve health with herbs and vegetables grown at the farm.

UTC hosted a group of youth (above) from the Detroit based non-profit *AfroFuture Youth* during one of our Harvest Days. The youth, along with their chaperones spent an entire day working beside our regular volunteers and farm crew and helped harvest, process, and package our produce for delivery the next day.

We grew Calendula to expand our library of medicinal resources for neighbors to consume, grow, and learn how to turn natural ingredients into tinctures and teas. Staff led a calendula tea making workshop during one of our summer 4th Saturdays.
At the farm and gardens Umoyae learned how to and assisted in:

- Harvesting a variety of herbs and vegetables
- Planting seeds and weeding
- Learning about Indigenous farming practices and traditions
- Tending to flower beds
- Laying down mulch
- Packing food share boxes
- Engaging in conversations with volunteers and community members

One of Umoyae’s favorite portions of programming was High-on-the-Hog which included:

- Bi-weekly screenings of the Netflix documentary *High on the Hog* about African ancestral food techniques and traditions, and how African American food traditions shaped U.S. cuisine
- Cooking Classes with Chef Sherimane Johnson of *Night Owl Vegan*. These classes utilized the ingredients that were highlighted in each episode and incorporated them into a dish with the produce grown at NF Farm
- An end of season project which compiled all of the staff and community member recipes into *UTC’s Community Cookbook*
Our Annual Harvest Party at Pearl St. Community Garden came back (in-person) with a bountiful harvest, fierce costumes, and fun!

During this final celebration of the season we hosted:

- An anxiety-remedy tincture workshop led by community member Trece
- Music by DJ Osagie
- Free food distribution from the final harvest of the season
- A back-to-school supplies giveaway
- Covid-19 information and education
- Games and a garden scavenger hunt
- A recognition ceremony to honor and thank community members that were crucial to the success of the season

UTC recognized the need to address ongoing worries in the community about Covid-19, the Delta variant and vaccines. This resulted in producing four informational one-pagers that address:

- Covid-19 and Delta variant facts
- Race and justice concerns around the vaccine and healthcare system
- Covid-19 in Philly, and ways to stay safe
- Vaccination and testing sites in West Philly

UTC’s Covid-19 one-pagers, and all their source info can be found here.
In October, we welcomed the in-person return of our Fall Farm Party. This event gave UTC staff, board, community members, donors, partners, stakeholders, and friends a chance to come together.

**Fall Farm Party Highlights**

- A cover-cropping demo led by Staff members, Mike and Nat
- A fire cider demo led by Chef Sherimane
- Food sovereignty Farm tours led by Yarrow
- Remarks by
  - Food Sovereignty Share Leader, Ms. Lisa
  - FSS member, Ms. Cheryl
  - Youth Apprentice, Umoyae
  - Farm Apprentice Yarrow
- Food, drinks, a silent auction, and music by DJ Aurora
- Vendors from local, Black-owned businesses

"Hey everyone! My name is Umoyae, and I'm a part of the Urban Tree Connections Youth Apprenticeship Program, I'd like to share with you all what I wrote in my journal entry when I first started this program. I am thrilled to learn how to grow food and then harvest it. I'm also excited to see the tomatoes grow, and I can't wait to own my own farm someday. And now I've learned how to plant and care for several vegetables and herbs, I'm even more open to trying more recipes with different veggies and herbs. I've even planted some of the flowers growing at this farm right now!"

- Umoyae Freespirit
We would like to give special recognition to UTC’s community of supporters including our monthly sustainers, donors, funder partners and advocates that make our work, our mission, and our vision more possible.

Our Major Funders included:

- Samuel S. Fels Fund
- Independence Foundation
- William Penn Foundation
- Claneil Foundation
- Leo & Peggy Pierce Family Foundation
- First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia
- Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church
- The November Fund
- Rosenlund Family Foundation
- Focus for Health Foundation
- Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation
- Independence Public Media Foundation
- Kuehlthau Family Foundation
- Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
- Patricia Kind Foundation
- Berkowitz Foundation

- Philadelphia Horticultural Society & City of Philadelphia (DHCD)
- Henrietta Tower Wurts Memorial
- TD Bank
- Sprouts Community Foundation
- Henry E. Niles Foundation
- Lindback Foundation
- Bread & Roses Community Fund
- Valentine Foundation
- Allen Hilles Fund
- Union Benevolent Association
- Merck Family Fund
- Alfred & Mary Douty Foundation
- Catholic Campaign for Human Development
- Pure Growth
- MidAtlantic Farm Credit

Government: 2.5%
Grassroots fundraising: 0.5%
Generated income: 0.5%

Restricted Funding: 36%
Unrestricted Funding: 64%
Foundation Grants: 85%
Individual Donors: 11%
Corporate: 0.5%
During this special time of reflecting on our season, the successes, setbacks and lessons learned we are setting our intentions for rest over this winter break so that we may enter into the new year and season refreshed and clear about path ahead.

Some of our goals for the upcoming season are to:

- Further grow our membership
- Develop a leadership cultivation track
- Build in more community lead positions
- Increase our organizing and base-building capacity
- Grow our land stewardship work
- Develop land tenure goals with community members
- Strengthen our branding, communications, impact story-telling, and evaluative benchmarks to advance our work
- Increase our resiliency practices

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LOVE THE PEOPLE
FEED THE PEOPLE!