



PHILADELPHIA PARKS & RECREATION

Gardening Trainings for Rec Leaders

By Anne Preston, FarmPhilly: Junior Farmers Program

As youth begin to harvest snap peas and strawberries from Junior Farmers gardens at recreation centers across the city, rec leaders are also getting involved in the gardens and enjoying the harvest!

FarmPhilly staff just finished our first series of gardening trainings for recreation center staff whose sites host youth gardens. The hands-on trainings, held in different PPR districts, brought rec leaders and recreation specialty instructors (RSIs) out into Junior Farmers gardens to learn about garden planning, planting, maintenance, watering and harvesting. Many Program staff who participated brought with them a lot of knowledge and enthusiasm about gardens in their own backyards, and shared ideas for easy, nutritious recipes to cook with the kids during after school and summer camp programs.

We harvested bunches of kale and collards from the gardens for staff to take home with them, and used the Weed Identification Guide created by the Sustainable Standards Division to build knowledge of common weeds to pull while caring for the gardens. As we discussed possibilities of ways the Junior Farmers Program can grow in the future, rec leaders emphasized the value of gardening with youth and bringing an awareness of nature to the recreation center grounds.

Staff left the trainings with a deeper understanding of the stewardship we aim to cultivate among people of all ages who participate in the Junior Farmers Program. We appreciate all our staff who took the time to come learn, share their knowledge, and develop renewed confidence in their ability to have a green thumb!

Quotes from Participating Program Staff:

“I see the kids, they really enjoy being out there, and they are learning things and eating a lot of new things”

- Jonto Swift (Mook), Happy Hollow

“Pleasantly surprised by how much the tots learned this season... Youngest was 2, most were 2-5 year olds. They literally started the garden, the things they can remember at that age is surprising!”

- Azahara Robinson, Emmanuel