



PHILADELPHIA PARKS & RECREATION

Urban Agriculture Update

By Elisa Ruse-Esposito, Urban Agriculture Program Coordinator



Out at our garden sites, our young farmers have gleaned the last of the harvest, collected seeds for next year and put our gardens to bed for winter. To celebrate the end of a fun and productive season, the Youth Urban Agriculture Program finished up the 2013 growing season with a festive flourish.

Thanksgiving Lessons

To celebrate the harvest, our garden educators taught the story of the first Thanksgiving and what the pilgrims ate. The kids then made their own turkey baskets to bring home and fill with treats.

Here are some fun facts:

- During the Mayflower's voyage, the Pilgrims' main diet would have consisted primarily of hard biscuit, salt pork, dried meats including cows tongue, various pickled foods, oatmeal and other cereal grains and fish. They also only drank a diluted beer, including children.
- The Pilgrims brought seeds with them to cultivate in the new world, such as barley, peas and wheat.
- Squanto taught the Pilgrims how to cultivate corn, extract sap from maple trees, catch fish and avoid poisonous plants.
- The first Thanksgiving was to celebrate their first successful corn harvest and was a feast that lasted 3 days and provided enough food for 53 Pilgrims and 90 Indians.
- On the first Thanksgiving, they ate wild fowl, venison, boiled pumpkin and squash, seal, fish, lobster, eels, clams, corn, cabbage, nuts, peas, beans, carrots, parsnips, berries, dried currants and nuts, and were mostly cooked with traditional Native American spices and cooking styles.





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Holiday Lessons

The Garden Educators wrapped up their visits to garden sites in mid-December with lessons on conifer trees and accompanying pine cone crafts.

Conifers are evergreen and bear cones, but a few--like juniper and yew--bear fruits.

Fun Facts:

- Conifers are some of the oldest known plants with primitive species appearing about 290 million years ago.
- Conifer seeds develop inside a protective cone called a "strobilus." Depending on the species, the cone can take 4 months to 3 years to reach maturity. All seeds are wind pollinated.
- The narrow, conical shape and drooping branches of many conifers makes them ideal trees for shedding snow. This also makes them resistant to freezing.
- The essential oils of some conifers are used in cleaning products, cosmetics and medicinal use.

We had a great 2013 growing season and want to thank all of the PPR Staff that helped to make this program possible by helping us build garden beds, transport soil, build fences, maintain gardens, work with us on programming and sharing the harvest.

In 2014, we are planning on expanding to 15 sites and are excited to get growing again.