

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **TheDCH Secret Garden in Hilltop wins regional award**

*Transformed from an abandoned lot couched between row houses, the outdoor classroom engages, inspires and educates preschoolers in underserved neighborhoods*

The Delaware Center for Horticulture (TheDCH) is pleased to announce that TheDCH Secret Garden, an enchanting outdoor classroom for preschoolers in Wilmington's Hilltop neighborhood, is a Blue Ribbon Award Winner in the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society Gardening and Greening Contest.

The award recognizes gardeners and organizations whose greening efforts greatly enhance neighborhoods and landscapes in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. TheDCH Secret Garden won in the Children's Garden category and was one of 26 total gardens in 13 categories to earn the distinction out of more than 350 entered. Gardens were judged on design, maintenance, horticultural practices, variety, color, and suitability of plantings, with extra points for creativity and sustainable practices. Children's Garden entries must be maintained primarily by school-age children, usually under adult supervision.

TheDCH Secret Garden, transformed 18 years ago from an abandoned urban space, is the centerpiece of a year-round horticulture and environmental education program of TheDCH for Ministry of Caring preschools. The bi-weekly program is powered by a team of eight dedicated volunteer educators – many are seasoned teachers – who create and deliver seasonally appropriate lesson plans that incorporate classroom and hands on learning in the garden.

"Watching these preschoolers pull fresh carrots, pick cherry tomatoes, and dig for worms, is priceless," said TheDCH Volunteer Coordinator Marcia Stephenson. "But more than that, the impact this program has on children at a very young age is tremendous. Many of these children don't have access to yards let alone gardens, and aren't in touch with where their food comes from. This program bridges that experiential gap in a fun, interactive, educational way."

"TheDCH appreciates the regional recognition from PHS, a longstanding leader in greening, gardening and volunteering," said TheDCH Executive Director Pam Sapko. Founded in 1829, PHS exists to motivate people to improve the quality of life and create a sense of community through horticulture.

For more information about TheDCH and its community programs, visit [TheDCH.org](http://TheDCH.org). For more details about the PHS Gardening and Greening Contest, visit [PennHort.org](http://PennHort.org).



*The Delaware Center for Horticulture cultivates a greener community; inspiring appreciation and improvement of our environment through horticulture, education and conservation. We create neighborhoods that are healthier, more attractive and ecologically sustainable. Our work includes community gardens, public landscapes, road-side beautification, tree programs, educational programs and community and membership events. The DCH is the only nonprofit membership organization that mobilizes and inspires community greening statewide in urban and suburban environments.*