

## **Berks County Conservation District's Urban Agriculture Initiative Addresses "One Nook at a Time"**

*Reprinted with permission from the Berks County Conservation District News, Events and Updates on July 13, 2023.*



**Before**



**After**

In October of 2022, the Berks County Conservation District in partnership with the Salvation Army of Reading began transforming the courtyard of the Tyson Schoener Elementary School into a garden space where children would learn to grow food.

This project is part of a larger Urban Agriculture Initiative that is growing within the City of Reading, connecting residents with locally grown food by teaching them how to grow fresh produce themselves and spreading their knowledge within their communities.

Volunteers from Penn State, The Salvation Army, the City of Reading and United Way of Berks worked tirelessly to transform the courtyard which was in disarray, into a safe, and inviting space for children to sow the seeds of their future by cultivating a passion for fresh, locally grown produce. As part of the garden program, the Berks County Conservation District's Environmental Educator, Jennifer Brooks, worked with the students from Tyson Schoener Elementary School who participate in The Salvation Army's after-school program teaches about topics ranging from water conservation in the garden space to growing the vegetables the students planted.

With funding from the DEP through an Environmental Education Grant, the BCCD purchased raised metal beds, soil, garden tools for the children, indoor growing tools for students to start seeds, and plants from a local greenhouse. The BCCD is continuing to make an impact in the City of Reading by developing projects that focus on transforming vacant lots into community greenspace and/or community vegetable gardens, "one nook at a time."