

## LIFE &amp; CULTURE

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Christa Barfield in the Farmer Jawn Greenery GreenHouse. Christa Barfield

## Through farms, foraging, and activism, Black women work toward a greener Philly

**They want to redefine the city's relationship to nature so all Philadelphians have access to the benefits.**

By Kiersten Adams  
For The Inquirer

From Japanese knotweed to garlic mustard, West Philly's Danni Morinich, better known as Lady Danni, knows that everything serves a purpose if you know how to find it. When leading foraging walks through her neighborhood, she teaches residents how to use what grows wild around them.

In Philadelphia, environmental enthusiasts, Black women in particular, are leading green movements by creating community-led farms, leading foraging expeditions, and even tending to trees. They're getting others outside and raising awareness about the necessity of an environmentally conscious Philadelphia.

As the city launched the Philly Tree Plan on Feb. 23 — a 10-year tree planting and care initiative by the Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and Fairmount Park Conservancy program in partnership with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society — some have already begun to envision what a "green Philly" will grow to be.

Farmer Jawn Greenery and Farms founder Christa Barfield sees the need to reimagine community spaces for growing food. "We have so many lots just in Philadelphia alone," she said. "Many of them are privately owned, but there are still enough that are owned by

the city ...[that] can be repurposed for a food forest citywide."

Since launching her organization in 2018, Barfield has been a resource for many in the Germantown and greater Philadelphia area. As one of the few Black urban farmers in the city, she works with a small team to provide fresh and organic food grown locally for residents, as well as fight against food insecurity and food deserts that impact marginalized communities. She wants to build a greener Philadelphia that prioritizes all of its residents.

"What we're building is bigger than just us, [and] we have to move towards this concept of collectivism," Barfield says of what a green city should look like.

Often shut out from green spaces due to redlining and gentrification, Black women in Philadelphia have started redefining their relationship with nature, and not just for the sake of food, but for their mental and physical well-being. As scientifically shown, recreational time outdoors can boost cognitive development for young adults, reduce stress, and even raise endorphin levels and dopamine production, a factor Morinich urges Black folks and tree lovers to take advantage of.

"Because there is a lot of trauma from just being Black in America ... So sometimes just [to] be out in that open air — that kind of connection, I think that's restorative," Morinich said.

There are many benefits of being outside — "touching plants, touching living green things," as Morinich said — but having the knowledge of what green spaces can do and how to access them is a privilege in itself. A report made by the Trust for Public Land

ranking Philadelphia's parks found that neighborhoods with a higher number of BIPOCs have access to 28% less park space than predominantly white neighborhoods.

At the intersection of environmental equity lies race and class, two factors that can determine proximity to parks and green spaces. Kiasha Huling, organizer for Clean Air Council, works to inform residents about land accessibility and tree equity, or how the placement and care of trees is impacted by income and racial demographics. She hopes to bridge the gap between access and information.

"In a very inherent and innate way, Black women bridge those gaps," Huling says. Huling plants trees throughout West Philly and educates her neighbors on the proven effects trees have on us, our environment, even our heating bills.

Farming, foraging, and even organizing around air pollution are progressive steps in attaining accessible green spaces for everyone. These women are exhibiting unique ways residents of all ages can interact with their environment and take advantage of the spaces offered to them. Committed to educational awareness and advocating for Black and brown communities, Barfield, Morinich, and Huling are building a future for the next generation of Black and brown environmental activists still green in the thumb.

"We're still working off a system that never had Black people in mind," Barfield said. "That's why we always feel like we're fighting an uphill battle. I don't put a lot of energy into what the city is going to do and what they're not going to do."



Danni Morinich in the great outdoors. Lady Danni



Growers tend to the Holly Street Neighbors Community Garden in West Powelton. Kiasha Huling

## ADVICE

## Relatives reject trans sibling's new name

By Carolyn Hax  
Washington Post



Adapted from an online discussion.

**Question:** My sister came out as trans last summer and began going by a beautiful feminine name. Certain members of our family have expressed resistance and "compromised" by agreeing to call her by her gender-neutral middle name, which our parents chose for her at birth. She tolerates it and has told me she

thinks it's good enough.

I exclusively use the name she wants — it's her name! — but what should I do when I hear one of these relatives use the middle name? Do I let it slide, since that's what my sister herself is doing, or correct them and make a stink, every single time?

**Answer:** "Who?" Then when they answer: "Oh, you mean [beautiful feminine name]. Her name is [beautiful feminine name]." Say it every single time.

When I answered this originally, I said to call them by the wrong name — and if they didn't like it, then say you are willing to compromise, you just need to like what you call them.

But with a cooler head, I realized your sister might not want you to fight her battle for her or fight it this way — as richly as your relatives

deserve it.

I do still, many months later, have no answer for why people are so insistently obtuse about treating someone in a way they'd never stand to be treated.

**Question:** A longtime and close friend, "Tom," is in a now-serious relationship with another close friend of ours, "Molly." My girlfriend and I have been very close to them both for 10-plus years (we're all about 30). We really like them individually, but when they're together, we find it almost unbearable. They have a strange, sappy, coupley dynamic that shapes almost every word they exchange. We're at the point of trying to avoid spending time with them together. Others in our circle feel somewhat similarly but see them less.

I want to raise it with Tom that it's

a bit grating. My girlfriend thinks I should not because we'll alienate them, though we're clearly alienating ourselves. I'm not sure how to decide if I should accept and move on or raise it.

**Answer:** If (you think) it works with your Tom dynamic to say something to him, then talk to him about it. You know better than I do whether this would fly.

But even then, they're a new couple, right? So consider waiting it out, too. One of the things "longtime and close friends" do for the greater good is tough out the less-than-endearing phases of each other's lives.

They're shmoopy right now. Good for them, right? It's OK to make "I'm happy for them, I'm happy for them" your mantra until they burn off the newness.

**Response:** They're on the verge

of getting married. We're only noticing the behavior now because he's moved back to the area after they were long-distance for a couple of years. Guess that means I'll need to bring it up with him!

**Answer:** Not necessarily — long-distance prolongs the shmoops. But if they bless you with something egregious, go for it: "I find it challenging when you're in her lap and hand-feeding her like she's an orphaned bird."

**Reader's thought:** Tell them to get a room a few times. Most people will get the idea.

Chat with Carolyn Hax online at noon Fridays at [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com).

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