# [URBAN FARMING: Growing healthy food in cities—a food revolution](http://www.themindfulword.org/2012/urban-farming-healthy-food/" \o "URBAN FARMING: Growing healthy food in cities—a food revolution)

**A**s more and more people grow concerned over what is happening with our [food supply](http://www.themindfulword.org/2012/improper-waste-management-disposal/)—from harmful chemical exposure to under ripe harvesting—urban farms are cropping up in cities around the world. Backyards, rooftops, balconies and even the sides of buildings are fertile ground on which to plant, not only healthy fruit and vegetables, but a revolution.

Not since the end of World War II and the swapping of Victory Gardens for supermarkets in the 1950s has there been such interest in urban farming. The world has reached a critical point with people starving from not just a lack of food, but from inadequate nutrients. In numerous major industrialized cities around the world, more and more areas known as “food deserts” have begun appearing—places where healthy food simply isn’t convenient or available. Urban farming works to reverse this trend by converting under or poorly utilized city space into fruit and vegetable gardens.

In one version of Utopia, healthy food would be available to all—not only to those with the means to pay more and the ability to travel in order to buy it. One could walk through Central Park in New York City and pick an apple from a tree and enjoy it. Unfortunately, healthy food comes at a premium these days. Retailers charge exorbitant fees for local and organic produce, for multiple reasons: there are higher costs related to the production of fruit and vegetables on a smaller scale without pesticides. But let’s face it, economics are also at work: supply vs. demand.

Along comes urban farming—where people are reclaiming private and public space and using the land to feed themselves and their communities.  Neighbours are working together to maintain these spaces, sharing in the harvest and most importantly, introducing a [sense of community](http://www.themindfulword.org/2007/anarchist-u-free-schools/). Urban farms are not limited to growing produce—some raise chickens, fish, rabbits—possibilities are limited only by regulation and zoning laws.

BENEFITS OF URBAN FARMING

The benefits of urban farming are numerous. First, fresh produce becomes available in areas where previously there were none or only small amounts; healthy people become happy people—the evidence of this is too obvious to ignore. Pollution is reduced, as there are fewer emissions from trucks bringing food into urban centres, and increased plant life helps clean and cool the air. Urban farming is also revitalizing neighbourhoods; in cities such as Detroit, Beijing and Mumbai, farms are bringing communities together and creating a sense of pride, while teaching farming skills to youth. Also, a growing need for planners, planters, harvesters, and others have created new jobs.

CRITICISM OF URBAN FARMING

Critics of urban farming cite pollution, lack of profitability, and health concerns as reasons the urban landscape is unsuitable for farming. The proximity to exhaust fumes from motor vehicles, lack of extensive space as well as soil and groundwater contamination in urban areas are the major issues raised against urban farming. In some urban centeres, these arguments have won and regulations have been enacted that prevent farming in these areas.

GUERRILLA GARDENING

Refusing to accept defeat, urban farmers have resorted to such tactics as “guerrilla gardening,” planting edible gardens in places without permission, usually under the cover of night in public parks, abandoned lots and other owner-neglected spaces. Although more of a political statement than a desire to develop the land, a few areas (notably in Portland and New York City) originally farmed without permission have become protected areas and the guerrilla gardeners are now able to continue cultivating and harvesting the “fruit”of their labour.

JOIN THE FOOD REVOLUTION

Urban farming addresses many of the issues causing our food crisis and it’s something that each of us can participate in. Instead of planting solely for aesthetic purposes, we can plant edible fruit and vegetables in and around our homes. We can all become involved with community gardening projects. We can purchase locally-sourced food. We can all be a part of the food revolution.  So roll up your sleeves and grab a shovel, our time is now!

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