**Persuading Skeptics: Response to Christensen-Dalsgaard’s article *How Urban Gardens Can Boost Biodiversity and Make Cities more Sustainable***

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Karen K. Christensen-Dalsgaard’s article *How Urban Gardens Can Boost Biodiversity and Make Cities More Sustainable* (2008) provides reasons why homeowners or renters should make their greenspaces more sustainable. The article also gives key background information on urban ecology and gives the audience tips on how to implement more environmentally friendly gardens (Christensen-Dalsgaard, 2008). Perhaps a reader of Christensen-Dalsgaard’s article is still unconvinced that they should restructure their gardens to incorporate more diverse plants. After all, what’s in it for them? Or maybe they didn’t quite follow how the gardens will address the issues of sustainability which the article outlined. I argue that by alternating between factual statements and emotionally relevant subjects, Christensen-Dalsgaard’s article persuades readers that biodiverse gardens are a good way to make their cities more sustainable.

The article begins by introducing sustainability problems that many cities experience and relating the populations of cities to the importance of addressing these problems (Christensen-Dalsgaard, 2008). One such problem is heat. According to Christensen-Dalsgaard’s article, “temperatures in cities are typically 2 C to 3 C warmer than those of the surrounding landscape” (2008). Although climate change may not be accepted as factual by all readers, most audiences would be selfishly interested in living in a cooler city. One logical solution to such a problem is vegetation which “lowers the temperature of a city by 1 C to 9 C” (Christensen-Dalsgaard, 2008). The next problem which unsustainable cities cause for its inhabitants is a demographically disproportionate level of comfort (Christensen-Dalsgaard, 2008). Neighborhoods with more people of colour are likely to have less greenspace than neighborhoods with more Caucasian people and are less comfortable to live in (Christensen-Dalsgaard, 2008). Here, the article is appealing to an audience’s sense of socio-economic justice. Lastly, the article becomes even more relevant for those readers who own greenspace since private gardens can make up “between 16 and 40 per cent of total urban land cover” (Christensen-Dalsgaard, 2008). Before finding out how biodiverse gardens can help solve some of the issues of unstainable cities, the reader learned how a lack of greenspace can impact themselves and those around them.

Now that the article has provided readers with reasons to care about the topic, Christensen-Dalsgaard flexes her credibility as an assistant professor in plant biology and urban ecology. Although there is little data involved in the last few paragraphs of the article, it is expected that the audience believes Christensen-Dalsgaard as she makes claims like “surface temperatures, measured using infrared thermal imaging, were higher in plots with less plant volume” (Christensen-Dalsgaard, 2008). Christensen-Dalsgaard’s well framed argument and accredited status allow her to make claims about how urban gardens can tackle the issue unsustainable cities. In her concluding paragraph she reiterates that it is the responsibility of those who own lawns and gardens to make the most of their space (Christensen-Dalsgaard, 2008).

Dalsgaard’s article *How Urban Gardens Can Boost Biodiversity and Make Cities more Sustainable* first appeals to an audience’s self-interests in cool temperatures and sense of racial and economic equity. While appealing to these emotions, Christensen-Dalsgaard builds her credibility by informing the audience on key issues and creating a logical basis for an argument. It is then brought to the reader’s attention the relevance of the article. Assuming the reader has an area which they can garden, the reader can have an impact on the problems previously outlined. Before reiterating the importance that the article has for a reader with a garden, Christensen-Dalsgaard outlines some elements of a beneficial urban garden. Christensen-Dalsgaard’s’ reputability and strong application of rhetoric create a strong argument for the average urban gardener.

**Naysayer Description**

All the founding partners of *The Conversation* are universities which should mean that articles on the website are unbiased. That said, some of the non-profits that fund *The Conversation* support social causes which could introduce some liberal bias. The naysayer who immediately comes to mind is a person who does not believe in climate change, but I think most people reading articles from *The Conversation* would generally be less conservative. With this in mind, I think a typical skeptic would be one who believes in climate change but doesn’t believe that gardens are an effective way to combat environmental issues in cities. They most likely have not studied biology and are hesitant to restructure their garden before knowing that it will make a difference.

**Reference**

Christensen-Dalsgaard, K. K. (2021, June 28). *How Urban Gardens Can Boost Biodiversity and Make Cities More Sustainable*. The conversation. <https://theconversation.com/how-urban-gardens-can-boost-biodiversity-and-make-cities-more-sustainable-162810>