

CATEGORY: POPULATIONS/HORTICULTURE PROGRAMS

Migrant and Refugee Populations & Programs

There has been an increase in programs addressing migrant, refugee and internally displaced people (IDP) reflective of increasing numbers worldwide. As of 2025, over 117 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes, with 25.4 million of this group being classified as refugees (UNHCR, 2025; Nadeau, 2019). The UN Refugee Agency defines a refugee as a person who has fled an armed conflict or persecution and who is protected by international law, whereas a migrant chooses to move to a different place mainly to improve their living conditions. According to the UN Refugee Convention, if a migrant seeks asylum in a country and is found to be entitled to a permanent residence permit, they have the status of refugee.

Programs with a horticulture focus include vocational horticulture training, community gardens welcoming migrants and refugees, ecovillage settings for health interventions (Pousen et al., 2020), food action initiatives, and social/horticulture programming. Researcher Palsdottier and colleagues have written extensively on such programs (2018, 2021), linking trauma and other health challenges to migrant and refugee experiences, with references to trauma/PTSD experienced by war veterans and placemaking in adopted homelands (Foss et al., 2024; Strunk et al, 2019; Marsh et al., 2023). An increasing number of studies have investigated nature's role and its restorative power with regard to the mental health of refugees as well as their social interaction (Poulsen et al., 2020; Charles-Rodriguez et al, 2023; Ekstam et al, 2021; Rai et al, 2023).

A variety of horticulture-focused strategies are addressing a complex web of health goals: integration of newcomers to communities, provision of safe community gathering spots, specifically community gardens and community kitchens, personal growth and post-traumatic growth, reduction of cultural and language barriers, and development of sense of self, trusting relationships and respect for human beings. Evidence of numerous community gardens for refugees and migrants suggests a growing interest for this type of programming (refer to program models below). A large number of articles are available through google search, identifying *refugee and gardening* programs that currently exist including information on Lansing MI which has more than 100 community gardens serving a large refugee resettlement; 20% of gardeners in 18 Lansing community gardens managed by the Lansing Food Band Garden Project are refugees and migrants.

The most recently published research addresses topics with horticulture for health impacts like migrant youth programming (Bennouna et al, 2019; Muda, 2017; Trauth et al, 2023); food security in a new land (Gangamma et al, 2024; Gingell, 2022); and horticulture programs for migrant and refugee populations in Italy, Canada, Finland and Denmark (Giare, 2020; Charles-Rodriguez et al, 2023; Uldall et al, 2022).

For related resources refer to category: Populations/Horticulture Programs in Specific Settings – Mental Health and Trauma Recovery; category: Horticultural Therapy & Health Services – all sections; and category: Landscapes for Health – community gardens.

Key Organizations

[Catholic Relief Services](#)

Local community gardens & refugee services
[The UN High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#)

Books, journals & epublications on migrant & refugee horticulture programs

- Bosch, M., & Bird, W. (Ed.). (2018). *Oxford textbook nature and public health: The role of nature in improving the health of a population*. Oxford University Press
- Hollin, C. R. (2023). *The psychological appeal of gardens*. Routledge. (refugee placemaking)
[Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health](#)
[Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies](#)
[Journal of International Migration and Integration](#)
- Parsons, J., & Wong, K. (Eds.). (2025). *The role of food in resettlement and rehabilitation: Good food and good lives*. Taylor & Francis.
- Raphaely, M., & Orback, M. (2023). Ch 16: Seeds of hope. In [Groupwork with refugees and survivors of human rights abuses](#). Routledge.
- Tsu, C. (2013). *Garden of the world: Asian immigrants and the making of agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley*. Oxford Press.
- United Nations Refugee Agency (2018). [Global trends: Forced displacement in 2017](#).

Research & articles on migrant & refugee horticulture programs

Recently published selected research & articles:

- Amartey, C. (2024). Refugees and clinical psychology meeting outside the clinic: Understanding the role of community, outdoor and natural environments in place attachment. Dissertation: *University of Leicester*.
- Atasoy, YY. (2023). Beyond the present: Therapy rehabilitation through landscape for those with post-war traumatic syndrome. Thesis: *Politecnico Milano*.
- Atiyeh, S., Choudhuri, DD., & Dari, T. (2020). Considerations for facilitating refugee acculturation through groups. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 45(4).
- Bennouna, C., Khauli, N., Basir, M. et al. (2019). School-based programs for supporting the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of adolescent forced migrants in high-income countries: A scoping review. *Social Science & Medicine*, 239.
- Biglin, J. (2020). Embodied and sensory experiences of therapeutic space: Refugee place-making within an urban allotment. *Health & Place*, 62.
- Block, A. M., Aizenman, L., Saad, A. et al. (2018). Peer support groups: Evaluating a culturally grounded, strengths-based approach for work with refugees. *Advances in Social Work*, 18(3).
- Brabec, E. (2021). [‘If I have land, I feed my family’ – refugee resettlement through community gardening in Seattle case study](#). *Women & Migration*.
- Charles-Rodriguez, U., Venegas de la Torre, MDLP., Hecker, V. et al. (2023). The relationship between nature and immigrants' integration, wellbeing and physical activity: A scoping review. *J Immigr Minor Health*, 25(1).
- Charles-Rodriguez, U., Aborawi, A., Khatiwada, K. et al. (2023). Hands-on-ground in a new country: A community-based participatory evaluation with immigrant communities in Southern Alberta. *Glob Health Promot.*, 30(4).
- Daly, F., Lenehan, SA., & O’Riordan, J. (2025). Green landscapes of care: The potential of gardens to support the well-being of asylum seekers in Ireland. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 22(9).
- Doan, L., Chen, C., Tran, MD. et al. (2024). Community-based gardening interventions For Asian American immigrants and refugees: A scoping review. *Innovation in Aging*, 8(Supplement_1).

- Ekstam, E., Pálsdóttir, AM., & Asaba, E. (2021). Migrants' experiences of a nature-based vocational rehabilitation programme in relation to place, occupation, health and everyday life. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 28(1).
- Fatehrad, A., Natalini, D., Yohannes, HT., & Palombo, G. (2025). The role of nature in migrant integration: An eco-social perspective. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 111.
- Foss, F., Gibbes, C., & Skop, E. (2024). Cultivating integration via placemaking: An ArcGIS StoryMap and inventory of refugee-centered farming organizations in the USA. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 25(1).
- Gangamma, R., Walia, B., Minkoff-Zern, LA., & Tor, S. (2024). Role of gardening in mental health, food security, and economic well-being in resettled refugees: A mixed methods study. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 12(1).
- Garcia Polanco, V. (2020). Equity and inclusion in the garden: Factors that facilitate immigrants and refugees participation in a community garden network in Lansing, MI. Thesis: *Michigan State University*.
- Gentin, S., Pitkänen, K., Chondromatidou, AM. et al. (2019). Nature-based integration of immigrants in Europe: A review. *Urban Forestry Urban Greening*, 43.
- Gentin, S., Chondromatidou, AM., Pitkänen, K. et al. (2018). Defining nature-based integration – perspectives and practices from the Nordic countries. *Reports of the Finnish Environment Institute*, 16.
- Gerber, MM., Callahan, JL., Moyer, DN. et al. (2017). Nepali Bhutanese refugees reap support through community gardening. *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation*, 6(1).
- Giare, F., Ricciardi, G., & Borsotto, P. (2020). Migrant workers and processes of social inclusion in Italy: The possibilities offered by social farming. *Sustainability*, 12(10).
- Gingell, T., Murray, K., Correa-Velez, I., & Gallegos, D. (2022). Determinants of food security among people from refugee backgrounds resettled in high-income countries: A systematic review and thematic synthesis. *PLoS One*, 17(6).
- Goralnik, L., Radonic, L., Garcia Polanco, V., & Hammon, A. (2022). Growing community: Factors of inclusion for refugee and immigrant urban gardeners. *Land*, 12(1).
- Griffin, M. (2017). Reconstructing identity with urban community agriculture: How refugees confront displacement, food insecurity, and othering through community farming. Thesis: *University of North Texas*.
- Heilmayr, D., Reiss, N., & Buskirk, M. (2020). Community gardens cultivate positive experiences for refugees. *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture*, 30(1).
- Howarth, M., Brettle, A., Hardman, M., & Maden, M. (2020). What is the evidence for the impact of gardens and gardening on health and well-being: A scoping review and evidence-based logic model to guide healthcare strategy decision making on the use of gardening approaches as a social prescription. *BMJ Open*, 10(7).
- Jakstis, K., & Fischer, LK. (2021). Urban nature and public health: How nature exposure and sociocultural background relate to depression risk [with immigrants & others]. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(1).
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- Koncikowski, J., & Capozziello, N. (2021, October). Therapeutic gardening: A community-led, community-wide approach. In *XV International People Plant Symposium and II International Symposium on Horticultural Therapies: The Role of Horticulture in 1330*.

- Mai, AT. (2019). Responding to the emotional needs of resettled refugees in the context of community gardens. Thesis: *University of Texas*.
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- Mejia, A., Bhattacharya, M., & Miraglia, J. (2020). Village Community Garden & Learning Center. Community gardening as a way to build cross-cultural community resilience in intersectionally diverse gardeners: Community-based participatory research and campus-community-partnered proposal. *JMIR Res Protoc.*, 9(10).
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- Muda, R. (2017). [Well-being through plants: The project of creating a therapeutic balcony for underaged asylum seekers](#). Thesis: *Diaconia University of Applied Sciences*.
- Nadeau, M. (2019). [The role of horticultural therapy in the treatment of refugees with post-traumatic stress disorder](#). Thesis. *Liberty University*.
- Nisbet, C., Lestrat, KE., & Vatanparast, H. (2022). Food security interventions among refugees around the globe: A scoping review. *Nutrients*, 14(3).
- Nur, HA., Atoloye, AT., Wengreen, H. et al. (2021). Scoping review and assessing the evidence for nutrition education delivery strategies for refugees in high-income countries. *Adv Nutr.*, 12(6).
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- Ogolla, E., & John, C. (2020). [Innovative 'keyhole' gardens help refugees improve their nutrition](#). [UNHCR](#).
- Onyango, E., Otoadese, D., Mori, K. et al. (2025). Exploring neighborhood transformations and community gardens to meet the cultural food needs of immigrants and refugees: A scoping review. *Health & Place*, 92.
- Otoadese, D., Kamara, I., & Onyango, E. (2025). Growing roots: The role of collective community gardening in cultural food insecurity and social integration of African immigrants in Alberta, Canada. *BMC Public Health*, 25(1).
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- Trauth, JN., Harris, K., & Jackson, N. (2023). Using trauma-informed care and horticulture therapy with college students: A counseling approach modeled after a refugee resettlement community. In *Practical strategies to reduce childhood trauma and mitigate exposure to the school-to-prison Pipeline* (pp. 66-82). IGI Global.
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Examples of migrant & refugee horticulture programs

Azadi Community Garden in Iraq's Kurdistan region was established in 2016 with its name (Azadi) meaning liberation in Arabic. Focused on small scale food production within a camp environment, women and children learn about recycling greywater, composting, growing plants under plastic and herb growing.

<https://lemontreustrust.org/community-gardens/>

Bardarash Community Garden, Kurdistan is located at the SEED Foundation Trauma Center in the refugee camp, with the mission of helping people heal from trauma, cope with displacement, rebuild a future, and use gardening as part of psychosocial and mental health services.

<https://lemontreustrust.org/community-gardens/>

“Community garden allows refugees to grow native produce”. Louisville, with one of the largest refugee populations in the US, and its Common Earth Gardens offers agricultural programs, garden plots, and food donations to food insecure families.

<https://spectrumnews1.com/ky/louisville/news/2022/06/20/refugee-community-garden-common-earth-louisville->

Denver Urban Gardens Yu Meh Community Farmer Training Program and Project Worthmore provide sustainable farming education with a focus on community food security for this population.

<https://dug.org/learn/>

Folkuniversitetet Vaxjo garden in Sweden is used as a rehabilitation site, language center, social setting, and safe location for multicultural exchange.

<https://learning.ugain.eu/portfolio/se03/>

Govan Community Project, Scotland supports refugee and asylum seekers locally, hosting a woman's group, gardening and other garden-based activities.

<https://govancommunityproject.org.uk/services/food-projects-2/>

Grounding Project, an NHS horticultural therapy program for refugees and asylum seekers living in Kennington, South London area fosters healing from trauma using a Calming Garden. Part of non-profit *Roots and Shoots* educational and environmental charity.

<https://www.rootsandshoots.org.uk/environmental-projects/the-grounding-project>

Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services based in Clearwater FL. has developed a community garden where clients can cultivate foods from their native cuisines.

<https://hias.org/news/community-garden-offers-refugees-belonging-and-taste-home/>

Hillside Paradise Parking Plots led by World Relief Seattle, an immigrant and refugee resettlement organization, created this place to grow food and socialize for people from 18 different countries.

<https://worldrelief.org/western-wa/our-work/resiliency/garden/>

Lansing MI has more than 100 community gardens with a large refugee resettlement; 20% of gardeners in 18 of Lansing community gardens managed by the Lansing Food Band Garden Project are refugees & immigrants.

<https://d.lib.msu.edu/etd/48591>

Lemon Tree Trust transforms refugee and internally displaced people (IDP) camps one garden at a time and supports agricultural businesses which create employment, purpose, cultural identity and social/economic change.

<https://lemontreustrust.org/>

Marion Polk Food Share uses a youth farm to help refugees grow food for themselves and their new community.

<https://marionpolkfoodshare.org/programs/youth-farm/>

Morrison Child and Family Services Immigrant Youth Service program in Oregon, delivers gardening and therapeutic horticulture in partnership with Youth Grow organization.

<https://www.growing-gardens.org/blog/Morrison%20Child%20and%20Family%20Services%20Partnership>

Neighbor's Field in rural Georgia helps refugees heal from their experiences and plant a garden, grow food using this as a therapeutic activity.

<https://www.loe.org/shows/segments.html?programID=19-P13-00007&segmentID=6>

New Lands Farm in New England works with newly resettled refugees, many of whom have significant agricultural experience and who are able to plant crops in this setting, with support from Lutheran Social Services.

<https://www.localharvest.org/new-lands-farm-west-springfield-M57340>

New Roots training program at *Cultivate Kansas City*, in conjunction with *Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas*, empowers refugees, immigrants and English Language Learner farmers to develop sustainable businesses, providing training, access to markets, and garden space.

North Carolina Botanical Garden is involved in international projects that involve therapeutic horticulture, training practitioners in Ukraine and Armenia.

<https://ncbg.unc.edu/engagement/therapeutic-horticulture/international-projects/>

Permaculture for Refugees global network of educators and community leaders disseminate permaculture knowledge to refugees, asylum seekers, forced migrants and IDPs.

<https://www.permacultureforrefugees.org/>

Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program through the U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services – Office of Refugee Resettlement helps ORR-served populations lead rural farming and urban community gardening projects, and with U.S. Dept of Agriculture provide fresh produce to farmers markets, and supplemental income for participants (as of July 2023).

<https://acf.gov/orr/programs/refugees/rapp>

Socially aware gardens at Jerusalem Botanical Gardens use their public garden as part of social programming, including [Plants Grow People](#), with its rehabilitation focus for holocaust survivors, war veterans and immigrants.

St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Falls Church, VA welcome people to their Sacred Places Garden with peace poles decorated in many languages representative of the diverse immigrant community.

https://naturesacred.org/sacred_place/st-anthonys-of-padua-catholic-church/

Tapestry Farms nonprofit empowers refugees with urban gardening and support services in Iowa.

<https://www.tapestryfarms.org/>

The Syracuse Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program is a 3-year educational farm-based model for growing, selling and producing vegetables, with the intent of promoting farm businesses.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njE8qlkALgw>

THAD (Therapeutic Horticulture Activity Database) offers TH activities across populations including migrant and refugee (activities like [Newcomer Plot Gardens on Hospital Grounds](#), [Eating Plant Parts-Migrant & Refugee](#) which include a focus on knowledge transfer, inclusion and ethnobotany).

<https://hos.ifas.ufl.edu/therapeutic-horticulture-activities-database/>

Transplanting Traditions community farm provides agricultural and entrepreneurial education to refugee farmers at this incubator site in Chapel Hill, NC. in support of food security and cultural community space for refugee youth and adults.

<https://www.transplantingtraditions.org/>

Videos, websites & webinars on migrant & refugee horticulture programs

Global Garden Reminds Bhutanese Refugees of Home video shows urban farm activity in Chicago, with support from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, and how the community supports plant-based food action.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDQ1thQWM4I>

Immigrant Gardens and Their Impact on The American Terrain webinar from Smithsonian explores contributions and challenges of this type of garden and gardeners.

<https://gardens.si.edu/learn/lets-talk-gardens-video-library/immigrant-gardens-and-their-impact-on-the-american-terrain/>

New Roots for Refugees is a 4-year farming program in Kansas City, Missouri with intent for participants to earn extra money, purchase land and begin farm based businesses. Video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VfQPXDr-vVw>

Plant it Forward Farms in Houston, Tx has a network of urban farms teaching refugees who were farmers, how to farm in their new climate - training program, financial incentives and more.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tASkCJyjYog>

Refugee Garden in Denver Co. through Project Worthmore uses private property to grow food as a model for this population since 2009, and still active with a refugee population in CO of 60,000.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhgfJdbV6Tc>

The Plants that Make Refugee Camps Feel More Like Home article and photos sheds light on life in these camps, and strategies for surviving including gardening.

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/the-plants-that-make-refugee-camps-feel-more-like-home>

Urban Gardens for the social integration of migrants (UGAIN) ebook, cofounded by Erasums & Programme of the European Union partnered with 7 European countries to promote community/urban gardens as an effective strategy for migrants and refugees.

https://learning.ugain.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2UPDATED_UGAIN_SummaryReport_English.pdf

Related organizations

[Refugee International](#)

[United Nations List of approved NGOs & CSOs for refugees and migrants](#)

[Urban Roots-Glasgow UK](#)

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