

CATEGORY: HORTICULTURE AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Political/Social Change Groups as a Catalyst for Social Interactions

Research has revealed that social connections and interactions are an important element of human health (Leavell et al., 2019). Social theory explains the need to affiliate. The focus of this resource page is on *social interactions* involving horticultural activities, and those promoting social/political change related to food security. These types of social interactions foster sense of community, social cohesion and social affiliation (Tam, 2014). The type of organizations that fall into this category include food alliances, food literacy non-profits, community gardens, urban farms, schools, 4-H groups, land trusts and neighborhoods.

Food advocacy, food access and food justice continue to be important, with need for ongoing efforts to address food insecurity. Community gardens are at the epicenter of this work (Berg et al., 2023; Gripper et al., 2022). Wardle et al., (2024) discuss unexpected effects of urban food activism on community and human wellbeing. Robinson & Capener (2022) discuss Northeast Florida's economic gardening experiment-JAX Bridges Barriers to Open Innovation.

For related resources refer to category: Landscapes for Health – Community Gardens, and category: Food, Nutrition and Food Action – food and nutrition subsets.

Key Organizations on horticulture as a catalyst for social interactions in political/social change groups

[AmericanHort](#)

[Civil Eats](#) – a weekly epublication with articles related to health, food security, food + policy, environment, food justice, farming

[Food Alliance](#)

Books, journals & epublications on horticulture as a catalyst for social interactions in political/social change groups

Alkon, AH., Lo, J., & Kerksen, T. (2017). *The new food activism: Opposition, cooperation, and collective action*. University of California Press.

Nettle, C. (2014). *Community gardening a social action*. Routledge.

Nonini, DM., & Holland, DC. (2024). *Food activism today*. NYU Press.

Research & articles on horticulture as a catalyst for social interactions in political/social change groups

Recently published selected research & articles:

Alaimo, K., Beavers, A.W., Crawford, C et al. (2016). Amplifying health through community gardens: A framework for advancing multicomponent, behaviorally based neighborhood interventions. *Current Environmental Health Reports*, 3(3), 302-12.

Berg, AC., Padilla, HM., Sanders, CE. et al. (2023). Community gardens: A catalyst for community change. *Health Promot Pract.*, 24(1_suppl), 92S-107S.

Bice, M.R., Ball, J., Bickford, N. et al. (2018). Community gardens: Interactions between communities, schools, and impact on students. *The Health Educator*, 50(1).

Campbell, B. (2021). Social justice and sociological theory. *Society*, 58(5), 355-364.

- Celata, F., & Coletti, R. (2018). The policing of community gardening in Rome. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, 29, 17-24.
- Certoma, C., & Tornaghi, C. (2015). Political gardening: Transforming cities and political agency. *Local Environment*.
- Community Good Centres Canada. (n.d.). Mental health benefits of community gardening.
- Egerer, M., Fouch, N., Anderson, E.C., & Clarke, M. (2020). Socio-ecological connectivity differs in magnitude and direction across urban landscapes. *Science Reports*, 10(1), 4252.
- Garner, C.T. (2019). The impact of a community garden upon food options among participants. Thesis: University of Georgia.
- Giraud, E. (2021). Urban food autonomy: The flourishing of an ethics of care for sustainability. *Humanities*, 10(1), 48e
- Gripper, AB., Nethery, R., Cowger, TL. et al. (2022). Community solutions to food apartheid: A spatial analysis of community food-growing spaces and neighborhood demographics in Philadelphia. *Soc Sci Med.*, 310, 115221.
- Harriott, N. (2024). [Equity must be integral to USDA programs: HEAL'S takeaways from the USDA Equity Commission's Final Report](#). *Heal Food Alliance*.
- Heilmayer, D., Reiss, N., & Buskirk, M. (2020). Community gardens cultivate positive experiences for refugees. *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture*, 30 (1), 25-35.
- Helling, R. (2019). Warranting the need for community gardens: Improving food security and community health in urban areas. Thesis: Vanderbilt University.
- Leavell, M.A., Leiferman, J.A., Gascon, M. et al. (2019). Nature-based social prescribing in urban settings to improve social connectedness and mental well-being: A review. *Curr Environ Health Rep.*, 6(4), 297-308.
- MacKenzie, A. (2016). [Beyond food: Community gardens as places of connection and empowerment](#). *Project for Public Spaces.com*.
- Maksymiuk, G., Pallares-Barbera, M., Arvanitidis, P., & Gawryszewska, B. J. (2021). Thinking deep. Acting on top. Underground built heritage and its fringe as a community catalyst for local sustainable development: Exploratory cases from Poland and Greece. *Sustainability*, 13(24), 14031.
- Mansor, N.A. (2024). Home gardening: Enabling grassroots efforts in an urban socialist society, Penang. Thesis: Univerisiti Malyasia Kelantan.
- Mehta, K., Lopresti, S., & Thomas, J. (2019). Addressing nutrition and social connection through community gardening: A South Australian study. *Health Promotions Journal Australia* 30 Suppl, 1, 5-8.
- Mmako, N.J., Capetola, T., & Henderson-Wilson, C. (2019). Sowing social inclusion for marginalized residents of a social housing development through a community garden. *Health Promotions Journal Australia*, 30(3), 350-358.
- Munoz-Rodriguez, M., Fernandez-Gonzalez, C., Aguilar-Gallegos, N. et al. (2020). The primacy of politics in public food security policies: The case of home gardens. *Sustainability*, 12(10), 4316.
- Poulsen, MN., Neff, R.A., & Winch, P. J. (2017). The multifunctionality of urban farming: Perceived benefits for neighborhood improvement. *Local Environment*, 22(11), 1411-1427.
- Robinson, C., & Capener, D. (2022). Northeast Florida's economic gardening experiment-JAX Bridges Barriers to Open Innovation in North Florida: A Case Study. *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, 87(1), 45-2.
- Wardle, J., McKenzie, J., Barker, M. et al. (2024). Unexpected effects of urban food activism on community and human wellbeing. *Local Environ.*, 29(5), 647-662.
- Woodward, A. (2019). (Re)orienting food activism toward social justice [Book review]. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 9(1), 141-143.

Examples of horticulture as a catalyst for social interactions in political/social change groups

4-H Extension, its programs and its child participants are working with local community organizations in support of food security, the catalyst for healthier living in Philadelphia with common action.

<https://www.psu.edu/news/impact/story/4-h-norris-square-community-alliance-promote-food-security-philadelphia/>

Dreaming Out Loud seeks to create economic opportunities for the DC metro region and its marginalized communities through advocacy, action and a healthy, equitable food system.

<https://dreamingoutloud.org/about/>

Center for Good Food Purchasing and *HEAL Food Alliance* have partnered to promote Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) that encourages large institutions to buy local, sustainable, nutritious food.

<https://healfoodalliance.org/arenas/>

HEAL Food Alliance seeks to transform food systems using a Platform for Real Food call to action using key sectors of environment, health, and the economy with actionable work and the support and involvement of its 55 affiliated multi-sector multi-racial coalition members.

<https://healfoodalliance.org/who-is-heal/>

<https://healfoodalliance.org/platformforrealfood/>

Land Trust Alliance is bringing people together to save land, strengthen communities and create a healthier planet. A different type of horticulture-centric, land-centric cause, with a focus on nature requiring common action and affiliation.

<https://landtrustalliance.org/>

Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust (NEFOC) affiliate to act for future food and land sovereignty through permanent and secure land tenure for Indigenous, Black Latinx and Asian framers honoring their ancestors' dreams for regenerative farming, sustainable human habitat, ceremony, native ecosystem restoration and cultural preservation.

<https://nefoclandtrust.org/>

P-Patch Program in Seattle and the *P-Patch Trust* support food donations to the city's food banks through their community garden network and their food production.

<https://civicwell.org/civic-resources/cultivating-community-gardens/>

Ron Finley Project in Los Angeles, CA teaches communities how to transform food deserts into food sanctuaries.

<https://ronfinley.com/>

The Heirloom Garden Project and the related *Oral History Project* use agricultural life, stories from elders and Black and Indigenous people's history and experiences as platforms for preserving history, culture and food action.

<https://civileats.com/2024/06/04/oral-history-project-preserves-black-and-indigenous-food-traditions/>

The Okra Project is a mutual aid collective providing support to Black Trans, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming people with the intention of alleviating barriers to the community including land security, food security and opportunities for Black Diasporic cooking traditions.

<https://www.theokraproject.com/>

This Detroit Agrihood is Transforming its Community –Michigan Urban Farming Initiative Tour

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

Urban Agriculture Resilience Program through the US Botanic Garden and the American Public Gardens Association provides financial awards to urban agriculture projects nationwide, promoting education, food security in public spaces.

<https://members.publicgardens.org/grow-your-garden/promote/urban-agriculture/>

<https://www.publicgardens.org/funds-awarded-to-26-urban-agriculture-projects-led-by-public-gardens-and-community-partners/>

Videos, webinars and websites of horticulture as a catalyst for social interactions in political/social change groups

Each One Teach One: Transplanting video shows how to transplant, sharing knowledge to others with the intent of expanding food access, food sovereignty, from Soul Fire Liberation on Land skills share.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkVGZKf5yrl&list=PLR9X2SVBYFDJnPQXceKROkAuh-xXt2_um&index=1

Planting with Purpose at Urban Tilth: Civil Eats TV urban farm profile transforming a food desert into community friendly productive space.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjdOz52jky4>

Public Health Law Center website offers resources including Community Gardening: Policy Reference Guide in support of food security, food access, economies and navigating local laws.

<https://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/resources/community-gardening-policy-reference-guide-2017>

Qajuqturvik organization in Nunavut Canada is focused on solutions for food security and food sovereignty using community food center, bonding, cohesion and Nunavummiut determination. Building community through food is their motto.

<https://www.qajuqturvik.ca/english/food>

THAD (Therapeutic Horticulture Activity Database) offers TH activities across populations and settings including therapeutic goals addressing social interactions, and some at community gardens (plan/plant & eat the rainbow, lettuce be different, building & planting a pallet garden, eating plant parts) .

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

University of Vermont Food Systems Summit 2024 community identified an action area of nourishing all people, a coalition of people & organizations from around the world acting together with a common purpose.

<https://www.uvm.edu/cals/food-systems-research/uvm-food-systems-summit>

Urban Growers Collective Chicago II. is a Black and woman-led non-profit farm working together to build a more just and equitable local food system through growing food, cultivating nourishing environments in support of health, economic development, healing and creativity through urban agriculture. Now offering job training for growers, herbalism apprenticeships, and youth corp programs.

<https://urbangrowerscollective.org/>

Urban School Food Alliance and FoodCorps Partner for Better School Meals. The 11 largest urban school districts in the U.S. are working together to build healthier school food environments, sharing this common cause.

<https://foodcorps.org/urban-school-food-alliance-and-foodcorps-partner-for-better-school-meals/>

Related organizations

[HEAL](#)

[Foodtank](#)

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