Florida Horticulture for Health Network – Resource Hub

CATEGORY: LANDSCAPES FOR HEALTH: DESIGNED LANDSCAPES

Urban Farms

The number of urban farms continues to grow with many communities supporting these entities for community cohesion, food security and food traceability. Academic papers identify two types of urban farms, though not often expressed this way – urban farms with a social gathering function and food production (similar to community farms), and ones with an emphasis on commercial production of food often referred to as urban agriculture. The distinctions can be nuanced, with terminology and clarifications evolving.

Urban farms grow and produce food in a city or heavily populated town or municipality. The terms urban farms, urban farming and urban agriculture are related though may have slightly different applications. For some, urban farms and community gardens are similar, and some community gardens may be urban farms. The primary distinction is that urban farms have a commercial side – growing products to be sold (plant-based and livestock). Urban farms have seen a dramatic increase in numbers in the last decade (Palmer, 2018), and a strong future, with a forecasted compound annual growth rate of 7.88% from 2025 - 2033 (Global Market Statistics, 2026). Urban farms can take any number of forms including gardens at private residential properties, CSAs, hydroponic greenhouses, indoor vertical farms, rooftop/park/school and community gardens. Each urban farm has particular goals, and may include education, environmental stewardship, sustainable practices, food access/food literacy/food security/food advocacy, along with food production and a physical location used as a community gathering spot. COVID-19 has revealed some developments re: urban farms, food security, home gardening and health benefits. (Refer to section Horticulture for Health - subcategory Pandemic Gardening and Impacts on Horticulture for Health.)

Research with a focus on commercial production at urban farms has expanded to include USDA's expanding role in urban agriculture, zoning, and funding (Caraccciola, 2022; USDA Urban Agriculture website, USDA Farm Service Agency services).Commercial production topics include: hoverfly assemblages in urban farms (Heiniger et al., 2025); emerging and disruptive technologies for urban farming (Ng & Mahkeswaran, 2021); yields from vertical farms (O'Sullivan et al., 2020); urban organic waste for urban farming food production using vermicompost and thermophilic compost (Schröderet al., 2021); and business models for peri-urban and urban farms (Sroka et al., 2023). Themes related to sustainability continue to be part of the urban farm paradigm (Manikas et al., 2020; Petrovics et al., 2022; Nowysz et al., 2022).

Research on social aspects of urban farms is not as robust; Gosh (2023) investigated health initiatives and urban farm connections. Models of urban farms are more readily available online with an apparent increase in these: *Sprout NOLA Farm, Patchwork City Farm, Woods Creek Sustainability Center and Food Forest* for example. Growing support for urban farming and urban agriculture by some city governments is evident in Pittsburg, Atlanta and communities in Washington state (refer to examples identified below). And of note, according to a 2024 article: "Recently, higher education institutions across the country, including the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), the University of California (UC) system, and the City University of New York Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy (CUNY SPH) have expanded their research, education, and outreach efforts to support

urban agriculture, particularly in ways that benefit underserved and marginalized communities" (Chiburn, 2024).

For related resources refer to category: Landscapes for Health: Designed Landscapes, Community Gardens, and category: Food, Nutrition, and Food Action; category: Horticultural Practices Impacting Health: Horticulture Best Practices, Technology Tools.

Key Organizations

RUAF Urban Agriculture and Food Systems
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education - SARE
The American Association for Agricultural Education
Urban Farming Global food chain focused on growing organic produce on unused land, business opportunity, health and wellness, and revitalization.
USDA *Community Supported Agriculture* (CSA listing by USDA Agricultural Marketing Service)
USDA *Cooperative Extension offices: USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture*
USDA *Urban Agriculture | National Agricultural Library*
USDA *Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production*
USDA *Urban Agriculture | Natural Resources Conservation Service*
USDA *Urban Grower Resources From USDA | Farmers.gov*

Books, journals & epublications on urban farms

American Public Gardens Association. (2018). The role of public gardens in American urban agriculture programming – APGA (downloadable).
Blue-Green Systems | IWA Publishing
Chatterjee, A., Debnath, S., & Pal, H. (2020). Implication of urban agriculture and vertical farming for future sustainability. In *Urban horticulture - Necessity of the future.* IntechOpen.
Chicago Botanic Garden & US Botanic Garden. (n.d.). *Building capacity for urban agriculture programs: Tools from the Windy City Harvest Model.* (downloadable).
Dorr, E., Hawes, JK., Goldstein, B. et al. (2023). Food production and resource use of urban farms and gardens: A five-county study. *Agronomy for Sustainable Development, 43*(18).
Global Market Statistics. (2026). Urban farming market size, share | *Industry Report [2035]* (downloadable).
Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension
Healthy Food Policy Project. (2024). *Zoning for urban agriculture: A guide for updating your community's laws to support healthy food production and access.*
Local zoning bylaws
Urban Agriculture Magazine - RUAF Urban Agriculture and Food Systems
Urban Farm Business Plan Handbook
U.S. Farm Bill
USDA National Agricultural Library (n.d.). Urban agriculture.

Research & articles on urban farms

Recently published selected research & articles:

Arnold, JE. (2022). On-farm spatial composition, management practices and estimated productivity of urban farms in the San Francisco Bay Area. *Processes*, *10*(3).
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Caraccciola, J. (2022). USDA's efforts to promote and support urban agriculture. *National Agricultural Law Center.*
Carolan, M. (2020). "Urban farming Is going high tech" digital urban agriculture's links to gentrification and land use. *Journal of the American Planning Association, 86*(1).
Chiburn, E. (2024). Urban agriculture is 'growing'. *Insight Into Diversity.*
Cimino, O., Vassallo, M., Henke, R., & Vanni, F. (2021). Income diversification strategies of Italian peri-urban farms: A structural equation modeling approach. *Land, 10*(8).
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Dorr, E., Hawes, J.K., Goldstein, B. et al. (2023). Food production and resource use of urban farms and gardens: A five-country study. *Agronomy for Sustainable Development, 43*(1).
Follmann, A., Willkomm, M., & Dannenberg, P. (2021). As the city grows, what do farmers do? A systematic review of urban and peri-urban agriculture under rapid urban growth across the global South. *Landscape and Urban Planning, 215.*
French, B., & Maynard, A. (2023). Eradicating malnutrition through small-scale, diverse and local food production. In Marsh & Williams (Eds.), *Cultivated therapeutic landscapes*. Routledge.
Gao, S., Medina, M., Gonzalez-Ospina, L. et al. (2025). Boosting soil health and crop nutrients with locally sourced biochar and compost in Sacramento urban agriculture. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems, 9.*

Giacchè, G., Consalès, JN., Grard, BJ. et al. (2021). Toward an evaluation of cultural ecosystem services delivered by urban micro-farms. *Sustainability, 13*(4).
Goh, TJ., & Ho, SS. (2023). The role of value orientations and media attention in predicting the personal norm and public intention to consume produce of urban farms. *Environmental Communication, 17*(6).
Gosh, S. (2023). Growing health in local food gardens: Cases studies of community, school, and home gardens. In Marsh & Williams (Eds.), *Cultivated therapeutic landscapes*. Routledge.
Grebitus. C., Chenarides, L., Muenich, R., & Mahalov, A. (2020). Consumer perception of urban farming – An exploratory study. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst., 12.*
Gunapala, R., Gangahagedara, R., Wanasinghe, W. et al. (2025). Urban agriculture: A strategic pathway to building resilience and ensuring sustainable food security in cities. *Farming System, 3*(3.)
Haloui, D., Oufaska, K., Oudani, M. et al. (2025). Sustainable urban farming using a two-phase multi-objective and multi-criteria decision-making approach. *International Transactions in Operational Research, 32*(2).
Harada, K., Hino, K., Iida, A. et al. (2021). How does urban farming benefit participants' health? A case study of allotments and experience farms in Tokyo. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(2).
Hardman, M., Clark, A., & Sherriff, G. (2022). Mainstreaming urban agriculture: Opportunities and barriers to upscaling city farming. *Agronomy, 12*(3).

Heiniger, C., Pétremand, G., & Rochefort, S. (2025). Hoverfly assemblages in urban farms compared to urban parks in the city of Geneva. *Basic and Applied Ecology*, *82*.
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Kato, Y., & Boules, C. (2024). Pandemic gardening: Variant adaptations to COVID-19 disruptions by community gardens, school gardens, and urban farms. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *46*(7).
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Kwon, CT., Heo, J., Lemmon, ZH. et al. (2020). Rapid customization of Solanaceae fruit crops for urban agriculture. *Nat Biotechnol., 38*(2).
Liu, SY., & Chang, CY. (2021). The influence of landscape colors of leisure farms on physical-psychological benefit. *Acta Hortic. 1313.*
Low, B. (2019). Building sustainable urban farms with government support in Singapore. *Field Actions Science Reports. The Journal of Field Actions*, (Special Issue 20).
Lupolt, SN., Santo, RE., Kim, BF. et al. (2021). The safe urban harvests study: A community-driven cross-sectional assessment of metals in soil, irrigation water, and produce from urban farms and gardens in Baltimore, Maryland. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, *129*(11).
Manikas, I., Malindretos, G., & Abeliotis, K. (2020). Sustainable cities through alternative urban farming: The case of floriculture. *Journal of International Food & Agribusiness Marketing*, *32*(3).
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Milestad, R., Carlsson-Kanyama, A., & Schaffer, C. (2020). The Högdalen urban farm: A real case assessment of sustainability attributes. *Food Security*, *12*.
Mulier, MH., Van de Ven, FHM., & Kirshen, P. (2022). Quantification of the local water energy nutrient food nexus for three urban farms in Amsterdam & Boston. *Energy Nexus*, *6*.
Nicholas, SO., & Harré, N. (2024). The community contributions of urban farms in Singapore. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, *48*(10).
Ng, AK., & Mahkeswaran, R. (2021, August). Emerging and disruptive technologies for urban farming: A review and assessment. *Journal of Physics: Conference series* (Vol. 2003, No. 1, p. 012008). IOP Publishing.
Nowysz, A., Mazur, Ł., Vaverková, MD. et al. (2022). Urban agriculture as an alternative source of food and water security in today's sustainable cities. *Int J Environ Res Public Health., 19*(23).
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O'Sullivan, CA., McIntyre, CL., Dry, IB. et al. (2020). Vertical farms bear fruit. *Nature Biotechnology*, 38(2).
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Wielemaker, R., Oenema, O., Zeeman, G. & Weijma, J. (2019). Fertile cities: Nutrient management practices in urban agriculture. *Sci. Total Environ.,* 668.
Wilke, AB., Carvajal, A., Vasquez, C. et al. (2020). Urban farms in Miami-Dade County, Florida have favorable environments for vector mosquitoes. *PloS One*, *15*(4).
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Examples of urban farms

Acta Non Verba Youth Urban Farm Project (ANV) Oakland CA is a safe outdoor space for children, youth and families focused on nutrition, food production and healthy living, founded and led mainly by women of color.

Bonton Farms in Dallas, TX operates a farm, Farmer's Market, Café, and Coffee House on a lot in South Dallas with a mission to transform lives by "disrupting systems of inequality, laying a foundation where change yields health, wholeness, and opportunity is the norm."

Boston Medical Center's Rooftop Farm provides local produce for the hospital, Demonstration Kitchen, Preventative Food Pantry, with a commitment to go green.
Cerasee Farm, associated with *Urban GreenWorks* in Miami, FL offers online produce sales and a CSA, guided by the "Food is Medicine" philosophy.

Chicago Botanic Garden's urban agriculture education and jobs-training program focusing on food, health and jobs, called *Windy City Harvest*, is delivered at 10 farms, with nutrition classes, 5 health partners and development/support for 30 small farm businesses.

Common Roots Bi-Hi urban farm in *Halifax, NS* began as a partnership with the local/provincial health agency with a mission of combating food insecurity, provision of community gardening space and therapeutic services with a horticulture theme.

Deep Blue Greens AgriTech start-up in *Canada* developed indoor farming products and systems (Voltapoinics) that significantly increase crop yields.

Love is Love cooperative farm with 70 acres in *Mansfield, GA*, also leases *Gaia Gardens*, a 5-acre family farm in the Atlanta neighborhood of *East Lake Commons.* It is a worker-owned cooperative and CSA.

McCormick Place, a partner with *Windy City Harvest Program through* Chicago Botanic Garden IL., is a soil-based rooftop garden on top of *McCormick Place*, the largest convention center in North America and produces Windy City Honey from its hives of more than 50,000 bees. Updated story and link.

Meacham Urban Farm - Tampa's Source for Fresh, Local, and Organic Food, describes itself as a "community hub for sustainable living," providing education, a farm store, and field to fork events.

Patchwork City Farms, originally located in Atlanta's historic west end and relocated to Oakland neighborhood includes connections with SWAG Coop centered around black urban farmers and transformative Atlanta food systems growing certified *Naturally Grown Food* sold at local farmers' markets and its weekly seasonal farm shop.

Sacramento Nursery CA is 5 acres of sustainable urban agriculture and education in partnership with *Three Sisters Gardens* and the *City of Sacramento*. It is part of *Planting Justice's* network of land-based social enterprises.

Services for the Underserved (S:US) has an Urban Farms project for people with disabilities, people in poverty and people facing homelessness in *NYC.* The program "engages more than 900 people in therapeutic horticulture, nutrition programming, and vocational training." Partners include *Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, NYC Parks & Recreation & Kingsborough Community College Culinary Arts Dept* among others.

South Florida Urban Farm specializes in microgreens produced at a modern indoor hydroponic facility.

SPROUT NOLA Farm, Louisiana, received USDA funding for food production, access for economically distressed communities, job training and education. It is one of several *Sprout* programs in *Louisiana*.

Urban Growers Collective — Chicago Urban Farm is a network of 8 farms covering 11 acres of land, offering job training and education in farming and herbalism, and offering their produce at a farm stand, a mobile market, and CSA.
Whitelock Community Farm in *Baltimore, Maryland* promotes community stewardship through long-term volunteering, farm training, leadership development, and community activity.

Woods Creek Sustainability Center and Food Forest, is an example where utility owned property in *Washington* state and structured with typical 7 layers for food forests focuses on food production, community engagement, education and reduction of food deserts.
https://mrsc.org/stay-informed/mrsc-insight/may-2024/urban-agriculture

Yisrael Family Urban Farm, *Sacramento CA* in underserved *South Oak Park* neighborhood, and now with multiple locations, cultivates fruits and vegetables on a half-acre sustainable farm, acting as community gathering spaces, providing workshops, with support from *UC's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources* in communities of color.

Videos, webinar & websites on urban farms
20 Urban Farming Startups to Watch in 2025 profiles companies bringing innovative products and systems to market for urban farming: vertical farms for strawberry production, systems using high voltage to increase crop growth, aeroponic vertical garden system, modular vertical indoor farming structures, use of seed pads for simpler process of microgreen growing and more.

Cornell Small Farms is a *Cornell University* program of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, with projects, educational courses, resources and guides, and quarterly newsletter.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) Locator for Florida. *Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.*

Eater, Atlanta states that Atlanta, GA has realized significant tree canopy loss in the city which has empowered numerous urban farms (50) to be established as well as 150 community gardens. Several of these farms are highlighted including, *The Metro Atlanta Urban Farm*, *Love is Love Cooperative Farm*, and *Patchwork City Farms*.

Hilltop hydroponic farm takes urban agriculture to new level, food regardless of season or weather. (2026). [video]. *WSYX ABC 6.*

Master Urban Farmer Training Program through *University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign* (UIUC) Illinois Extension in *Cook County* offers programs that support equitable urban farming in addition to this 12-week program.

Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC). (2024, May 1), provides a fact page on government supported urban agriculture examples, studies, and legislation, for planning purposes. *MRSC - Local Government-Supported Urban Agriculture Adds Equity and Climate Change Benefits for the Public*

National Urban Farm Festival in *Brandywine MD* has existed for several years, with dates typically in May.

Operation Better Block and its Junior Green Corps initiative with *Pittsburgh* school students, seeks to teach urban farming, beautify vacant lots, install air quality monitors while growing food accessible to neighborhood residents. It offers a paid job readiness program for youth.

Paris urban farm feeds the city and its community spirit. (2026). [video] *DW News*.

People's Garden is a network of gardens nationwide, with one at *USDA* Washington headquarters, with a mission of empowering communities to grow and educate about sustainable resilient local food systems.

Pittsburgh Urban Farm Tour is an annual self-guided experience highlighting urban farms that educate on food cultivation, improving the environment, while providing access to local produce and transforming neglected areas into vibrant green spaces.

StartUs Insights *Discovery's* AI powered site identifies urban farm start-ups with an annual spotlight of some to watch each year.

The Garden (2008) documentary.

These Urban Farms Are Filling the Gaps the Government Ignores. (2025, May 27). *Nextcity.org.* This online article describes how urban farms are agents of change, addressing issues like "predatory lending, prison recidivism, and food security."

Turning lawns into 'micro farms' to fight food insecurity in south LA. (2025). [video]. *NBCLA.*

Urban Farming: Growing sustainable food in the city. (2025). [video]. *Sustainable Cities.*

Urban Farming in 2025: How Cities Are Growing Their Own Food - Sustainable Living.

USDA Urban Agriculture website has resources on urban agriculture toolkit, urban soil issues, CSAs, and urban farm business plan handbook.

USDA Community Supported Agriculture website has resources on CSAs, Farm to School, Food Circles, and links to research.

USDA Farm Service Agency has invested $5.2 million in 17 urban agriculture and innovative production projects in 2024.
https://www.fsa.usda.gov/news-events/news/07-01-2024/usda-invests-52-million-17-urban-agriculture-innovative-production

Can you Dig This (2025) movie explores Los Angeles' "urban gardening revolution."

Related organizations
EcoWatch
Edible Magazine Subscriptions has a network of 90+ locally focused magazines in US and Canada,

telling the stories of farmers, crops, and chefs.
LocalHarvest provides lists and an interactive map of family farms, local farmers' markets, CSAs, etc.
The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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