

## **ENVIRONMENT**

## **Edible Cities**©

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Words are explained alongside the text Stressed syllables are underlined and in bold\*



Picking your morning apple from a tree in your <u>office</u>'s orchard, grabbing fresh eggs at the metro station before heading home or a salad from your apartment's rooftop. Those delights seem quite far from the reality of an urban dweller. However it is becoming less and less unlikely as the past years have seen the emergence of a new trend: urban agriculture.

Urban agriculture is the <u>practice</u> of growing, <u>processing</u> and <u>distributing</u> food in towns, cities and peri-urban areas. It is one of the solutions to increase food security in urban areas faced with a fast-growing population.

From community-based organic agriculture initiatives to industrial hydroponics, from homemade soil containers to city-organized community permaculture gardens, urban agriculture can be carried out in many forms using many different organizational techniques.

Cli<u>mat</u>ic conditions are central in de<u>ter</u>mining the <u>crop</u> va<u>rieties</u> and <u>quan</u>tities that can be grown, especially concerning <u>soil-bound</u> methods. Other determinant factors are local eco<u>nomic</u> conditions, <u>leg</u>islative regulations, <u>cul</u>tural habits, etc. In France, for example urban agriculture practices are mainly based on <u>vegetable</u> and <u>aromatic</u> herb production.

Urban agriculture has been a **popular** research topic in the past **decade** especially in **Can**ada and certain parts of the US, but also in **Cu**ba and South **Af**rica. There is now **evidence** establishing that some cities could easily

**orchard** (n.) area of land where fruit trees are grown

to grab (vb.) to take hold of

**dweller** (n.) person who lives in a particular type of place

unlikely (adj.) improbable

trend (n.) tendency

organic (adj.) without chemicals

**hydroponics** (n.) growing plants in liquid

**permaculture** (n.) practice of producing food using ways that do not deplete the earth's natural resources

**to carry out** (phrasal vb.) to perform, accomplish

**crop** (n.) plant grown in large amounts

soil-bound (adj.) attached to the

**decade** (n.) period of ten years

evidence (n.) proof

produce enough fruit and vegetables to meet their population's demands, but also that urban agriculture can provide many social, economic and environmental benefits for both urban and rural populations.

Accessing fresher, healthier, local food in urban locations is one benefit among many others. Social benefits of urban agriculture range from the creation of self-sufficient communities to creating local employment, and some of the environmental and economic benefits are the creation of green areas, reduction of urban heat, natural water and air purification systems...

Most urban agriculture programs are **implemented** on a **rel**atively small **scale**. This means that local **prop**erty and constraints can be taken into consideration but it is also restricting in terms of **gen**eralizing the practice.

However, some **citywide** initiatives are starting to emerge. The City of Paris has **recently** set quite **impressive** objectives in terms of greening the city, including through food production. Many communal gardens are **flourishing** across the city and each citizen can now participate in greening both public and private spaces. For example, if you want to start growing your own food in front of your office you just need to ask for a *permis de végétaliser* and the town hall will provide you with free soil and **seeds** as long as you don't invade the **entire pavement**. You can also ask them to plant a pear tree or an apple tree in your garden, all for free as well!

Informal urban food growing is also a popular trend, officially called guerrilla gardening. Given the amount of vacant land in our cities, some communities have taken up the mission to grow food in those unused spaces. The initial guerrilla gardening website groups were for "anyone interested in the war against neglect and scarcity of public space as a place to grow things, be they beautiful, tasty or both!". It's getting so popular that you now have a plethora of special guerrilla gardening kits that are being sold or distributed to take over your neighborhood. These include the famous "seed bombs",

to meet (met-met) (vb.) to satisfy

**location** (n.) place, position

to range (vb.) to vary within limits

to implement (vb.) to carry out, perform

scale (n.) size, dimension

**citywide** (adj.) including all of a city and everyone who lives there

to flourish (vb.) to develop successfully

**seed** (n.) small, round, or oval object produced by a plant and from which, when it is planted, a new plant can grow

pavement (n.) pedestrian path

guerrilla gardening (n.) activity of growing plants without permission on land that belongs to someone else or on public land, with the aim of improving the environment or producing vegetables or flowers for people to use or enjoy

to take up (took-taken) (phrasal vb.) to accept, embrace

scarcity (n.) shortage, lack

to take over (phrasal vb.) to get control of something

a mix of soil, **clay** and seeds that you can throw wherever seems appropriate and hopefully in a few months you'll get a few **sprouts**, and maybe more.

But the first step in participating in **edible cities** is to have a look around you for what is already there to eat. To help you, "Falling Fruit" is a citizen-led col<u>lab</u>orative global initiative that **gathers** data on a<u>vailable</u> food growing in public spaces. Anyone can add a fruit tree or a <u>bush</u> they know of. A few town halls have even shared all their data on the <u>plat</u>form. You can find it <u>on</u>line at <u>fallingfruit.org</u>.

Now go out to **spot** those edibles in your neighborhood and find a place you'd like to green!

clay (n.) thick, heavy earth

sprout (n.) new shoot of a plant

edible city (exp.) "good food" movement

to gather (vb.) to collect

**bush** (n.) low plant with many small branches

to spot (vb.) to locate, identify

\* Tip!

Note the stress pattern in the nouns that end in -ty. Stress their third-from-last syllable:

com<u>mu</u>nity, <u>prop</u>erty, <u>quan</u>tity, re<u>al</u>ity, <u>scar</u>city, va<u>ri</u>ety