

Gardening in Urban Spaces

Urban green spaces are vital to our shared ecosystem, and in towns and cities little patches of green, some shady trees or a flower bed can have real value, becoming a little oasis amongst the hustle and bustle of an urban area. A garden in a town or city can be made on a balcony, in a yard or in a community space. This resource will guide you through why urban green spaces are so important, some top tips on how to get started and much more.

Why gardens are so important in towns and cities.

Gardens, green spaces and parklands help in ways you might not have thought of and with 85% of the UK living in a town or city, they really are an essential lung in our neighbourhoods.

Garden hedges, trees and verges provide a vital home for wildlife, from hedgehogs to birds and foxes to creepy crawlies. Being out in open space is proven to improve wellbeing and having an afternoon digging, planting and gardening is good for physical health too.

Trees and hedgerows provide important shade – a welcome cool environment to retreat to during hot weather. With towns and cities having lots of hard surfaces like roads, pavements and driveways, having gardens and parks can help to prevent urban flooding.

Every little patch of nature helps. Even window boxes of flowers or herbs will attract pollinators like bees, capture rainwater and process carbon dioxide.



Top 10 tips for Urban Gardening

- 1. Use what you have:** Look in your recycling for mushroom trays which can be used for seedlings, cress or pea shoots. Tin cans can be (safely) repurposed into flowerpots or bug hotels.
- 2. Organise a seed swap.** Seed packets usually contain enough seeds for two or three harvests, especially if you have a small garden or balcony. Consider having a seed or seedling swap if you have more than you need. That way you can grow more varieties and keep costs down.
- 3. Mulch your beds.** Covering the surface earth around your plants with a mulch of leaves, bark or hay reduces water evaporation from the soil and regulates its temperature, which decreases the need to water as much. It can also deter some pests like snails too!
- 4. Find out if you have a community garden you could volunteer at.** The RHS has a database: www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/find-a-group.
- 5. Bored of mowing a lawn?** Consider sowing a wild meadow – start with No Mow May or change a lawn for a flower bed.
- 6. Collect rainwater in a water butt or irrigation system.** Some water companies give free or subsidised water butts so check your local provider.
- 7. Can you replace any paving or hard surfaces with plants or wild meadows?** To not only support wildlife but also to help rainwater soak away and prevent flash flooding, restoring paving with plants and shrubs will help the environment.
- 8. Grow your own.** If you are really keen to grow your own but lack space, see if you can find an allotment. First step would be your local council or ask at your local allotment. There may be a waiting list though.
- 9. Plant perennials.** Whilst bursts of colour from bedding plants can look nice, it is better for your pocket and the planet to grow perennial plants which come back year after year. Plants like sunflowers or cosmos are annuals, whilst foxgloves, lavender and thyme are perennials which will die back in winter but come back the following year.
- 10. Find your local Library of Things or Share Shed.** With lawnmowers, shears and rotavators being expensive to purchase and many of us not having the space to store garden equipment, you could search for your local community sharing service.



Generate conversation and explore sensory experiences.

As a group you could share ideas on what land or park in your community could do with a spruce up. Many councils are open to community groups tidying up forgotten flower beds and verges.

Visit a community garden, allotment, RHS or National Trust garden and have a look at what they grow, discuss which flowers and plants attract pollinators.



About this resource:

Keen to get gardening? We have got you covered, even if you only have access to a windowsill or balcony.

Why not download the windowsill herbs resource:

www.fflgettogether.org/get-involved/resources/growing/growing-herbs/

Or learn how the group at Fearon Hall who have thrived with their community garden endeavours:

www.fflgettogether.org/get-involved/resources/growing/growing-in-urban-spaces/

foodforlife.org.uk/campaigns

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