

Urban Gardening Initiatives 2020

Preface

fresh: EDMONTON'S FOOD AND AGRICULTURE STRATEGY

fresh was developed in consultation with interested citizens, groups, businesses and organizations. Implementation has been underway since 2012, when it was approved by City Council. The strategy helps guide Edmonton towards the vision of a resilient food and agriculture system that contributes to the local economy and the overall cultural, financial, social and environmental sustainability of the city.

THE YEAR OF 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted how we live, work, and play in Edmonton. Many have turned to gardening for access to freshly grown food, for social connections, and for physical and mental well-being. This report highlights some of the ways the City of Edmonton celebrates and promotes local food growing opportunities.



Front Yards in Bloom: Edible Yards

Front Yards In Bloom is a volunteer-based, partnership program in operation since 1999 that encourages Edmontonians to recognize their neighbours' beautification efforts. The program has an Edible Yards category which celebrates growing vegetables in front yards. In 2020 there were 127 nominations for the Edible Yards, which is a 200% increase from 2019!

Veg Instead!

Veg Instead! launched in 2020 as a City of Edmonton pilot project that is supported by the Edmonton Food Council. The project encourages and helps Edmontonians grow vegetables for personal consumption or donation in non-traditional areas of their private property such as front and side yards and balconies.



City Farm

City Farm was a new initiative in 2020 that **repurposed 13.59 acres of land** at a City-owned nursery to produce food for donation while acknowledging Edmontonians' diverse food needs. Potatoes, onions, beets, carrots, corn and pumpkin were all successfully planted, grown and harvested. Horticulture crews were responsible for preparing seeds, planting crops, and harvesting and delivering the produce. City-owned equipment was utilized in site preparation, watering, and harvesting.

City Farm supported the community by donating fresh produce to local foundations, such as the Edmonton Food Bank. Agencies responded quickly and worked together to ensure the **32,727 pounds** of food donated by City Farm got to Edmontonians in need.

See some highlights and a video in this [Transforming Edmonton blog post](#).

Edmonton



Gardening got me consistently outside and contributed to my well being. I was able to meet some neighbors, and feel more connected to the people around me. I wish I had a little more to harvest to contribute to the food bank, but it did ease food costs for myself.

Pop-Up Community Gardener



The experience demonstrated that the value of community gardening is more significant during a pandemic. It encouraged outdoor activity, supported mental and physical wellness, and brought family, friends and the community together in a safe and responsible way.

Pop-Up Community Garden Leader



Community Gardens

In partnership with Sustainable Food Edmonton, the Community Gardens Grant Program awarded over \$28,000 of funding to 11 projects.

Edmontonians can easily find a garden close to home by viewing locations and garden contact information on the Community Gardens Map online at edmonton.ca/communitygardens.

In response to COVID-19, Community Garden Guidelines were developed and installed citywide to ensure the safety of gardeners.

Between April and October, there were five new community garden projects initiated in the city. Also, the Community Gardens Process Flowchart was replaced by the [Community Group Led Construction Guide Roadmap](#). To start a new community garden project, please contact parkandfacilitydevelopment@edmonton.ca.

Pop-Up Community Gardens Pilot

In 2020, the City of Edmonton launched a **pilot** to add 391 planters in 29 temporary community garden sites. These gardens consist of raised beds designed for community food production and provide a safe recreational opportunity.

Participants in the pilot were responsible for plants/seeds, disinfecting products, personal gardening protective equipment and tools, gardening knowledge, and being dedicated to support the garden.

WHAT WE HEARD

We invited participants to fill out an end of season survey. Leaders of 27 gardens (out of 29) and 23 gardeners and/or volunteers from seven gardens responded.

GARDEN LEADERS

The most important reason why leaders applied for the pop-up gardens pilot is to **connect community members to each other**. The second and third most important reasons are to **provide gardening space** and **enhance food security**.

18 garden leaders (out of 27 who responded) identified that they received donations from community members, businesses, or community partner organizations in the form of seeds, seed potatoes, tomato seedlings, equipment and monetary donations.

POP-UP GARDEN PILOT

Type of Participants	Number of Participants
Volunteers	13
Adult Gardeners	353
Children/Youth	63
Total	429

* Estimate based on responses from 27 garden leaders.

GARDEN OPERATIONS

- + **18 assigned** plots to individual families
- + **5 operated** as communal model/free for all
- + **4 maintained** by a group of volunteers

15 out of 27 gardens donated to the Edmonton Food Bank or community members. These gardens are estimated to have donated at least 1,000 pounds of produce during the 2020 growing season in the form of greens, potatoes, beets, pumpkins, carrots, and others.

GARDENERS

20 out of 23 gardeners identified at least one challenge while participating at a pop-up garden. Theft is the most common challenge with vandalism and a short growing timeline being other challenges.

All gardeners said they had positive experiences while participating at a pop-up garden. The most common (**22 out of 23**) positive experiences were getting to grow food locally and improving mental well-being and physical health.

For more information visit edmonton.ca

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