



Food security is when people can easily obtain and afford safe, healthy and familiar food.

“Food secure” communities value local food and work to preserve and protect the land, water and other resources needed to produce food.

Focus on Food in Simcoe Muskoka

Urban Agriculture

Urban Agriculture is growing food in or around cities, towns or smaller communities. Some examples include backyard gardens, beehives, berry patches, shared gardens, container gardening, edible landscaping, greenhouse agriculture, herb gardens, urban farms, orchards and vineyards, rooftop gardens, and schoolyard gardens.

What would urban agriculture look like in our community?

- Community partners help develop urban agriculture guidelines.
- Local government policies and guidelines support urban agriculture (i.e. bylaws allowing community gardens on city-owned land) and planning policies that support preservation of urban farm land.
- Community gardens and other “grow your own” projects are supported with funds and resources such as land, water supply, tax relief, insurance and gardening tools.
- Neighbours grow food in or around cities and towns in shared gardens, around public buildings, on rooftops and in schoolyards.
- Residents feel connected, safer and more secure in their community.
- Education and training help people choose local foods and prepare them in healthy ways.

Definitions

Community gardens — are small public plots of land in shared gardens that can be leased from the town/city or other group, for growing food and flowers.

Rooftop gardens — are any gardens on the roof of a building used to grow vegetables, fruit, herbs, trees and flowers.

Urban farm – farms that continue to operate inside towns and cities.

Urban agriculture has many benefits

- Keeping money spent on food in the community supports local farmers and others in the food sector by creating jobs, income and security.
- Makes healthy foods more available so people can meet their nutrition needs.
- Increases the number of vegetables and fruit people eat, which is an important part of a healthy diet.
- When people buy local and eat foods in season, it helps to reduce greenhouse gases and improves air quality.
- Supports a healthy, active lifestyle.
- Provides a place for people to come together and improve their well-being.

Growing food in your neighbourhood makes sense

- Most Canadians eat fewer than five servings of vegetables & fruit daily, which is less than *Canada's Food Guide* recommendations.
- A 3 x 6 metre (10' by 20') plot can provide 32 kilograms (64 lbs) of vegetables or 34 kilograms (68 lbs) of fruit yearly.
- Reports show that Toronto has only three days worth of fresh food at any one time, and smaller cities and towns likely have an even smaller supply.

For more information, check out the following links:

- Together 4 Health (Waterloo Region)
www.together4health.ca/workgroups/waterloo-region-community-garden-council
- The Stop Community Food Centre (Toronto)
www.thestop.org
- Community Garden (City of Barrie)
www.barrie.ca/Living/ParksTrails/Pages/CommunityGardens.aspx

Other factsheets available in this series:



Food security is when people can easily obtain and afford safe, healthy and familiar food. Communities that are “food secure” value local food and work to preserve and protect the land, water and other resources needed to produce food.



A **Sustainable Local Food System** allows people to eat a healthy diet and provides fair payment to local farmers and those who process and sell food. It provides a safe and quality food supply now and into the future.



Local Food Procurement Policy gives direction to institutions such as government, colleges, school boards/schools, and hospitals on the type of local food to buy and where to get it. It helps local farmers and those who process and sell food compete fairly.

For more information or to access the other factsheets available in this series contact *Your Health Connection*.



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