Urban Agriculture in New York City

Urban Agriculture World Summit

Nerima City, Tokyo
December 1, 2019

Bill LoSasso
Director, NYC Parks GreenThumb
New York City’s Agricultural History

1760s

late 1800s

1930s
Agriculture across NYC

583 GreenThumb Community Gardens/Farms

595 NYCHA Resident Gardens

780 School Gardens

94 Other Agriculture Sites

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2,052 total Agricultural Sites (estimated)

300 acres (121 hectares) (estimated)

170+ farmers markets
Agriculture in New York City
GreenThumb Community Gardens
Community Gardens and Farms
School Gardens
Rooftop Farms
Workforce Development & Healthy Food Access
Resident Gardens in Public Housing Developments
Indoor Farming and Ag Tech
Agricultural Demonstrations
Creative Land Use Decisions
Long-term Land Use Planning

Where is gardening and agriculture allowed in New York City?

Zoning allows agricultural uses in all residential districts, the vast majority of commercial districts, and all manufacturing districts. The only area where agriculture is not permitted by zoning is within C7 districts, which are intended for amusement parks. Agricultural uses include personal production, community gardens, urban farms, and urban horticulture and horticulture-related uses.
Urban Agriculture Plan  
(proposed)

By Council Members Espinal, Arroyo-Sanchez, Torres, Crenshaw, Brannan, Levine, Feneu, Constantine, Miller, Holloway, Rose, Avella, Koo, the Public Advocate (Mr. Williams), Rosenthal, Dukakis, Cohen, Pinzone, Carlucci, Gentile, Yerrington, Richards, Lengeman, Van Bramer, Talev, Cohen, Gibson, Barron, Valavanis, Mejia, Koslowitz, Deutsch, Ferragamo, Perelis, Lengeman, Espinal, Alvarez, Levin, Chin, Menchaca, Kang, Ojeleye, Mallon, Barron, Camilo, Salamanca, Rivers and Ulrich (by request of the Brooklyn Borough President)

A Local Law in relation to developing a comprehensive urban agriculture plan

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

1. Section 1. Comprehensive urban agriculture plan. a. The department of city planning, in cooperation with relevant agencies and stakeholders, including but not limited to food policy educators, representatives from community gardens and urban farming businesses, shall prepare a comprehensive urban agriculture plan. Such comprehensive urban agriculture plan shall address, but not be limited to, the following issues related to urban agriculture: (i) cataloging existing and potential urban agriculture spaces; (ii) classification and prioritization of urban agriculture uses; (iii) identification and policy use priorities for the expansion of agricultural uses in the city; (iv) an analysis of zones that impact agricultural uses, including those segments of the zoning resolution, building code, and fire code that merit reconsideration to promote urban agriculture; (v) expanding the availability of healthy food in low-income neighborhoods; (vi) the integration of urban agriculture into the city’s conservation and resiliency plans; (vii) youth development and education with regard to local food production; (viii) direct and indirect job creation and impacts from urban agriculture production; and (ix) the feasibility of creating an office of urban agriculture.

   b. On or before July 1, 2020, the department of city planning shall submit to the mayor and speakers of the council and post on the department’s website the comprehensive urban agriculture plan prepared pursuant to subdivision a of this section.

2. This law shall take effect immediately.

Office of Urban Agriculture  
(proposed)

By Council Member Espinal

A Local Law to amend the New York City charter, in relation to establishing an office of urban agriculture and an urban agriculture advisory board

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

1. Section 1. Chapter one of the New York City charter is amended by adding a new section,

2. a. Office of urban agriculture. Definitions. For the purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

   b. Office. The term "office" means the office of urban agriculture.

3. a. The mayor shall establish an office of urban agriculture within the office of long-term planning and sustainability. Such office shall be headed by a director who shall be appointed by the mayor and shall additionally employ at least one staff member who has expertise in urban planning.

4. c. Powers and duties. The director shall have the power and the duty to:

   1. Conduct education and outreach to promote urban agriculture and inform the public about urban agriculture, its benefits and ways to participate;

   2. Receive comments and complaints related to urban agriculture;

   3. Make recommendations to the office of long-term planning and sustainability and the heads of relevant agencies with respect to protecting and expanding urban agriculture for the purpose of sustainability, resilience, environmental protection, health, community development and small business planning;
Supporting Safe Food Production

3. Cut your lumber and build your bed! For one 8 foot x 4 foot raised bed, you will need three boards of 8 foot lumber: two for the long sides, and one to cut in half for the short sides.
   a. You can remove the stakes/string if you are assembling the bed in place.
   b. We find that the buddy system works best for bed assembly. One person can hold a corner in place, while the other connects the boards using a hammer and nails or a power drill and screws.
      i. If using a power drill, pre-drill your holes so that your lumber does not split.
   c. You should make this a double raised bed if you plan to grow root vegetables or any vegetables with deep roots such as tomatoes, kale, collards, corn, and squash. A single-level raised bed is fine for herbs and baby leafy greens such as arugula.
      i. Build a second raised bed with the same dimensions as the first one.
      ii. Place it on top of the first raised bed.
      iii. Add a 2 inch x 4 inch piece of lumber (or any scrap untreated lumber) to each corner. Make sure the two beds are flush with one another and secure to the corner posts.

4. Once your raised bed is assembled, place it in its final spot if you have not already done so.
5. Use the level to see if it is even. If it’s not even, use stones, bricks, or excess soil to raise up a low corner or edge.
6. Fill the raised bed with soil. The soil should be flat and level with the top of the raised bed. One cubic yard of soil will fill one 8 foot x 4 foot raised bed.

Maintenance:

It is best practice to add a few inches of compost to top off your raised bed at the start or end of each season. It is important to keep the soil level full to the top of your raised bed so that your plant roots have enough space to grow and do not grow into the underlying soil. This practice also helps to replenish nutrients in the soil after growing delicious vegetables all season long! If the soil levels in your bed gets too low, it may be necessary to fill it with a soil and compost mix, not just compost.
grow to learn nyc

THE CITYWIDE SCHOOL GARDENS INITIATIVE
Supporting Land Access for All
Supporting Healthy Food Access
Supporting Healthy Food Access
GreenThumb gardens and farms are public open spaces stewarded by volunteers

- Open to public 20 hours per week
- Must accept new members
- Must host free events
- Members decide site design and use
Prioritized by:
- Open space access
- Food insecurity
- Health factors
- Historical under-investment
Community Development through Community Gardening
Community Development through Community Gardening
THANK YOU