

Urban Gardening Initiatives 2021

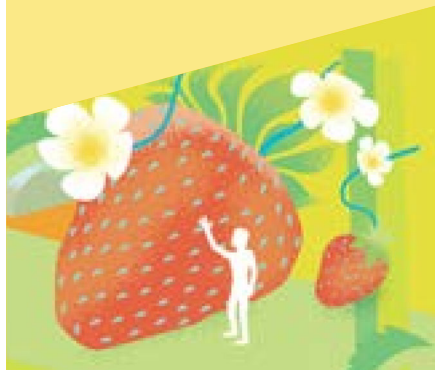


Preface

This year, Edmontonians continued to face significant adjustments to the way we lived, worked and played and continued to adjust their lives through the Covid-19 pandemic. Gardening remained a meaningful activity that individuals and communities were able to participate in as restrictions changed. Many people stayed connected, maintained physical and mental wellbeing and benefitted from access to local, fresh food. This report highlights the many ways that the City of Edmonton celebrates and promotes urban gardening and food growing opportunities.

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.



Edmonton Food Council was established in 2013 and completed its eighth year of operations as a volunteer advisory council to City Administration. While their primary function is to provide Administration with strategic and expert insight into the food and urban agriculture landscape, other activities include identifying, researching and exploring local food policies, emerging issues and opportunities; proposing key work priorities to the City; and building and maintaining relationships with the food and urban agriculture community.



Veg Instead!

Veg Instead! is a City of Edmonton project in collaboration with Edmonton Food Council to encourage and help Edmontonians to grow vegetables, for personal consumption and/or sharing, in non-traditional areas of their private property such as front and side yards and balconies. This season was the second year of the project and popularity has increased among urban gardeners across the city.

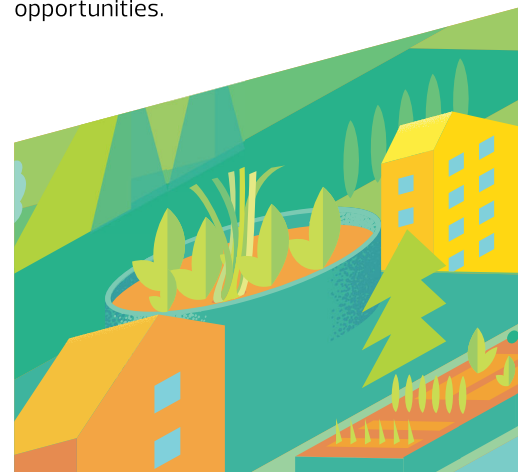
Veg Instead! has roots in several strategic directions from *fresh*: Edmonton's Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy, which imagines how new approaches to food and urban agriculture can make Edmonton an even better place to live, work, play and invest. **Veg Instead!** also stems from the Climate Resilient Edmonton: Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan and Edmonton's Energy Transition Strategy, as growing food is more environmentally friendly than growing grass and helps make our city more climate resilient.

Front Yards in Bloom: Edible Yards

Front Yards In Bloom is a long-standing volunteer-based program that's been in operation since 1999. This program encourages Edmontonians to recognize their neighbours' beautification efforts. The program has an Edible Yards category which celebrates growing vegetables in front yards. In 2021 there were a total of 5951 nominations, including, 62 nominations in the Edible Yards category. For program information and ways to get involved visit frontyardsinbloom.ca

City Farm

This season marked another successful year for City Farm, such that 52,320 lbs of fresh produce was donated to Edmonton's Food Bank and partner organizations. The season finished with a fall planting of garlic seed. Growing garlic will be new to City Farm, providing an early-season crop of garlic scapes. Utilized similarly to scallions or spring onions, shoots are harvested while young and tender to the touch. The nutritionally dense, sweet with mild garlic flavour scapes are sure to add a delightful touch to any early spring meal. Followed by a fall harvest of the more familiar garlic bulbs. A portion of the bulbs will be reserved for seed. In 2022 we look forward to further connecting the community through a variety of volunteer programs and opportunities.





I loved going each day to my pop-up garden, mentally it served me well. Not only was I able to bring home fresh home grown produce, the nurturing and caring of the plants I find pleasure in too. Additional exercise daily too and fresh air is a great benefit especially in the times of the pandemic

Participant survey respondent



Pop-Up Community Gardens Pilot

This season marked the second year of the Pop-Up Community Gardens Pilot. A total of 365 planters at 29 temporary community garden sites were established in the early summer. The pilot community gardens consisted of raised beds designed for community food production and were intended to provide a safe recreational and community-building opportunity for Edmontonians most impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Community Led Process

Community gardens developed on city parkland are considered [community-led projects](#) and follow the [Park and Facility Development Process](#). The Park and Facility Development team leads Project Proposal review for permanent projects and provided support in assessing temporary locations for the Pop-Up Community Garden Pilot sites.

For more information on parkland projects visit [park and facility development](#).

Community Gardens

A community garden is a place where a group of people come together to nurture and sustain a growing space in their community. The City of Edmonton has supported the development and expansion of community gardens for over 15 years. Currently there are over 80 community gardens citywide promoting local, organically grown food; healthy and active lifestyles; and safer, more vibrant and connected communities.

Edmontonians can easily find a garden close to home by exploring locations and garden contact information on the [Community Gardens Map](#). Gardens remain community-led initiatives and membership requirements are varied. Support for project planning and development is available to community groups who want to start a new garden on parks and open spaces within the City of Edmonton. Safety protocols at gardens were supported by the installation of Community Garden Guidelines, which were revised in response to COVID-19 requirements.

In partnership with Sustainable Food Edmonton, the Community Gardens Grant Program awarded \$30,000 of funding to 11 projects. This funding opportunity helps community groups build new gardens and expand or renovate existing sites.

Training and education was encouraged by hosting three community garden presentations for City Hall School participants in the spring and two community garden process workshops were hosted in July and September.

Urban Hens

In 2021, the City of Edmonton issued 53 urban hen licenses. The University of Alberta Small Flock Poultry Course was developed to support applicant requirements and training. Participants can join a 2-hour course with 10 educational modules on the care and responsibilities of raising hens in an urban setting. Also, numerous inquiries were received from surrounding municipalities seeking advice on establishing similar programming. The City is committed to sharing best practices and lessons learned in leading this program.

For program details visit edmonton.ca/urbanhens

Urban Beekeeping

In 2021, the City of Edmonton issued 20 beekeeping licenses to Edmontonians. Although the program continues to grow in popularity, neighbourhood restrictions on licensing such as allergy alerts and finding industry mentors for new beekeepers have limited the number of completed applications.

Delicate bees are sensitive to climate extremes, like high summer temperatures and smoky conditions. The local conditions in 2021 caused the bees to become more aggressive than in previous seasons. The City responded to concerns from neighbourhoods concerning increased bee stings and swarms. The City worked with resident beekeepers to ensure hives were controlled and supported proactive ways to limit negative impacts to neighbours.

Social Development

Community Building Social Workers supported improvements to the Pop-Up Community Garden Pilot objectives and applicant criteria. The result was that there was priority to communities and groups disproportionately impacted by Covid-19. Also, support was provided to enhance community benefits, beyond the participating gardeners. Examples of this include sharing the harvest and promoting inclusion of neighbourhood residents. Broader participation was facilitated by supporting gardening organized through not-for-profit social agencies and other community groups. By promoting equitable access to marginalized communities, we were able to expand the reach of local pop-up community gardens to communities without traditional access to gardening programs.

For more information visit edmonton.ca

Edmonton