



HOW TO STRENGTHEN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF URBAN GARDENS IN THE CITY?

Challenge

Allotment and community gardens have long belonged to the city and are intertwined with its activities and dynamics. Even though growing is a fundamental activity, as societies change places must adapt to maintain relevance and attractiveness. In some cities, contemporary challenges in relation to Urban Allotment Gardens (UAG) are associated with:

- Uncertainty regarding the future of the garden.
- Risk of loss to urban development.
- Change in the composition of gardeners due to ageing, out flux or family issues.
- The lack of attractiveness to new plot holders, especially young people.
- The lack of diversity of spaces, uses and users.

Question 1: How can gardeners improve the significance of their garden in the city? How can they make the garden more relevant and attractive?

Question 2: Why should public authorities strengthen the validity of urban gardens in the city and how can they do this?



Image 2 - Beekeepers event open to the public, Martineau Gardens, Birmingham, UK. Photo: Sandra Costa



Image 3 - Quinta da Granja, public paths between plots, Lisbon. Photo: Sandra Costa

Advice for Gardeners

How can we improve the significance of our garden?

Your garden will be more relevant and attractive if more people get involved:

- Involve children, by offering a plot to a nearby kindergarden or primary school.
- Engage in networks and co-work with NGO's to learn more and generate new ideas.

Make your garden accessible to a broader public:

- Allow people from the neighbourhood access to and across the garden.
- Offer benches to sit on.
- Offer opening days.
- Organise events in which the public are involved.
- Offer workshops e.g. in gardening, composting, water management, beekeeping and recycling.

Increase the functionality of the garden:

- Offer a diversity of spaces that go beyond growing plots, such as a shared greenhouse, playgrounds, a clubhouse, and lawns with trees.
- Offer plots of different sizes for different groups of people.
- Offer raised plots for users with disabilities.

- Offer an orchard with fruit trees and hedgerows; these will contribute to increased biodiversity and attract pollinators.

Keep the site well-maintained:

- Do not neglect your plot.
- Take care for temporarily vacant plots.
- Collaborate in the maintenance of the shared areas of the garden.

Inform the public and the gardeners about what is going on in the garden:

- Have an information board on site.
- Use social media.



Image 4 - Benches along public areas, Hanbruch allotment garden, Aachen, Germany. Photo: Runrid Fox-Kaemper



Image 5 - Shared greenhouse, Walsall Road allotment, Birmingham, UK. Photo: Sandra Costa

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Have a look at recently implemented community gardens as they tend to be more open to the public and include a greater diversity of activities and spaces. You do not need to incorporate all spaces however consider developing some diverse spaces as these will improve the gardens.

Case studies

Prinzessinnengärten is a community garden in Berlin, implemented on a site which had been a wasteland for over half a century. Locals can gather together to experiment and discover more about organic food production, biodiversity and climate protection. <http://prinzessinnengarten.net/about/>

Martineau Gardens is a community garden established in Birmingham following World War II. It offers a diversity of environments that work as a refuge for urban wildlife and for the local community and visitors. It is well established as a therapeutic place for people with disabilities and learning difficulties through the practice of therapeutic horticulture, and a venue for educational activities. <http://www.martineau-gardens.org.uk/>



Image 6 - Allotment park Quinta da Granja, with the recreation park in the first plan and the growing areas at the back, Lisbon, Portugal. Photo: Sandra Costa



Image 7 - Allotment park Quinta da Granja, Lisbon, Portugal. Photo: Sandra Costa

Information for Policy Makers

Why should policy makers support UAGs?

- UAGs provide many ecosystem services, including supporting social cohesion, food provision, educational benefits, climate regulation and urban biodiversity.
- UAGs provide many economic advantages such as saving on health costs and free or collaborative maintenance of public space.

How can you as urban planner or designer contribute to supporting urban gardens?

At the city/neighbourhood level:

- Develop conditions under which the garden site can be encoded in long-term and short-term urban planning.
- Facilitate connectivity by connecting the garden to other urban green infrastructure.
- Rethink public transportation to facilitate flexibility and/or to create stops near gardens.
- Provide cycling and walking paths to and across the garden, in order to guarantee access to public.
- Support school initiatives in establishing gardens.

At the garden level:

- Include the gardeners and the surrounding community in the planning/design process.
- Plan the garden to be more multifunctional and inclusive (age, gender, ethnicity).
- Provide advice, funding and cooperation for improving the diversity of spaces within the garden.
- Fun, education and play – offer play spaces associated with growing and the learning of natural processes.
- Offer spaces for event celebrations.
- Plan/design to accommodate new technologies (e.g. internet).
- Embrace sustainability by rethinking energy efficiency and new environmentally friendly and efficient ways to harvest and storage rainwater.

Advocate for the existence of gardens for growing in the city and offer locations for this purpose!



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Case study

Lisbon (Portugal) has developed a specific programme for promoting urban allotments as a new use for green parks and gardens. The so-called urban allotment parks combine areas for food growing and for recreation and are integrated in the greenways strategy for the city. The Urban Allotments Parks Programme intends to implement more than 20 urban allotment parks before 2017.

For more see:

Mata, D. (2014). Lisbon's green plan actions: towards a green city. Available at: http://www.urbanallotments.eu/fileadmin/uag/media/Lisbon/2-GVSF-CML-paper_COSTLNEC_FINAL.pdf (accessed 15 May 2016).

http://www.cm-lisboa.pt/fileadmin/VIVER/Ambiente/Hortas_Urbanas/ParqueHorticolaLisboa.JPG

<http://www.cm-lisboa.pt/en/living-in/environment/municipal-horticulture-parks>

Image 8 - Cycle and pedestrian lanes, adjacent to the growing areas, Quinta da Granja, Lisbon, Portugal. Photo: Sandra Costa

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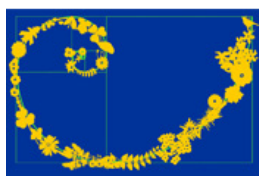


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