

Career and Technical Education Grade 8: Nutrition and Wellness Course

Wonderopolis Wonder of the Day #17: Can You Garden in the City”

Source: <https://wonderopolis.org/wonder/growing-veggies>



Have you ever Wondered...

- Can you garden in the city?
- What kind of vegetables can you grow in a container?
- Are rooftops a good place for an urban garden?

Over seven billion people call Earth home these days.

Feeding all those hungry people is no small task. Fortunately, scientific advances have helped to modernize agriculture to the point where billions of pounds of food can be produced year after year.

Intensive agricultural use of land takes its toll on Earth's resources, though. From demands on the land and bodies of water to pollution associated with chemical fertilizers, it can be a challenge to maintain the health of Earth as we seek to maintain the health of its people.

Today, many people have started to take a greater interest in where their food comes from. Rather than eating food that has been shipped hundreds or thousands of miles, many people now prefer locally-grown foods. Not only do local foods result in less pollution from shipping, but they're also fresher and taste better.

A desire for fresh, local foods has led many people to create their own gardens to grow their own food. If you've ever seen a corn or soybean field, you know that most farms that produce food are quite large. That's why they tend to be out in the country where large tracts of land are available. What are people who live in cities to do? As many people who have tried urban gardening have learned, you don't have to own a tractor or thousands of acres of land to grow your own food. Using new and creative techniques, you can easily create vegetable gardens in the city.

In the urban environment, land can be scarce. Large, open spaces can be few and far between and larger tracts of land can command a premium price for other uses, such as housing and business development. If you live in a city and have a backyard, you're set. Even the smallest patches of land can be developed into thriving vegetable gardens. You simply have to set reasonable goals for the land you have to use.

You might not be able to grow enough vegetables to feed hundreds, thousands, or millions of people, but you can probably grow enough food to make many meals for your family.

If you don't have a backyard or access to even a small patch of land, don't fret. You can still grow vegetables in containers. Even a simple windowsill is large enough to host small containers full of herbs. Larger containers, such as five-gallon buckets, can be used to grow a wide variety of vegetables, such as tomatoes, potatoes, lettuce, beans, peppers, and cucumbers.

Where would you put the containers? Take stock of your environment and find a suitable place. Windows, patios, balconies, decks, and even rooftops that get at least six hours of sunlight each day make great spots for containers of vegetables to grow. In large cities, such as New York City, you'll find many rooftops that have been turned into thriving gardens that produce a bountiful supply of vegetables each season.

So, if you want to grow your own vegetables, think outside the farm! Evaluate the land and spaces available to you and make the most of them! You won't regret getting your hands dirty, raising some homegrown food, and feeling more connected to Earth.

Take the Wonder Word Challenge- Match the term on the left to its definition on the right.

Fresh	Workplace consisting of cultivated land as a unit.
Agriculture	Large in quantity, abundant
Farm	Recently made, produced or harvested
Maintain	By a particular locality
Locally	Keep in a certain state, position or activity
Bountiful	A large scale farming enterprise

Student Activity: All students will complete the following activity questions.

1. Interview an adult family member who may have had a garden in the past. Ask the following questions: What fruits or vegetables did you grow? What time of the year did you plant the garden and when did you harvest or pick the produce? Did you have a garden in the ground or did you plant the produce in pots? What was your favorite and least favorite part of gardening?
2. List five fruits that you eat on a regular basis. Then list three fruits that you might like to try but never had the opportunity. You may use the internet to look up different types of fruits.
3. People are more enthusiastic and connected to their food when given the opportunity to get hands-on. A fresh way to cultivate excitement for trying new foods in your household is by raising your own homegrown veggies. You can learn so much as you nurture a vegetable plant through each phase of the growth cycle — from seedling to dinner plate. Have you ever thought about trying to grow your own food? If so, what vegetables would you like to grow? If not, explain why growing a garden would not be of interest to you? Take some time today to plan out a simple garden plot with an adult friend or family member. Draw out the design of your garden and label what you would plant. It may be a ground plot garden or a garden in pots.