



The Role of Urban Gardens in Improving Community Nutrition: Opportunities and Challenges

Ameneh Marzban^{1*}

1. Department of Health in Disasters and Emergencies, School of Health Management and Information Sciences, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

ARTICLE TYPE	ARTICLE HISTORY	KEYWORDS
Letter to the Editor	Received: 18 Feb 2025 Accepted: 01 Mar 2025 Published: 20 Apr 2025	Urban gardens, Community nutrition, Food deserts, Social interaction, Community involvement

► Please cite this paper as:

Marzban A. The Role of Urban Gardens in Improving Community Nutrition: Opportunities and Challenges. J Nutr Fast Health. 2025; 13(2): 142-143. DOI: 10.22038/JNFH.2025.86188.1562.

Dear Editor

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in urban gardening as a means to improve community nutrition and promote sustainable living (1). Urban gardens, which include community gardens, rooftop gardens, and vertical gardens, offer a variety of benefits that contribute to the overall well-being of communities (2). They provide fresh and healthy produce, promote social interaction, and offer educational opportunities. However, the implementation and maintenance of urban gardens also come with their own set of challenges (3). In this letter, I aim to highlight the significant role of urban gardens in enhancing community nutrition, discuss the opportunities they present, and address the challenges that need to be overcome.

Opportunities

Access to Fresh Produce

One of the most significant benefits of urban gardens is the increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables. In many urban areas, residents face limited access to healthy foods due to the prevalence of "food deserts," areas where fresh produce is scarce and expensive (2). Urban gardens can help bridge this gap by providing locally grown, affordable, and nutritious produce. This increased access to fresh foods can lead to better dietary habits, improved health outcomes, and a reduction in diet-

related diseases such as obesity and diabetes (4).

Promotion of Social Interaction

Urban gardens also serve as communal spaces where residents can come together, interact, and build relationships. These gardens often become community hubs where people of all ages and backgrounds can collaborate, share knowledge, and work towards a common goal (2). The social interaction fostered by urban gardens can strengthen community bonds, reduce social isolation, and create a sense of belonging among residents. Educational Opportunities Urban gardens provide valuable educational opportunities for both children and adults (3). They offer hands-on learning experiences related to gardening, nutrition, and environmental sustainability. Schools can use urban gardens as outdoor classrooms to teach students about biology, ecology, and healthy eating habits. Additionally, community workshops and training sessions can empower residents with the skills and knowledge needed to grow their own food and make informed dietary choices (5).

Challenges

Limited Space

One of the primary challenges of urban gardening is the limited availability of space in densely populated cities. Finding suitable locations for gardens can be difficult, and

* Corresponding authors: Amenah Marzban, Department of Health in Disasters and Emergencies, School of Health Management and Information Sciences, Iran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran. Tel: +98 9172458896, Email: amenemarzban@yahoo.com.

© 2025 mums.ac.ir All rights reserved.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

creative solutions such as rooftop gardens and vertical gardening systems are often necessary (6). These innovative approaches require careful planning and investment but can effectively utilize available space to maximize food production (7).

Financial Constraints

Establishing and maintaining urban gardens can be costly. Expenses include purchasing seeds, soil, and gardening tools, as well as installing irrigation systems and other necessary infrastructure. Securing funding and resources can be a significant hurdle for many communities. Grants, donations, and partnerships with local businesses and organizations can help alleviate financial constraints and support the development of urban gardens (6).

Sustainability and Maintenance

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of urban gardens requires ongoing maintenance and community involvement (1). Gardens need regular care, including watering, weeding, and pest control. Encouraging community members to take ownership of the garden and actively participate in its upkeep is essential. Additionally, implementing sustainable practices such as composting and rainwater harvesting can contribute to the garden's longevity and environmental benefits (4).

Conclusion

Urban gardens play a crucial role in improving community nutrition and fostering a healthier, more sustainable living environment. They provide access to fresh produce, promote social interaction, and offer valuable educational opportunities. However, the challenges of limited space, financial constraints, and maintenance must be

addressed to ensure the success and sustainability of these gardens.

To overcome these challenges, communities can explore innovative gardening solutions, seek financial support through grants and partnerships, and promote active community involvement. By working together, we can harness the full potential of urban gardens to enhance the health and well-being of our communities.

References

1. Kwartnik-Pruc A, Droj G. The role of allotments and community gardens and the challenges facing their development in urban environments—A literature review. *Land*. 2023;12(2):325.
2. Marzban A, Dowlati M, Sadeghi Nodoushan F. Urban Agriculture and Food Security: A Narrative Review. *Journal of Nutrition and Food Security*. 2024;9(1):152-9.
3. Wadumestriga Dona CG, Mohan G, Fukushi K. Promoting urban agriculture and its opportunities and challenges—a global review. *Sustainability*. 2021;13(17):9609.
4. Jahrl I, Moschitz H, Cavin JS. The role of food gardening in addressing urban sustainability—A new framework for analysing policy approaches. *Land Use Policy*. 2021;108:105564.
5. Hume C, Grieger JA, Kalamkarian A, D'Onise K, Smithers LG. Community gardens and their effects on diet, health, psychosocial and community outcomes: a systematic review. *BMC Public Health*. 2022;22(1):1247.
6. Zhang Y, Smith JP, Tong D, Turner li B. Optimizing the co-benefits of food desert and urban heat mitigation through community garden planning. *Landscape and Urban Planning*. 2022;226:104488.
7. Kingsley J, Egerer M, Nuttman S, Keniger L, Pettitt P, Frantzeskaki N, et al. Urban agriculture as a nature-based solution to address socio-ecological challenges in Australian cities. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*. 2021;60:127059.