

The Potential of Small-Scale Urban Food Growing to Supplement Households' Diets and Provide Health and Wellbeing Benefits

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Abstract : With the majority of the UK population residing in urban areas and with the pressures both environmentally and socially on rural agriculture, the role of urban food production, particularly urban horticulture (UH), is increasingly important in the future of UK food security. UH has the potential to provide an important contribution to urban diets and to provide additional benefits to human health and well-being. While allotments are the traditional focus of UH and play an important role, as access to this type of land is limited and unequal across cities, other forms of UH space, such as domestic growing, will need to be utilized to provide a significant contribution to urban diets. It is theorized that this smaller scale of growing may also be a more accessible way of engaging novice growers in UH. A collaborative research project, Urban Harvest, was designed between the University of Sheffield and Sheffield-based food organizations, which aimed to engage inexperienced gardeners in UH by providing them with home food-growing kits (Grow-Kits). Grow-Kits were provided to 189 participants across Sheffield in 2022, 48% of whom had never grown food before. Data collected through surveys and interviews will help us to evaluate the effect of small-scale food growing on health and wellbeing and the potential of this type of scheme to encourage future UH engagement. This data and increasing evidence on the co-benefits of UH have important implications not only for local food security but also for urban health inequalities and the potential use of this activity for preventative healthcare.

Keywords : urban horticulture, health and wellbeing, food security, nutrition

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