

Two birds, one stone: Green roof gardening in the city

May 1 2019, by Nabilah Islam



Green roofs add some color to lower Manhattan. Credit: [Alyson Hurt/Flickr](#)

I'm a New York native, born and raised in Ozone Park, Queens. My

family has a decent amount of space in our small backyard to grow fruits and vegetables. Tomatoes, chili peppers, squash and cucumbers are just a few items we grow each summer. The garden saves us money during grocery trips, helps us eat healthier, and also adds a little more greenery and fresh air to the city.

Most New Yorkers don't have a backyard, though, especially in the more densely populated neighborhoods. Physical space is so scarce, it's imperative to make use of the little space that is available to us. And it turns out there's a lot of space if you just look up.

The city has over 40,000 acres of rooftop space available for green roofs. The benefits of green roofs are extensive, including improving air quality and nutritional health. We're at an interesting time where awareness of climate issues and desire for healthier eating habits are at an all-time high. In some ways, these concerns go hand-in-hand and so can their solutions.

According to C40 Cities, cities account for over 70 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions. Some research suggests that green roofs could be one way to cut some of those emissions through offsetting the output from buildings, cars, and intense human activity. A 2009 study done by scientists from Michigan State University found that installing [green roofs](#) over an area the size of Detroit could sequester 55,000 tons of carbon. That's equivalent to taking roughly 12,000 cars off the road each year.

Growing local and [organic food](#) on rooftops is an additional benefit that may help to improve nutrition and health. About 40 percent of adults consume [fast food](#) every day according to the Centers for Disease Control. The growing fast food epidemic has been directly associated with increasing rates of such things as obesity, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

Fast food is convenient and cheap, and in some places much more accessible than healthy options. Food deserts are largely prevalent in already impoverished neighborhoods, and this reduces individuals' access to fresh produce. Incorporating [green roof gardens](#) and having readily available access to produce may help people incorporate fruits and vegetables into their lives.

New Yorkers can benefit greatly from making use of [roof](#) space for gardening. This can even start off small with a few seed varieties, inexpensive pots and planters, and a rooftop (with the permission of your landlord), and eventually, grow into something much bigger. These gardens would not only promote the health and well-being of the environment but also help [city dwellers](#) make healthier food decisions.

This story is republished courtesy of Earth Institute, Columbia University
<http://blogs.ei.columbia.edu>.

Provided by State of the Planet

Citation: Two birds, one stone: Green roof gardening in the city (2019, May 1) retrieved 30 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-05-birds-stone-green-roof-gardening.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--