

Sustainable City Living in Your Backyard, in Your Community, and in the World THOMAS J. FOX



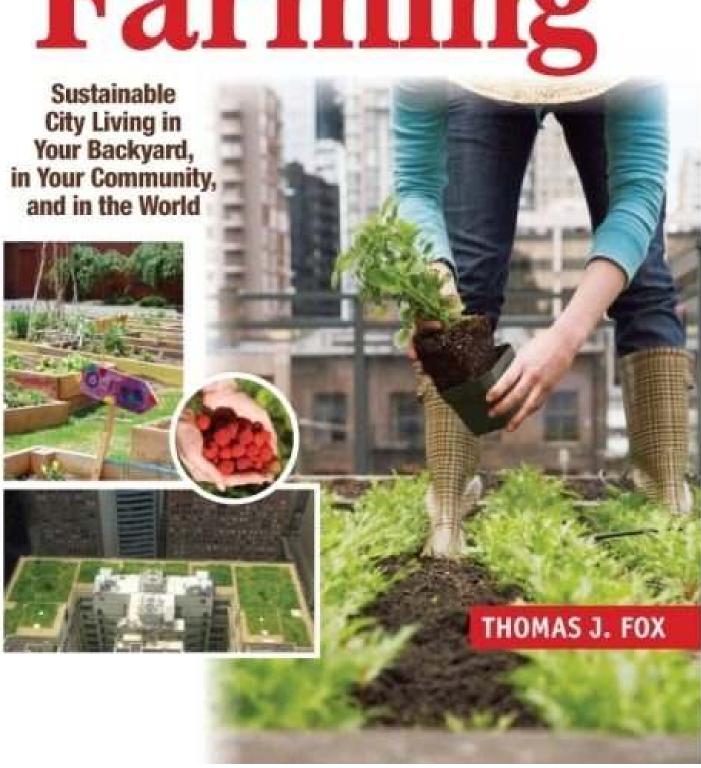


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Dedication

To my mom, for a love of writing;

my dad, for a love of gardening;

my wife, for a love of life;

and my boys, with great love and hope for a greener future.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to I-5's Andrew DePrisco, who opened the door to the book; to Karen Julian, who ushere it through; and to my two crack editors, Jennifer Calvert and Amy Deputato, who lifted the peaks at filled in the valleys with extraordinary skill and restraint. I'd also like to acknowledge the mat people who tolerated my ignorance with grace, taught me so much, and shared their enthusiasm f urban agriculture, among them: Martin Bailkey, Rick Bayless, Don Boekelheide, Natalie Brickajli Fred Brown, John Cannizzo, Roxanne Christensen, Virginia Clarke, Mary Seton Corboy, Dani Dermitzel, Wes Duren, Danielle Flood, Lorraine Gibbons, Carole Gordon, Jennie Grant, Mike Hamr Sherilin Heise, Gregory Horner, Jerry Kaufman, Aley Kent, Erik Knutzen, Michael Levensto Andrew McCaughan, Michael McConkey, Joe Nasr, Molly Philbin, Robert Philbin, Gordon Prai Jessica Prentice, Martin Price, Brooke Salvaggio, Wally Satzewich, Bob Scallan, Mike Score, Ji Slater, Jac Smit, Lena Carmen Soileau, and Brenda Tate. It would have been a much poorer boo without them, and a much less enjoyable task of writing.





Introduction

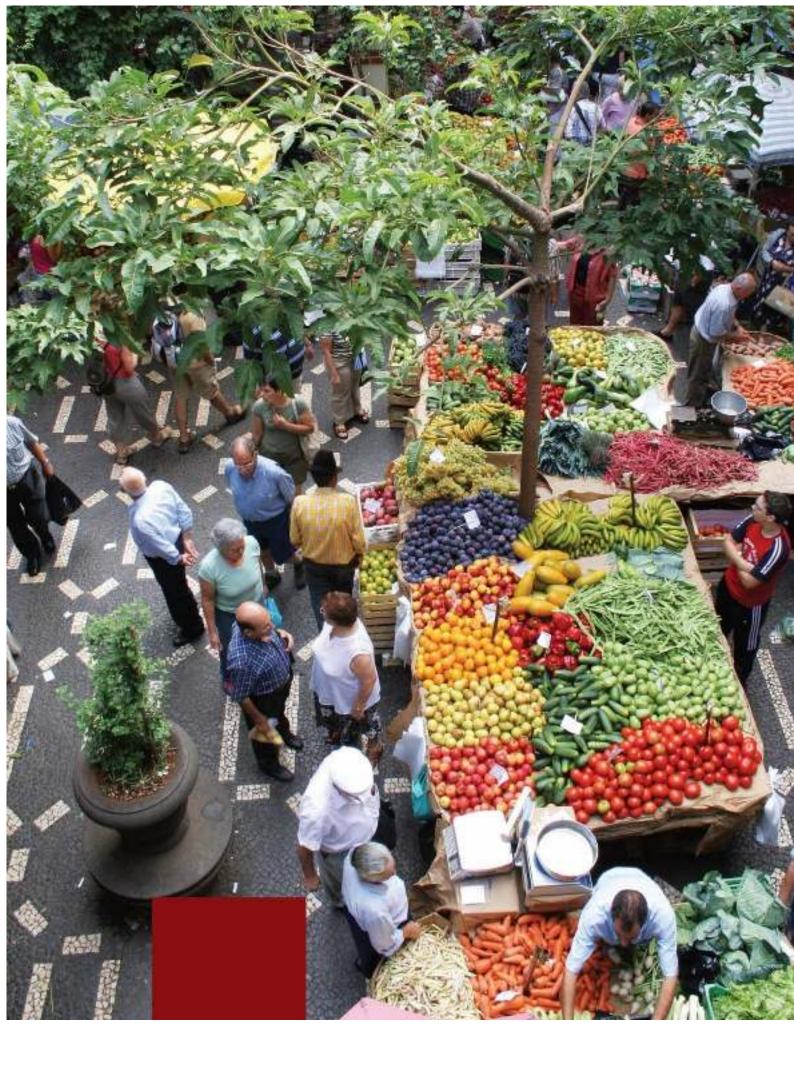
When Jac Smit—later to be regarded as urban agriculture's chief evangelist, if not its "father"—first set about writing a book on the topic in 1994, his searches at both the Library of Congress and the library of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations in Rome yields virtually nothing. It puzzled him. Although he knew the importance of urban agriculture in ear history, and had for decades helped to encourage the practice throughout the developing world, urban the developed west. He helped change that, stumping for the development of urban agriculture and co-writing the seminal *Urban Agriculture: Food, Jobs and Sustainable Cities* with Joe Nasr for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1996.



Talk about local color! Beautiful local produce adorns farmers' markets across the nation and arour the world.

The book proved to be something of a watershed, as evidenced by a quick search on "urb farming" or "urban agriculture" in Google's news archive. That search yields just 139 article published between 1900 and 1995, averaging fewer than two articles for each of those ninety-fir years. In the thirteen years from 1996 to 2009, however, such a search finds 3,350 articles, averaging more than 250 annually—including over 800 articles published just during the year I wrote this book If you live anywhere near a city, you probably don't need Google to have a sense of that. Chances a you will have seen food growing in vacant lots, on balconies and rooftops, along train tracks, und









Tomatoes are easily grown in most American cities.

Even as urban agriculture has enjoyed a renaissance in practice and a boom in publicity, it has quite coalesced into a field with a standardized vocabulary and accepted principles—what promine researcher Luc Mougeot has called "conceptual maturity." This is in part because urban farming fi into so many existing disciplines—economics, sociology, agronomy, and political science, to name few—and because the underlying terms are deceptively difficult to define. What makes a settleme "urban"? Population size or density, a municipal government, public transportation systems, economicativity, universities, or the designation of a government bureau? There are sure to be places more everyone agrees are cities but that fall outside of any of those attempts to define the concept.

This book takes a broad view of cities. Everyone would agree that schoolchildren growing vegetables in a vacant lot in Detroit are engaged in urban farming, so why not schoolchildren on the grounds of their school in Tarpon Springs, Florida, (population: 21,000)? It's not as big, dense, oppoulous as Detroit, but neither is the city of Tarpon Springs rolling with big open fields. It's a city the state of Florida, and that's good enough for me.

Ideally, **urban farming is agriculture that is (mainly) of the city, by the city, and for the cit** This book explores why urban agriculture has begun flourishing since 1996 (chapters 1 and 2), who we may expect of it in the future (chapter 3), and how you can get started on the path to becoming a urban farmer (chapters 4–9).



A street market in Bali may look different from the farmers' market down the street, but they're a built on the same principles.

Part I:

THE BIG PICTURE



The floating market in Bangk

Feeding Our Cities

In towns and cities across the globe, in large ways and small, urban farming is quietly gaining momentum. If you're slurping a bowl of hot *tom yam goong* from a street vendor in Bangkok, enjoying a traditional potato omelet (*chips mayai*) in Dar-es-Salaam, sipping a glass of merlot in Santiago, indulging in honey-and-goatcheese ice cream at the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel in Vancouver, chance are you are supporting urban farming. Modern urban farming is closely connected with urbanization and increasingly with a conscious move toward sustainability. It has even become an unexpected necessity in some places, such as Havana (pictured).

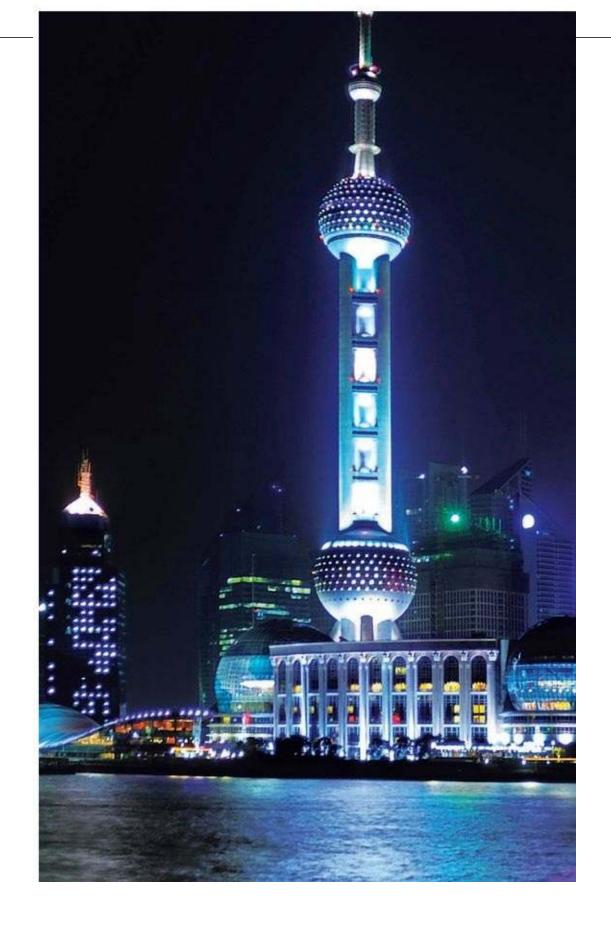
The human population of the world is rising by about 75 million people per year—mostly in citi—and is expected to exceed 9 billion by 2050. Sure enough, some of the growth in urban farmin happens when towns grow into cities, and cities into megacities, sprawling into once-rural land Instead of displaced rural farmers working the newly urban landscape, researchers have found mourban farmers to be established city dwellers. It is usually driven in the global north by those looking to reconnect with a sense of place and to live more sustainably, and in the global south by those judoking to live.



Across the United States, communities are taking steps to create a more welcoming atmosphere fragriculture through farmers' markets, zoning-law changes, and use of underused green spaces are brownfields (former industrial sites), often through the irrepressible efforts of a few individuals with passion to make it happen. One such example is the Goat Justice League in Seattle, which is fighting to legalize goats within the city limits and has succeeded with pygmy goats so far. But is farming the city even realistic? The short answer is yes.

About 15 percent of the world's food supply is already produced in and around cities. Marindividual countries and cities are even more advanced. Shanghai (pictured), for example, product more than 50 percent of its consumed chicken and pork, 90 percent of its eggs, all of its milk, at more than 2 million tons of wheat and rice in and around the city. And Shanghai is no shrinking violet, backwater city—it has roughly 20 million residents and more than four times as mar skyscrapers as Manhattan.

Even as urban agriculture has taken root in cities around the world, traditional rural agriculture—least the Currier & Ives vision of it—has evolved into something more Dickensian. The changes farming over the past three centuries have brought extraordinary productivity, both enabling an enabled by growing cities. However, only recently has the true cost of these gains emerged. At it worst, this "industrial agriculture" is antithetical to our heritage, as discussed in the next section, as a threat to our future.



Roots of Urban Farming

In March 2009, in the midst of a recession and two wars, First Lady Michelle Obama helped brea

ground on a new vegetable garden at the White House—the first since her predecessor Elean Roosevelt planted a "victory garden" in the midst of World War II. Mrs. Roosevelt's garden had itse hearkened back to the work-relief gardens of the Great Depression. Before that came the Federal Warden program of World War I as well as Detroit's "potato patches" and other responses to the 189 depression. Urban dwellers have turned to gardens countless times throughout history to weath adversity and regain a sense of autonomy.





First Lady Michelle Obama in the new White House vegetable garden.

The White House is not alone. Since 2009, statehouses and municipal governments from Baltimo to Sacramento have begun their own food gardens. The United States Secretary of Agriculture open a "People's Garden" at its headquarters and encouraged similar efforts at its facilities around the country. Seed sales jumped by about 25 percent, and about 40 percent more households greater vegetables that year than two years earlier.

Across the Atlantic, similar efforts are afoot. In June 2009, Queen Elizabeth unveiled a vegetab patch on the grounds of Buckingham Palace, the first (once again) since World War II. The waiting list in London for allotments—patches of land rented out to gardening-minded residents at a noming cost—can stretch into decades, and the supply of allotments in the United Kingdom is reportedly should about 200,000 units—in a country with one-fifth the US population. London hopes to create 2,012 neurban agricultural spaces by 2012—in time to feed visiting Olympians with local food. Neconstruction throughout the European Union may soon include integrated "vertical allotments" accord with regulations being considered by the European Environment Agency. These allotment could include balconies, rooftops, and walls earmarked for growing food on high-rise buildings.

Why is urban farming integrated into cities such as Shanghai but still a novelty in the United States? Certainly, part of the reason is that we have profited so abundantly from the transformation from traditional farming into industrial agriculture—yields per farmer have skyrocketed. This successure has reinforced the notion that city is city and country is country, and never the twain shall meet-except in supermarket aisles. It is a bias evidenced, perhaps, by the fact that goats in Seattle may more striking to us than a world population ballooning beyond the ability of conventional agriculture to feed it. Yet this separation of *urban* and *farming* is a modern one.

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