



Feeding the Future

15 strategies to produce food
and feed our future

by Jonathon Walsh





Feeding the Future

– Back to basics: new ideas, new potential

The explosion in the world's population is putting increasing strain on global food production. New thinking is needed and new thinking is what we are seeing. Market gardening in buildings? Farming on city rooftops? Growing food on concrete? Portable gardens? Here's 15 ideas that have potential to transform our health and drastically overhaul the way we produce food – and what we put on our plates.

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ROOFTOP GARDENS

Eagle Street Rooftop Farm is a 6,000 square foot green roof organic vegetable farm located three stories up on top of a warehouse rooftop in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, New York. Intended to be a model for the urban farming movement and a showcase of how green roofs can be utilized, Eagle Street Rooftop Farms operates a small community supported agriculture (CSA) program, an onsite farm market, and provides fresh produce to local restaurants. Rainwater is captured to help reduce load on the city's sewage system.

Read more:

- >> [Eagle Street Fact Sheet](#)
- >> [13 Amazing Facts about Green Roofs](#)
- >> [Omotesando rooftop farm, Tokyo](#)

IDEA: Corporate garden companies

Eco entrepreneurs could launch corporate garden companies and encourage businesses to pay them to set up garden plots on the rooftops of their offices. The corporate garden company would obtain agreement from the landlord, set up corporate gardens (each interested company in the building could have their own corporate garden in different areas on the roof) and charge each company for the service. An ongoing fee for garden maintenance could also be charged as necessary. Interested staff would pay a joining fee, garden in their spare time/lunch breaks and take home – or sell – any produce they grow.

Rooftop garden parties – where staff swap gardening tips and tools while taking in the sunset – would add to the enjoyment.

Similar to the previous idea, groups of gardening-oriented office workers could approach their building landlords and ask to create a rooftop garden. A small rental fee could be offered to encourage agreement. Workers would then set up gardens and grow food for office or personal consumption. Doing so would transform unused space into a food production center, and potentially, an income stream. Alternatively, building owners could set up rooftop gardens and rent space to workers in their buildings.

PRODUCING FOOD AT HOME

Container gardening is a simple and efficient method of producing food that does not need any soil in the ground to do. A wide range of vegetables can be sown and reaped simply by positioning containers of soil in areas with sufficient light.

- >> [How to Start a Container Garden in any Amount of Space](#)
- >> [Vegetable Gardening in Containers](#)
- >> [Grow your own food](#)

IDEA: Alternatively, people with large properties, lawns or gardens could consider leasing plots to others and sharing the produce grown.

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VERTICAL GARDENING

When horizontal space is limited or non-existent, why not grow up? Upward, that is. 'Green walls' not only provide an instant talking point and attractive interior focal points, they can also provide a visual and gastronomic feast.

- >> [The Past, Present and Future of Green Roofs & Vertical Gardens](#)
- >> [Spain's Massive Vertical Garden is the Future of Indoor Environments](#)
- >> [Creating a Living Wall \(DIY vertical garden\)](#)

HYDROPONICS

Hydroponics, the art of cultivating plants in water using mineral nutrient solutions, is a well-established method of growing plants without soil.

Plants can be grown with their root systems suspended in nutrient solution or in an inert medium that is used in place of soil and helps anchor the plant. The unique aspect of hydroponics is that, in contrast to almost every other growing method, it produces plants without soil.



Hydroponic vegetables

- >> [DIY Hydroponics – Introduction to Hydroponics](#)
- >> [Hydroponics – Basic information](#)

WINDOW FARMS

Window farming, a variation of hydroponics, is a growing system that enables year-round growing in almost any window. Plants grown in window farms use natural window light, the climate of the adjacent living area, and organic "liquid soil."

- >> www.windowfarms.org



Grow your own food

Start growing food yourself with **GroBrick kits** – containing everything you need to grow vegetables and herbs at the home or office. GroBricks bring life to virtually any space, healthy food to your plate, farming to the city, and greater independence to your life.

>> [More information](#)

SPIN FARMING

SPIN stands for S-small P-plot IN-tensive, a non-technical, easy-to-learn and inexpensive vegetable farming system that enables virtually anyone to earn income from land of under an acre in size. For farming novices, old hands, and those who want to try something different, SPIN offers the following benefits:

- Organic-based techniques that make it possible to earn \$50,000+ from a half-acre plot of land
- No requirement to own land – simply rent or barter
- Can be implemented virtually anywhere
- Removes the two big entry barriers – land & capital.

>> [SPIN farming website](#)

BUSINESS-FUNDED FARMS & FOOD PRODUCTION

Venture capitalists, entrepreneurs and business people who want to enter the food production business can now do so without moving out of the city. Business ventures could be launched in which professionals living in cities or other regions fund or take partial ownership of farms, and earn profits from sales of produce. Farm tours, education programs and side businesses such as cafes and souvenir shops could be installed to generate additional income. This concept would be ideal for people who have left their home towns but still want to contribute to their growth. Providing funding to a farm has a number of real benefits. The investor can:

1. Provide employment for local people
2. Create goodwill for the investor's brand/products
3. Contribute to building a more sustainable community.

RENTING CITY FARM SPACE

For city dwellers who want to grow their own food, possibly the easiest ways to do so are:

1. Borrow, rent or buy a plot in a local community garden
2. Dig up and plant a garden in empty or under-utilized plots of land around town. Under-utilized car parks are a good first target
3. Get involved in 'deconstruction.' This involves organizing demolition of vacant buildings, clearing debris, then reverting the plot back to its natural state and installing a garden.

Basically any space that is exposed to the sun could be converted into a garden.

WEEKEND FARMING

Looking further afield, weekend farming is a great way for people to grow food in the countryside without having to own land. In Yokohama, Japan, farmer Yoshikatsu Mochida has divided some of his farmland and rented 70 plots to city folk who come once a week to tend their crops. For an annual fee of about \$500 per plot, Mochida shows people how to plant, water and harvest. The 'weekend farmers' who take part in this initiative take the vegetables home, and Mochida receives government subsidies that help cover the costs of seeds, water and tools.

Weekend farming is a great way for parents to expose their children to farm life, and to discover whether they themselves have 'green fingers.' It also offers an avenue for people to unwind and develop a stronger connection with Nature.

>> [Japanese take up weekend farming](#)

ORGANIC FARM STAYS

Wwoof, an acronym for "World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms," is a global network of organizations linking volunteers with organic farmers, and helps people experience and share sustainable methods of living. In return for providing volunteer help, Wwoof members receive food, accommodation, and opportunities to learn about organic lifestyles.

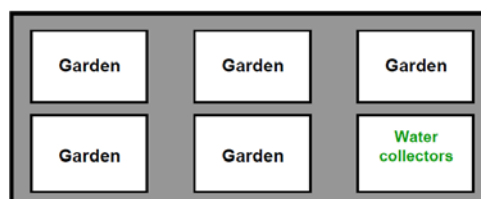
>> [Wwoof organic farmstays](#)

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Besides the convenience, health and environmental benefits of growing food close to home, community gardens can let people bond, make new friends and network while they share produce, tools and gardening resources. Community gardening is also a great way to help children (and adults) learn gardening skills they will have for life, and keep food bills down. The food produced could be taken home, shared with others, or donated to food banks.

If gardens are not readily available, people could band together and request to take over vacant lots, car parks and other unused or under-utilized areas in their community and install raised gardens (see overleaf) or dig up and plant directly in the earth. To boost sustainability, a simple rain collector system could be set up to harvest rain.

- >> [Community Gardening \[Wikipedia\]](#)
- >> [Starting a Community Garden](#)
- >> [Golden Bay community garden, New Zealand](#)



A vacant car park could be converted into a community garden



A community garden in Tokyo, Japan

RAISED GARDENS

The key benefit of raised gardens is that they provide the opportunity to grow flowers or vegetables on virtually any surface – concrete, plastic, asphalt, clay, sand or rock. This creates huge potential, in particular for city dwellers who could install fully-fledged gardens on unused driveways, car parks, decks, verandahs, rooftops, derelict properties, even in unused swimming pools.

- >> [How to Build and Install Raised Garden Beds](#)
- >> [How To Build A Raised Garden Bed](#)



A raised garden bed

PORTABLE GARDENS

Even people for whom space comes at a premium or who are always on the go can grow, and if necessary, pack their gardens with them. Portable garden bags make growing – and relocating – vegetables, herbs and flowers a breeze. Simply put the bag down, add soil and plant.



- >> [Portable gardens](#)
- >> [Portable garden bag supplier](#)

GARDENS IN THE SKY

As urbanization continues to reduce the amount of land available for farming, farming is moving into the cities and taking the shape of what is called “urban agriculture” – clean, green food production in “farmscrapers.”

- >> [11 Vertical Farms to Transform Our Cities](#)
- >> [Vertical farm information, diagrams](#)
- >> [Big Ideas: The Vertical Farm \[book\]](#)
- >> [What Would a Vertical Farm Look Like?](#)
- >> [Vertical Farms – Designs](#)

Advantages of farming vertically include:

- All food is grown organically: no herbicides, pesticides, or fertilizers
- Year-round crop production
- No weather-related crop failures
- Virtually eliminates agricultural runoff
- Returns farmland to nature and restores ecosystems
- Converts abandoned urban properties into food production centers
- Dramatically reduces fossil fuel use.

GOVERNMENT-RUN FARMS

For countries that need to boost food production but have limited or insufficient incentives for private farmers to boost production, national or local governments may have to step in, acquire new or re-designate existing land, and launch state-run or joint public/private farms. These farms could incorporate the latest biotech and seed technologies and employ out-of-work local people, thereby boosting food production and employment simultaneously. Government and joint public/private farms may well take off in the near future as a strategy to enable governments to ensure food production – minus an imperative profit motive – as a potential measure against social unrest in the case of large natural disasters or prolonged effects of climate change.

Continued deployment of these and other food production methods have the potential to create major in-roads – and fuel another ‘green revolution’ – to feed our own and future generations.