

Cultivating Urban Horticulture: A Global Phenomenon, but Where Does India Stand?

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Introduction:

Urban horticulture has become a boom in recent years among the people of the world due to the increasing interest in sustainable living, healthy eating, and environmental conservation, in which we the Indians lag behind a bit. Urban horticulture refers to the practice of cultivating and growing plants, flowers, fruits, and vegetables in urban or peri-urban environments, such as cities and towns. It involves the use of various techniques and methods to grow plants in small or limited spaces, such as rooftops, balconies, terraces, and small gardens. It provides numerous benefits, including fresh produce, improved air quality, reduced urban heat island effect, and increased biodiversity. Additionally, it can provide social and economic benefits by creating jobs and building community connections.

Global Status of Urban Horticulture

The status of urban horticulture varies

greatly across the world. While some cities and regions have well-established urban horticulture systems and policies, others are just beginning to explore the potential of this practice. Here are some instances illustrating the worldwide condition of urban horticulture:

1. North America: Many cities in North America have well-established urban horticulture programs and policies, including New York City, Chicago, and Toronto. These programs support community gardens, urban farms, and other forms of urban horticulture.

2. Europe: Urban horticulture is well-established in many European cities, with cities like Berlin, Paris, and Amsterdam being known for their innovative urban horticulture projects. The European Union has also developed policies to support urban agriculture. In Paris, peri-urban agriculture accounts for about 35 percent of the regional crop deliveries in value,

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mainly in the form of vegetables, flowers, and fruits. Producers usually sell their produce directly to Parisians or at local markets. In Greater London, there are 13,566 hectares of farmland, of which 500 hectares are under fruit and vegetable cultivation. Moreover, 800 hectares of public land are used for market gardening.

- 3. Asia:** Urban horticulture is gaining popularity in many Asian cities, such as Singapore, Tokyo, and Hong Kong. These cities are using vertical farming and other innovative techniques to increase the amount of food produced in urban areas.
- 4. Africa:** Urban horticulture is an important source of food and income in many African cities, where traditional farming may be difficult due to limited land and resources. Cities like Nairobi and Dakar have thriving urban agriculture scenes.
- 5. South America:** Urban horticulture is becoming more popular in South American cities, such as Rio de Janeiro and Bogotá. These cities are using urban agriculture to promote social and environmental justice.

➔ Considering all these facts its clearly evident that India is not present in the scene of global status.

Why not in India?

There are several reasons why urban horticulture has not taken off in India at the same pace as other countries. One of the main

challenges is the lack of available land in urban areas for gardening and agriculture. In many Indian cities, urbanization and population growth have led to a shortage of open spaces and green areas, which makes it difficult to establish community gardens or urban farms.

Another challenge is the lack of awareness and interest in urban horticulture among the general public, as well as the limited availability of resources and training for those interested in starting an urban garden.

Additionally, there are issues related to water scarcity and pollution, which can make it difficult to grow healthy and productive plants in urban areas.

Despite these challenges, there is a growing interest in urban horticulture in India, and efforts are being made to promote and support this emerging field. For example, several urban farming initiatives have been launched in cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru, and there is a growing community of urban gardeners and advocates who are working to promote sustainable and community-oriented food systems. With the right support and resources, urban horticulture has the potential to thrive in India and contribute to more sustainable and resilient cities

Ways to move the Urban Horticulture to the next level in India

- 1. Use of vertical space:** One of the best ways to improve urban horticulture is to use vertical space by growing plants on walls, trellises, or fences. Vertical gardens are a great way to maximize space and add beauty to urban environments.
- 2. Promotion of rooftop gardening:** Rooftop gardening is an effective way to maximize limited urban space and increase access to fresh produce. Promoting the adoption of rooftop gardening can be done through awareness campaigns, subsidies, and tax incentives.
- 3. Hydroponics and aquaponics:** Hydroponics and aquaponics are soil-free methods of growing plants that can be used in urban areas. These methods use nutrient-rich water instead of soil to grow plants, and they require less space and water than traditional gardening methods.
- 4. Increase availability of urban farming inputs:** The availability of quality seeds, fertilizers, and other inputs is essential for the success of urban farming. Therefore, the government and private sector should invest in making these inputs readily available and affordable to urban farmers.
- 5. Container gardening:** Container gardening is a great way to grow plants in small spaces like balconies, patios, and rooftops. It involves growing plants in containers, such as pots, planters, or raised beds, which can be moved and rearranged to maximize sunlight exposure.
- 6. Education and training:** Education and training programs on urban horticulture can help create a culture of urban farming in India. Such programs should be targeted towards urban residents, school children, and unemployed youths who can take up urban farming as a livelihood.
- 7. Use of raised garden beds:** Raised Garden beds are an excellent way to grow plants in urban areas where soil quality may be poor. These beds can be built using various materials, including wood, cinder blocks, or recycled materials, and they allow gardeners to control soil quality and moisture levels.
- 8. Companion planting:** Companion planting is a technique where different plants are grown together to create a mutually beneficial relationship. For example, certain plants can help repel pests or attract pollinators, which can help improve the overall health and productivity of a garden.
- 9. Encourage community gardening:** Community gardening provides a platform for citizens to come together to cultivate and harvest fresh produce. It is essential to encourage community gardening through the creation of community gardens, shared gardening tools, and educational programs.

10. Use of organic and sustainable practices:

Using organic and sustainable practices can help improve the health of plants and the environment. These practices include using natural fertilizers, composting, and minimizing the use of pesticides and herbicides.

11. Promote the use of technology:

Advancements in technology have made urban horticulture easier and more efficient. The use of hydroponics, vertical gardening, and automated irrigation systems can help urban farmers maximize yields and minimize water usage.

12. Create a market for urban produce:

Creating a market for urban produce will provide urban farmers with a source of income and encourage more people to adopt urban horticulture. Initiatives such as farmers' markets, online marketplaces, and partnerships with restaurants can help create a market for urban produce.

By using these techniques and strategies, urban horticulturists can improve their gardening practices, increase their yield, and promote sustainability in urban areas. Adoption of these practices will surely take India to the next level of Urban Horticulture.

Why Urban Horticulture is needed?

Urban horticulture offers numerous benefits that make it a valuable practice for

urban areas. Urban horticulture holds significance for several reasons:

☞ **Promotes sustainable living:** Urban horticulture can help promote sustainable living by providing fresh and healthy produce, reducing food miles, and promoting the use of organic and sustainable farming practices.

☞ **Improves food security:** Urban horticulture can improve food security by providing access to fresh produce in urban areas where food deserts are prevalent. This can help ensure that people have access to healthy food options, even in areas where fresh produce is not readily available.

☞ **Enhances urban biodiversity:** Urban horticulture can enhance urban biodiversity by providing habitat for wildlife, promoting pollinators, and increasing green spaces in urban areas.

☞ **Improves air quality:** Urban horticulture can improve air quality by absorbing pollutants, reducing the urban heat island effect, and increasing oxygen levels in urban areas.

☞ **Enhances community connections:** Urban horticulture can help build community connections by creating shared spaces where people can come together, share resources, and learn from one another.

☞ **Provides economic opportunities:** Urban horticulture can provide economic opportunities by creating jobs in farming, landscaping, and other related industries.

Conclusion

In conclusion, urban horticulture is growing globally as more and more people recognize the importance of sustainable urban agriculture. While urban agriculture is on the rise in India, huge gaps remain between the feasibility and acceptability of urban agriculture.

India has a rapidly growing urban population, urban gardening plays an important role in food security, improving public health and improving urban ecology but more concerted efforts to promote and scale up urban gardening practices are needed to fully realize the potential. With the right policies, investments, and initiatives, India can harness the potential of urban horticulture to create a more sustainable and resilient future.