



Growing Organic Produce Locally

Growing organic food locally – either in your own yard or in nearby organic farms – has many health and economic as well as environmental benefits. These benefits include:

Healthy, fresh organic food

- Lower health costs from food without neurotoxic pesticides which contribute to expensive chronic disease, even in very small amounts
- Much less expensive polluting CO2 transportation from shipping organic food thousands of miles from Latin America, or hundreds of miles from other farms here in the US. The reductions in CO2 help fight climate change and global warming.
- Healthy, productive outdoor activity for all, sometimes keeping young, low income teens away from gangs and/or illegal drugs
- Organic farms breed bees and other necessary pollinating insects.

Many different ways to get started: Supporting locally grown organic produce can begin in many different ways. You don't have to start your own organic garden immediately. Here are some very easy ways to start supporting local organic produce:

Use Compost – The Best Kind of Fertilizer If possible, buy at local organic farm markets: Almost every good sized urban community has at least one weekly farm market where many of the local family or small farmers come to sell their produce. These local farm markets are usually open once every week, often on Saturday. Find their location, hours, and then be sure to arrive there as early as possible to get the best selection of the organic produce currently available.

Local Organic Farms: Many communities also have organic farms at which you can volunteer to work and/or buy from. Here you can volunteer to plant more produce, weed currently growing vegetables, help them sell produce to customers, or

possibly help them expand their farm by clearing more land. Many such organic farms are already in operation and have websites (see end of article).

There are three which are notably worthy of a brief description here:

1. Growing Power It was founded in Milwaukee, Wisconsin by ex-basketball star Will Allen in a low income “food desert” to both provide healthy food there and also to employ the teenagers there selling healthy food instead of joining gangs and pushing drugs. In the last couple of years, Will Allen has developed an efficient, cheap Aquaponics system for both raising fish, watering his plants, and fertilizing the plants with the fish feces. He can grow organic food all year round in cheap, efficient hoop plastic greenhouses. <http://www.growingpower.org/>
2. Growing Home is an extension of Growing Power that now operates in the extensive low income areas in and around Chicago, Illinois.
3. The Talking Farm in Evanston, Illinois already has a small organic farm near Evanston Township High School. Just last year they have expanded to a much larger farming area on Howard Street just west of Evanston. Last year they cleared the unwanted plants away so this year they can start an actual farm there. <http://www.thetalkingfarm.org/>

Start your Own Organic Garden: If you live on your own lot or in a condo with a large rooftop/balcony, you can start your own organic garden. Renters on a large lot could possibly start too with your landlord's permission. Be sure to (a) plant only vegetables that grow naturally in your area, and (b) they require or the best way to both fertilize your garden and recycle all your left-over food clippings, is with a compost pile or bin. You can also add: (a) all weeds from your garden (after chopping them up), and (b) all leaves in the fall. With the aid of earthworms and many other micro-organisms, the bottom will slowly turn into the very best, rich fertilizer! **For more information:**

<http://www.growingpower.org/index.htm>

<http://growinghomeinc.org/> <http://www.thetalkingfarm.org/>

<http://www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/> Find local farmers markets and local organic farms

<http://www.eatwellguide.org/i.php?pd=Home>

<http://www.eatwild.com/products/>

<http://www.burtsbees.com/c/root-save-disappearing-beessupport-local-organic-farmers-burt-s-bees.html>

<http://vegweb.com/composting/>

http://eartheasy.com/grow_compost.html