

Day One - Case — How do we encourage people to become more involved in producing their own food?

The success and impact of urban agriculture and local food depends on the engagement of citizens. It begins with an awareness of the value of good food grown locally. Consuming good food is a starting point to building a more integrated, comprehensive approach to urban agriculture and local food. One view is that true behaviour change really begins to occur when we start to grow our own food.

Gardening begins by performing the technical and physical activities such as preparing the soil, planting seeds, watering and caring for plants and, after a full season of worrying whether the garden is getting enough water, sun, is not damaged by hail or attacked by insects we move to harvesting our own crops.

For those who garden, growing food is more than a set of steps and activities. It is much more. We become more fully and deeply intellectually and emotionally engaged in the act of growing and producing food. We become more aware of tastes and quality. We are more conscious of not only what we eat but the very processes by which we create and access our food. Our thinking moves beyond what we produce to what we consume.

Urban agriculture and local food is primarily founded on the act of growing and gardening and the deep emotional and intellectual processes that gardening stimulates. However in far too many instances, citizens don't have the knowledge and experience of gardening.

For too many of us, gardening was not part of our childhood experiences. In many settings, we are not as connected with our neighbours in order to observe and learn from their activities.

But how do we help those who may be interested in gardening actually become gardeners?

Can we think about innovations and technologies that can help stimulate interest and activity?



A recent Kickstarter initiative (<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/2083391547/nourishmat-changing-the-way-wethink-about-food>) by a small start-up firm called Earth Strategies may offer an interesting innovation.

Earth Strategies created a simple product called "**Nourishmat**" (<https://vimeo.com/65108292>). Nourishmat presents itself as an affordable, eco-friendly, easy-to-use produce that allows anyone to plant a garden.

Take a look at the web site and video on Nourishmat. While the product is not yet on the market locally, does it offer a useful approach?

Discussion Question:

More importantly, as you think about ways that we can encourage more people to become more active and enthusiastic gardeners, **what other innovations and technologies might be useful?**