



LONDON

**GUIDE TO URBAN
AGRICULTURE**

Acknowledgements

This Guide to Urban Agriculture in London Ontario is part of an academic exercise conducted by graduate students in the *Masters of Environment and Sustainability* (MES) program in the *Centre for Environment and Sustainability* (CES) at Western University, London, Ontario, Canada. For information on this program, please visit www.uwo.ca/mes/.

Authors:

Hilary Boucher
Jenna May Clune
Kaitlin Creighton
Urvi Prajapati

Supervisor:

Dr. Gabor Sass



Western

The Centre for Environment
& Sustainability

Urban Agriculture Steering Committee Project Reps:

Skylar Franke
Becky Ellis
Jeremy Horrell

Project Contributors:



**London
Environmental
Network**



**URBAN
ROOTS
LONDON**



**London
CANADA**



FUAL

**Friends of Urban
Agriculture London**

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Objectives & Methodology

The primary objective of this Guide is to **empower** London's diverse citizens to confidently **sow and grow** in the city. The methods undertaken to achieve this objective are as follows:

1. Conducted scans of Canadian municipalities to determine successful urban agriculture projects and policies and to identify what is missing in London
2. Met with various stakeholders, such as community groups and knowledge keepers, to have a coherent landscape of urban agriculture currently
3. Identified policy barriers to urban agriculture in London, such as municipal or provincial by-laws
4. Created the Guide

The methodology for this Guide included in-depth research into urban agriculture in Canadian municipalities, combined with 17 interviews and 13 survey responses from key stakeholders within the urban agriculture community in London. Interview and survey questions were informed by internet research to understand the urban agriculture landscape in London, including policy barriers, such as municipal or provincial bylaws. Research and interviews were conducted between January 2019 and April 2019.

This Guide to Urban Agriculture was created by four students from the Masters of Environment and Sustainability program at Western University, with suggestions and oversight provided by volunteers from the Urban Agriculture Steering Committee in April 2020. If you notice any errors, or would like to add something to the Guide, please email hello@londonenvironment.net and CC urbanaglondon@gmail.com to provide your comment or edit.

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Introduction

Urban agriculture is the practice of growing, processing, sharing, and distributing food within a city. While the benefits of urban agriculture are well-known and include community-building, public health, education, reduced carbon emissions and making efficient use of land, many municipalities in Ontario have various by-laws and knowledge gaps that conflict with the practice. The Guide to Urban Agriculture has been created as a tool to help citizens practice urban agriculture in the City of London, Ontario.

The City has made urban agriculture a priority and has taken steps to support a strong, resilient food system for all. For example, the Food System chapter of The London Plan recognizes the importance of a local food system for supporting the community's climate resiliency. Another key resource is London's Urban Agriculture Strategy (the Strategy), which is essentially an action plan for urban agriculture in the City. The Strategy was developed over 2016 and 2017 with a wide variety of community input. The Urban Agriculture Steering Committee (UASC) was also established to help direct the implementation of the Strategy.

In order to support the goals of the Strategy, this Guide to Urban Agriculture was created to provide Londoner's information on conducting urban agriculture within the City. The Guide has chapters on: Growing, Processing, Distribution, Food Loss & Recovery, and Education & Connection. The Guide is designed to be a **how-to guide** for urban agriculture in order to help residents of London conduct their own urban agriculture projects in the City.

Each chapter of the Guide provides information on relevant policies and by-laws, helpful resources, existing gaps and barriers, and recommendations for how the community can go forward. The Guide's chapters also give clear steps on **how-to** conduct different types of urban agriculture within the City of London.

*The primary objective of the Guide to Urban Agriculture is to help **empower** Londoners to confidently **sow and grow** in the city.*

GROWING

Urban Farms

What is an Urban Farm?

Urban farms can range from small-scale plots on private or public land, to larger, non-profit or commercial farming initiatives growing food for the community. These are just two examples, though urban farms may take many forms. Urban farms are *not* large-scale agricultural operations and are exempt from provincial regulation for nutrient and pest management. An urban farm is meant to be a dynamic space that serves as a hub for food security, food literacy, and community building.¹ London residents have a great deal of interest in urban farms and small-scale agriculture, and it's easy to see why; the benefits of urban farms are well established and include:²

1. Community-building

- Growing and gardening brings people from all walks of life together to learn and have fun.
- Shared source of pride for the community.

2. Public health

- The list of physical and mental health benefits is enormous! Nature and green space improve mood and lowers stress, while eating fresh, non-processed fruits and vegetables improves health, to name a few.

3. Increased food security

- Either by eliminating food deserts or lowering the cost.

4. Reduced carbon emissions

- By decreasing food miles and the resulting transportation emissions.

5. Educational opportunity

- Such as promoting food literacy in children, youth, and adults.

6. Green space

- Cleaner air and water.

7. Efficient land utilization

- Urban farms can be a viable interim use of land that is intended for future urban development.

¹ "Urban Agriculture Strategy," *City of London*, (2017): 11, <https://www.london.ca/business/Planning-Development/current-topics/Documents/2017-Nov-UAS-Final.pdf>.

² "10 Ways Urban Farms Benefit the Community," *The Ecology Center*, Published March 1, 2016, <https://www.theecologycenter.org/10-ways-urban-farms-benefit-the-community/>.

London Context

The City of London is supportive of urban farms through various plans, strategies, and policies. [The London Plan](#), which is the City's Official Plan, includes a Food System chapter (pg. 155) with the goal of strengthening the London food system. The City has also adopted a [Food Charter](#), and the policies within the London Plan support the charter. Supportive language in The London Plan related to urban farms includes:

Through our planning, public projects, and investment, we will encourage, foster, and support:

Alternative ways that Londoners grow, process and sell food within the city.

Opportunities for urban food production on private and public lands.

Consider and establish new and innovative approaches to urban food production that increase food security, such as cooperative farming initiatives and urban garden plots on vacant, city-owned lands.

Spotlight on Urban Roots Farm

Urban Roots London is the City's only operational urban farm, revitalizing underused land in London for agriculture. Located at Highbury Avenue and Hamilton Road (21 Norlan Avenue). Urban Roots is a non-profit organization that grows produce for community members, businesses, restaurants, and social service organizations on its 2.5 acres of private land. Urban Roots first broke ground for the 2017 season and is committed to providing access to fresh vegetables for those who might not be able to otherwise enjoy them. Their goal is to sell enough produce to restaurants and the community to cover their operating costs and donate everything else. Some recipients of organic produce donations and deliveries include London's Men's Mission, Youth Opportunities Limited (YOU), Hamilton Road Crouch Resource Center, and My Sister's Place.³



Image Source: [Urban Roots London](#)

³"About Us," *Urban Roots London*, Published 2018, <https://urbanrootslondon.ca/about-us/>.

How to Start an Urban Farm

The City of London can facilitate access to land for individuals or community groups interested in entrepreneurial urban agriculture practices. If you are interested in starting an Urban Farm, the steps below can be used as general guidelines:

1. Determine potential site of urban farm within City limits

- You may consider entering into a land-use agreement with a private landowner who has land to spare.
- The City of London has a [Vacant Land Inventory](#).
 - You must contact the Development Services and City Planning divisions of the City of London to negotiate farming on land that is intended for future development and to connect with private landowners. Realty Services Department is the best contact for publicly owned lands.
- Determine the zoning of your site using the City's [Zoning By-law No. Z.-1](#) or contact the City Zoning Division to confirm you can grow food at your potential site.
- Growing food is permitted in London in multiple locations:⁴
 - Backyards and private property (i.e., homes and private property)
 - Institutional property (e.g., schools and places of worship)



- Image Source: [Urban Roots London](#)

⁴ "Urban Agriculture Strategy," 41.

- Land zoned for development as an interim activity
 - Land zoned open space (subject to criteria e.g. Provided you do not remove significant natural features)
 - Land zoned urban reserve
 - Land zoned agricultural or commercial agriculture
 - On rooftops
 - As SPIN farming⁵
- o It is important to be aware of the past and future use of land chosen

2. Determine proximity to community groups

- o Everyone deserves access to fresh, healthy, affordable food, and this should be taken into consideration when choosing the location for an urban farm.

3. Determine access to water and sunlight

- o You must consider where you are getting your farm's water from. Will you be using municipal water services? Potable water storage tank? Rain barrels?
- o The site's access to the sun is also critical.

4. Soil testing

- o See the section on Soil Testing on page 30 of this Guide
- o Did you know that silty clay loam and silt loam make up most of London's urban soil? Silty clay loam is a moderately good soil type for agriculture because it can hold water.⁶

5. Food safety and handling

- o In general, freshly grown produce is safe to eat as long as you follow safe food handling practices. Always wash your produce and your hands before any food preparation.
- o Contact the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) for guidelines and best practices.
- o Some fruits and vegetables should be refrigerated, while some do not need to be. UnlockFood has a [vegetable storage guide](#), including storage times, by Canadian dieticians.

6. Grow healthy food!

⁵ "SPIN Farming," SPIN Farming, (n.d.), <https://spinfarming.com/certificate-in-spin-farming/>.

⁶ "Middlesex-London Community Food Assessment," *London Food Bank*, (2016): 59, <https://www.healthunit.com/community-food-assessment#>.

Gaps & Barriers

- Access to land is an issue for some community groups.
 - The City can facilitate access to land once the group's specific requirements are understood.
- Much of the land in London is identified for future growth and development. Urban agriculture may be an appropriate interim use on lands that have been identified for future development.
 - It is important that these lands be available in the future so that the City is not under pressure to expand the urban growth boundary into productive agricultural land.
- Bylaws are sometimes unclear when it comes to agriculture structures on non-agriculturally zoned property. Definitions and clarifications on where these structures, such as greenhouses, caterpillar tunnels/hoop houses, stand in relation to current bylaws is required. Contact the City Building Division for Ontario Building Code requirements for structures.

Growing Forward

- 1.** Better access to land for those interested in entrepreneurial urban farms.
 - Enable search by Zoning on City of London GIS-based zoning map; currently, Londoners may only search by address.
 - Inventory of land that is zoned to enable urban farms.
 - Make Brownfield maps available to public.
 - Raised bed urban farming might be the preferred option for contaminated Brownfield sites. An impermeable membrane between the raised bed and contaminated ground beneath might be required.
 - The City in the future could permit park land to be converted to urban farms or lease City owned land for rent to urban agriculture projects.
- 2.** Expand grant opportunities for urban agriculture and farming initiatives.

Community Gardens

London has 17 community gardens on municipally owned land, and several community gardens on land that is not city owned. Community gardens bring people--often from different socioeconomic backgrounds--together to learn about, grow, and access fresh, healthy food, all while contributing to food security.



Image Source: [FUAL](#)

London Context

On September 1, 2015, City Council endorsed the [London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan \(2015 – 2019\)](#) and the Year One Implementation Plan.⁷ The Plan provides the overall vision and direction for community gardens across London. Since 2006, the City has provided funding to support the management of the Community Gardens Program. The City of London's Parks & Recreation Division provides assistance with community garden openings, maintenance and seasonal closures, watering and composting services, and ongoing liaison with gardeners related to garden issues in parks. Additionally, the City of London's Environmental and Parks Planning Departments work with the community to select sites for newly proposed gardens on public land, and to facilitate consultation and any necessary public processes.⁸

⁷ "London Community Gardens," *City of London*, (2020), <http://www.london.ca/residents/Parks/Community-Projects/Pages/London-Community-Gardens.aspx>.

⁸ "London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan, 2015-2019," *City of London*, (2015): 4, <https://www.london.ca/residents/Parks/Community-Projects/Documents/London%20Community%20Gardens%20Strat%20Plan%202015-2019.pdf>.

Supportive language towards community gardens in [The London Plan](#) includes:

Encourage grocery store, farmers market, and community garden uses in areas that have been identified as a food desert.

Consider and establish new and innovative approaches to urban food production that increase food security, such as cooperative farming initiatives and urban garden plots on vacant, city-owned lands.

Foster and promote opportunities for community gardens and local markets that:

- Encourage and support urban food production on private and public land and identify opportunities on surplus lands where it is safe and suitable, and the soil can support gardening within the urban area.
- Identify potential City-owned sites where different food production activities might be supported.
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of participants.

In conformity with the community garden strategy, expand the development of community gardens located on municipal and/or private lands into neighbourhoods across the city. Prioritize neighbourhoods that feature a high proportion of rental or attached housing.

As appropriate, invest in urban food projects through grants and funding to implement the City's community garden strategy and projects that support the Food Charter.

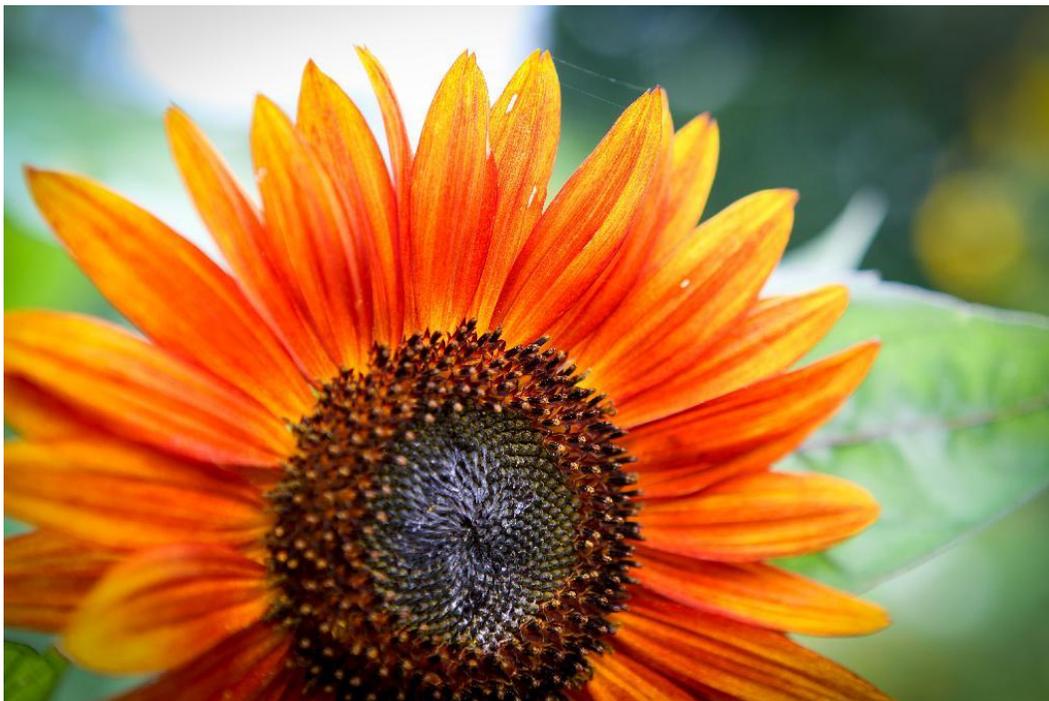


Image Source: [FUAL](#)

Spotlight on Westview Community Garden

Westview Community Garden is the London Community Resource Centre's garden located at 1000 Wonderland Road South. The garden serves as a space where food literacy and cooking skills are cultivated. The London Community Resource Centre uses several plots for their Grow Cook Learn program to grow food for cooking session workshops, and for donation to the London and Area food bank and emergency meal providers. Westview Community Garden is also the site for our Sprouts Children's Garden Program.

The London Community Resource Centre also provides [free resources on gardening](#), including information on beginner gardening, seed saving, and even how to start a community garden in London.⁹



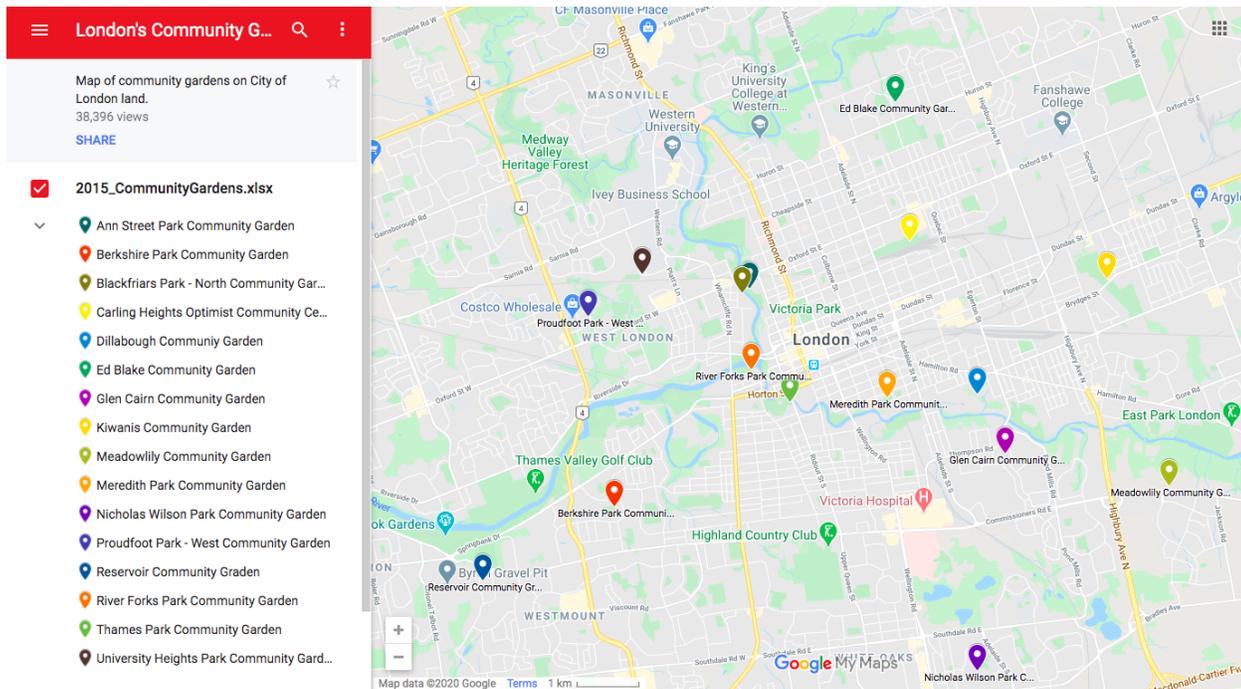
Image Source: [Westview Community Garden](#)

How to Rent a Plot

The City of London's Community Gardens information and registration page can be found [here](#). Registration begins in January of each year and can be done through the City's recreation program guide, online, over the phone, or in person. Plots are rented on a geared-to-income basis. In 2020, the rental fee ranged from \$15 to \$40 for a plot of approximately 200-400 square feet for the season (May 1st - November 30th). Plots may vary slightly in size. Gardeners are responsible for opening their garden plots up in the spring and putting their plot "to bed" in the fall.

⁹ "Westview Community Garden," *Grow Cook Learn*, (2020), <http://lrcr.on.ca/westview-community-garden>

A Google map of the City's community gardens and each garden's amenities can be found [here](#) (Note: last updated in 2015). The same information may be accessed in list format [here](#).^{10,11}



Once a plot is obtained, gardeners must follow the London Community Gardens Program Guidelines, which provide Londoners with standards and procedures for the development and operation of Community Gardens on municipally owned lands. The Program Guidelines may be found [here](#).¹²

Accessibility

Several community gardens in London are listed as accessible. These accommodations include raised planter beds and accessible pathways to and within community gardens. Should you require accommodation within a non-accessible community garden, you may contact London Community Gardens directly at communitygardens@london.ca. Raised planter beds, including standing height raised beds, are available upon request.

¹⁰ "London's Community Gardens," *Google Maps*, Published 2015, <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1LKQ6pX8xZwLVoibAJbtXvcsEUq0&ll=42.9727682226411%2C-81.29324913024902&z=13>

¹¹ "Community Garden Locations and Details - 2019," *City of London*, (2019), <http://www.london.ca/residents/Parks/Community-Projects/Documents/Community%20Gardens%20Web%20Doc.pdf>.

¹² "London Community Gardens Program Guidelines," *City of London*, (2018), <http://www.london.ca/residents/Parks/Community-Projects/Documents/2018%20Community%20Gardens%20Guidelines.pdf>.

Gaps & Barriers

- The majority of community gardens in London are at full capacity, and some gardens may have a waiting list due to high demand and the popularity of community gardening.
 - Londoners wishing to rent a plot in their neighbourhood may have to settle for a plot in a different neighbourhood if their nearby community garden is at full capacity.
 - This represents a barrier to building stronger neighbourhoods and neighbourhood identity when residents must leave their neighbourhood to access a plot.
- Access to tools may be an issue for gardeners, particularly lower income residents who benefit from community gardens and access to fresh, affordable produce the most.
- Animal disturbances.
- Theft of produce from plots.
- The sale of produce or flowers from a community garden is prohibited, as per the London Community Garden Program Guidelines. Gardeners may, however, trade or exchange these items with other gardeners. As the City has recently amended the Zoning By-law to allow for Farm Gate Sales on lands not zoned agriculture, this could potentially be a stepping zone to allowing gardeners to sell their produce and make a small profit, but would require approval by the City at an ad hoc basis.

Growing Forward

- 1.** Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan (2020 - 2024)
 - Continue to prioritize community gardens until the vision of having a community garden in every neighbourhood, initiated and led by local residents, is realized.
- 2.** Starting a tool library (please see page 52 of the Guide for more information).
 - Consider introducing a tool library to empower lower income residents to access the tools they need to start and maintain a garden plot.
- 3.** Accessibility
 - Work towards improving accessibility in all gardens for older adults and people with physical or mobility challenges.
- 4.** Align community garden design with the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Standards](#).

Urban Pollinators

What are Pollinators?

Urban pollinators, such as bees, are integral to the production of food in urban areas. Outside of food production, many plant species found in natural habitats require animal-mediated pollination. There is a great deal of interest among Londoners in urban pollinators, in particular backyard beekeeping. There are strong opinions in favour of, and opposed to, promoting urban beekeeping, though there is unanimous support for maintaining and improving pollinator habitats such as native plant gardens.



Image Source: [London Urban Beekeepers' Collective Facebook](#)

London Context

Beekeeping in Ontario is regulated by the Ontario [Bees Act](#). Its main purpose is to protect the health of honeybees, particularly from pests and diseases. The act requires that anyone who owns or is in possession of honeybees to register with the Apiary Inspection Program. Additionally, [Produce, Honey and Maple Products](#) is a provincial regulation under the [Food Safety and Quality Act](#). It sets out legal requirements for grading, packaging, labelling, transporting and selling honey in Ontario.

The City of London has no by-laws or policies related to urban beekeeping. Londoners who are interested in taking up urban beekeeping are referred to provincial legislation, which regulates beekeeping in London and the rest of Ontario. Seeking out opportunities for urban beekeeping and increasing pollinator habitat are both aims of the London Urban Agriculture Strategy.¹³ [The London Plan](#) also includes supportive language about pollinators and pollinator habitat, such as:

¹³ "Urban Agriculture Strategy"

- Creating pollinator habitat as part of a naturalization strategy;
- Establishing London as a key pollinator sanctuary within the region;
- Supporting pollinators and food production through landscaping and street tree planting;
- Using parks and open spaces to support London's food system, including helping to support pollinators.

The City of London is very supportive of the [Pollinator Pathways Project](#), a non-profit movement in London that educates on how to grow a pollinator garden and support pollinators.¹⁴ The City has also funded two beekeeping projects through the [Neighbourhood Decision Making grant program](#) with community groups on land that complies with provincial regulations:

1. Hives at Boler Mountain (maintained by the London Urban Beekeepers Collective)
2. [LOLA Bees](#) in Old East Village (near the London Brewing Co-operative)

How to Keep Bees

If you are thinking about getting into urban beekeeping, follow the general tips and guidelines below. Please note that the Guide is not an exhaustive manual on urban beekeeping. It is recommended you consult with the [Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs \(OMAFRA\)](#) and the [Ontario Beekeepers' Association \(OBA\)](#) for full information.

1. Begin research

- Consider starting with OMAFRA's [Overview of Beekeeping Regulations in Ontario, Apiculture, and Grade, Container and Label Requirements for Honey in Ontario](#) overview, and the OBA's [Getting Started Guide](#).
- Together, OMAFRA and the OBA have put together a guide on [Essential Practices for Beekeepers in Ontario](#), including:
 - Basic colony management
 - Responsibility to the beekeeping community and honeybee population
 - Regulations and legal requirements
 - Education and training (resources)
- The University of Guelph Honey Bee Research Centre has a [YouTube channel](#) with great informational videos on topics such as getting started with bees, pest management, honey harvesting, and more.

¹⁴ "Pollinator Pathways Project," *Pollinator Pathways Project*, Published 2019, <https://www.pollinatorpathwaysproject.com/>.

- If you choose to watch other educational videos, seek out regional videos that are specific to Southwestern Ontario rather than the Southern United States, for example.

2. Take a workshop

- o Ontario Beekeepers' Association offers introductory, [hands-on workshops for beginner beekeepers](#).
- o In London, [Heff's Hives](#) and [Meadowlily Farms](#) also offer introductory beekeeping workshops. You can also learn hands on when opportunities are available from the London Urban Beekeepers Collective and LOLA Bees.
- o Outside of the above resources, you may be able to find additional workshops that suit your schedule and budget. Ontario is fortunate to have credible, science-based beekeeping workshops and resources.

3. Acquire supplies

- o Hive.
 - OBA has shared a [Beehive Construction](#) document from the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.
- o Smoker.
- o Personal protective equipment.
- o Winter beehive wraps.
- o One London beekeeper estimates the cost of building a hive and associated equipment is around \$400, and a nucleus colony (see below) is around \$200. Subsequent hives are approximately \$200 (the \$400 is to get the hive tool, smoker, protective gear, etc).

4. Acquire and register bees

- o OBA has a [guide to buying bees and what you need to know](#).
- o The Ontario Bee Breeders' Association has a [guide to buying a nucleus colony of bees](#).
- o Any beekeeper selling queens and nucleus colonies is required to have a Queen and Nuc Permit from OMAFRA. This ensures that your queen and nucleus colony producer is regularly inspected and is not spreading diseases.
 - Here is OMAFRA's list of [Ontario Honeybee Queen, Nucleus and Colony Producers](#).
- o Anyone who owns or is in possession of honeybees must register annually with OMAFRA, free of charge. Beekeepers are required to identify the location of bee yards and the number of honeybee colonies as part of the registration process. The [Honeybee Registration Form](#) is available through OMAFRA.

5. Raise bees, produce delicious honey, support London's food system!

Spotlight on Mississauga: A Canadian **Bee City**

Bee City is a North American initiative to support pollinator protection. In 2019, Mississauga became Canada's 29th Bee City. As part of the Bee City Canada Program, Mississauga is committed to (1) creating healthy pollinator habitat, (2) educating the community about the importance of pollinators, and (3) celebrating pollinators.¹⁵¹⁶¹⁷

- Mississauga's One Million Trees program has enabled the city to plant over 300,000 native trees and shrubs to enhance pollinator habitat.
- Mississauga has thirteen pollinator and community gardens located at City community centres, providing opportunity for resident engagement.
- The City has a honeybee hive on the roof of City Hall to support urban agriculture, increase pollination in the downtown core, and educate the public on pollinators.
- *Pollinator Week* is a dedicated week to celebrate pollinators and educate the public on pollinator protection.
- Mississauga provides a *Pollinator Promo Pack* native seed mix for residents to plant in their gardens.

Gaps & Barriers

- The location of hives clause in the Ontario *Bees Act* represents a significant barrier to urban beekeeping as it prohibits hives from being placed within 30 metres of any property line, as follows:

No person shall place hives or leave hives containing bees within 30 metres of a property line separating the land on which the hives are placed or left from land occupied as a dwelling or used for a community center, public park or other place of public assembly or recreation.

- In complying with the *Bees Act*, only residents with very large backyards are able to participate in beekeeping, which represents a significant barrier.
 - However, it is well-known within the beekeeping community that this regulation is rarely enforced unless there is a complaint.
- London's *Yard & Lot Maintenance By-law* may be seen as discriminatory towards a yard owner providing pollinator habitat. Specifically:

Every owner shall keep his land clean, cleared and free of refuse.

¹⁵ "Pollinators," *Mississauga*, (2020), <http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/parks-pollinators>.

¹⁶ "Bee City Benefits," *Bee City Canada*, (2020), <https://beecitycanada.org/bee-cities/benefits/>.

¹⁷ "Bee City Canada Application," *City of Mississauga, Bee City Canada*, (2019), https://beecitycanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/BCC-application-form-Mississauga_June2019.pdf.

- Where “refuse” can include “grass clippings, tree cuttings, brush, leaves and garden refuse;”. This potentially contradicts the City’s pollinator and pollinator habitat goals as all of the above may provide crucial habitat for pollinators, especially during the harsh winter months.
- Perennial gardens and wildflower meadows are exempt from this bylaw, provided they are managed in accordance with the [Weed Control Act](#). This could result in a disagreement around what is and isn’t a perennial garden/wildflower meadow between a gardener and municipal law enforcement officer.
- London’s [Property Standards By-law](#) includes provisions for keeping exterior property areas “Neat and Tidy”, specifically:

...a neat and tidy condition includes removal of:

- (a) rubbish, garbage, brush, waste, litter and debris;
- (c) growth of weeds in excess of 20 cm (8");
- (d) ground cover, hedges and bushes which are unreasonably overgrown;
- (e) dead, decayed or damaged trees or other growth and the branches and limbs thereof which create an unsafe condition;

- This may also potentially contradict the City’s pollinator habitat goals.
- The City does not allow people have hives on public lands e.g., parks, community gardens, Environmentally Significant Areas.

Growing Forward

1. Consider becoming a registered [Bee City](#) to support pollinator protection.
2. City to voice support for urban beekeeping, perhaps through a pollinator plan.
3. Consider mowing municipal and public lawns less in the summer to let wildflowers grow, and/or sowing wildflower meadows in London parks.



Image Source: [London Urban Beekeepers' Collective Facebook](#)

Spotlight on Urban Hens

Many Canadian cities permit households to keep backyard hens as pets and for fresh eggs. An urban hen keeping pilot project was originally part of the draft London Urban Agriculture Strategy. The idea was removed from the strategy by the City after the first review of the Urban Agriculture Strategy went to Council. However, many residents who are part of the urban agriculture community strongly support the move to keep backyard hens.¹⁸



Image Source: City of Edmonton



Image Source: Chris Seto



Image Source: City of Toronto

In 2014, the City of Edmonton began an **urban hen keeping pilot project** to understand the impact of urban hens and establish good husbandry principles in an urban context. As of May 2019, all residents are permitted to apply to keep a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 6 backyard hens. Interested applicants must also complete an introductory urban hen keeping course specific to Alberta. Once approved, hen keepers must follow the City's Urban Hen Keeping Procedures and Guidelines.

Related Policies

Poultry keeping is enforced under Edmonton's *Animal Licensing and Control Bylaw, 13145*

Setback requirements for coops are outlined in Edmonton's *Zoning Bylaw, 12800*

fresh: Edmonton's Food & Urban Agriculture Strategy

In 2018, the City of Guelph amended their *Animal Control By-law* to make it easier for homeowners to keep backyard hens. The amendment reduced the required distance between hen coops and neighbouring buildings from 15 metres to 1.2 metres back from the rear lot line. Additionally, the amendment requires all hen keepers to register with the City. Residents are limited to keeping no more than 10 hens, unless they are kept in a specialty enclosure.

Related Policies

The keeping of poultry, ducks, geese, and pigeons, is regulated under Guelph's *Animal Control By-law*

In March 2018, the City of Toronto launched the **UrbanHensTO Pilot Program**, allowing residents to keep backyard hens in 4 specific wards of the city. The pilot will run until March 2021. To participate, residents must register for the pilot project and register their hens. Residents may keep a maximum of 4 hens on their property. Hens are to be for the purpose of enjoyment and egg production and are not intended as livestock to eat.

Related Policies

Coop building requirements are based on the City's Zoning Bylaw 569-2013

GrowTO: An Urban Agriculture Action Plan for Toronto

¹⁸ "Forget backyard chickens, council shifts focus to food security," *CBC News*, (Nov 15, 2017), <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/forget-backyard-hens-council-shifts-focus-1.4402648>

Backyard Gardening

What is Backyard Gardening?

Backyard gardening is a rewarding practice that has many environmental, social, and physical and mental health benefits, such as:

- Increasing food security
- Saving money on food
- Reducing food waste by using compostable material from kitchen
- Enhancing habitat for pollinators
- Enhancing water drainage and filtration
- Time spent outdoors
- Interacting with friends and neighbours
- Reducing stress
- Physical exercise

It includes, but is not limited to, residents keeping flower or herb pots, container and raised bed gardening, and gardening directly in your yard's soil.

London Context

The City of London is very supportive of backyard gardening and provides a number of excellent resources on the topic. As part of the City's mission to cultivate a food secure community, five key commitments were identified in [London's Food Charter](#). Three out of five are especially related to backyard gardening, including:

Ready access to quality grocery stores, farmers' markets and other food sources which provide safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate foods;

Opportunity for residents to become food literate; and,

Opportunity for residents to grow and sell food within the City.

The Food System Chapter of [The London Plan](#) contains language that is supportive to backyard gardening, specifically:

Through our planning, public projects, and investment, we will encourage, foster, and support:

- Alternative ways that Londoners grow, process and sell food within the city.
- Opportunities for urban food production on private and public lands.

The growing and producing food within the City could include, but not be limited to, backyard gardening projects.

How to Garden in Your Backyard

The official website of the City of London has a [Lawns and Gardens](#) launch page with links to resources and information on the following topics:¹⁹

- [Energy Saving Tips for Outdoors](#)
- [Factsheets and Links](#)
- [Garden Care Tips](#)
- [Get Growing with Frankie Flowers](#)
- [Growing Naturally Home Water Assessment Program](#)
- [Grow Me Instead - A Guide to Alternative Plant Selection](#)
 - [Beautiful Non-Invasive Plants for your Garden](#)
- [Irrigation Systems](#)
- [Lawn Care Tips](#)
- [Pesticide Information](#)
- [Problem Identification](#)
- [Rain Garden](#)

¹⁹ "Lawns and Gardens," *City of London*, (n.d.), <https://www.london.ca/residents/Property-Matters/Lawns-Gardens/Pages/default.aspx>.

If you are interested in starting up your own backyard garden, spend some time reading the City resources on the previous page, and then follow these general guidelines:

1. Choosing a spot

- Observe your back or front yard to determine amount of sun in each area. Ideally select a spot with 6-8 hours of sunshine (although you can successfully grow specific veggies in more or less sun).
- Cultivating healthy soil is important for the success of your plants! Avoid planting veggie gardens near trees such as black walnuts as those types of trees can adversely affect the soil quality for your veggies.
- Please refer to page 30 of the Guide for information related to Soil Testing in London.

2. Consider building raised beds

- Using a raised bed is great if you live in a rental property or if you are limited in available soil, or your soil quality is poor.
- They can be built or acquired in virtually any shape or size! Feel free to use salvaged materials, if possible, but avoid treated wood as the chemicals may leach into your soil and vegetables. Untreated pine and cedar are recommended. London Middlesex Master Gardeners has a how-to-guide for building raised beds, [found here](#).

3. Consider bringing in backyard composting

- See the City of London's guide to [Composting at Home](#) for more information.
- Refer to page 78 of the Guide for information related to composting in London.
- Add compost to your soil every year!
- Avoid adding compost with black walnut leaves or blight as this could negatively impact your soil.



Image Source: [FUAL](#)

4. Acquire seeds

- First, decide what you want to plant and when you will need to start your seeds' germination indoors. Or you can buy seedlings from local farms and nurseries.
- There are many resources, including this [Planting Calendar](#), for timing the start of fruits and vegetables for London.
- Some local options include that sell veggies seedlings and seeds: Heeman's, Mulberry Moon Farm, Ontario Seed Company, Arthur Ford Nature Park Plant Sale (April-May), local nurseries, greenhouses, garden centres etc.

5. Plant heirloom and drought tolerant species

- London is located within the [Carolinian zone](#) of Southwestern Ontario. Many species that are native to this zone are also drought resistant.

6. Produce food in your yard!

- All you need is a little bit of yard space, a water source, sun, care, and time!
- Consider using a [rain barrel](#) to collect rainwater to use as your water source. Get a rain gauge to determine when you should water (general rule is if you do not get 1 inch of rain a week, you should manually water). Also water in the early morning.

7. Consider companion planting and wildlife shelters

- Certain plants benefit others when they are planted in close proximity, and as such you will have increased amounts of your delicious vegetables.
- Consider supplying bird and/or bat houses for our friendly pest controllers!

8. Increase the number of vegetable perennials you plant

- Perennials are more suitable for London's climate and life zone, and they consume less water, are more drought-resistant, and sturdier than annuals. They also have the benefit of coming back each year without needing to replant.
- Perennial vegetables include asparagus, rhubarb, and sorrel, for example.

9. Space plants appropriately

- Plants need appropriate space, both above and below ground, to grow and mature.

10. Consider planting a native pollinator garden

- Urban pollinators are integral to the production of food in urban areas; yields rise when there are more pollinators. Plant [native plants](#), which are plants that best support our local ecosystems.
- Support yours' and your neighbours' backyard garden food system by creating a pollinator garden!



Image Source: [FUAL](#)

Gaps & Barriers

- Apartment building living without backyard access.
 - Many Londoners have found creative and rewarding ways around this problem with the use of planter boxes on balconies. Some have also been able to access land at a friend or family member's house.
 - Balcony space may be an issue for some, and some residents do not have a balcony at all. Apartment dwellers are encouraged to find a local community garden plot.
- Access to gardening tools, fertilizers, and seeds may be a concern for lower income Londoners.
 - Many residents participate in the annual [Seedy Saturday](#), hosted by the London Middlesex Master Gardeners program, where Londoners gather to purchase seeds, garden supplies, decor, and local food and learn about gardening and growing food.²⁰
 - Seedy Saturdays also host a seed swap, where citizens can swap seeds they have saved or acquired.
- London's [Yard & Lot Maintenance By-law](#) and London's [Property Standards By-law](#) may conflict with some of the ways in which Londoners practice backyard gardening.
 - Please see the discussion on page 20 of the Guide for the discussion of these by-laws.

²⁰ "Seedy Saturday - Garden Fest," *London Middlesex Master Gardeners*, (n.d.), <http://londonmiddlesexmastergardeners.com/seedy-saturday-march-2021/>.

Growing Forward

1. Prioritize more community gardens in areas with a high proportion of rental or attached housing, as per the Food Systems Chapter of [The London Plan](#).
2. Consider implementing a Green Roof By-law, such as [the City of Toronto has done](#), and require new or renovated apartment buildings to provide green roofs and garden plots for their residents.



Image Source: [FUAL](#)

Soil Testing

Why Test Your Soil?

The trick to raising beautiful, healthy fruits and vegetables is healthy soil. Soil testing can provide information on soil nutrient deficiencies, soil acidity, soil organic matter, soil texture, and soil contamination. Soil pH, or the measure of the acidity of your soil, is important to know because plants take up nutrients best within optimal pH ranges. Testing for phosphorous and potassium is recommended as plants require both of these nutrients in larger amounts than others. Other nutrients, such as iron, manganese, and zinc, are required by plants, but only in small amounts. If you regularly enrich your soil with compost, these nutrients should already be present in the necessary amounts.²¹



Image Source: [FUAL](#)

London Context

Silty clay loam and silt loam make up most of London's urban soil.²² Silty clay loam is a moderately good soil type for agriculture because it decently holds water. It is still a good idea to get your soil tested for harmful pollutants, especially if your home is over 50 years old. Lead was used in household paint, gasoline, and pipes and can remain in the soil. Old agricultural soils can contain high levels of arsenic as it used to be used in agriculture for pest control. If you reside on a major road or a former industrial area, you may wish to test for contaminants as well.

²¹ "Soil Testing Is Worth The Effort," *Fine Gardening*, (n.d.), <https://www.finegardening.com/article/soil-testing-is-worth-the-effort>.

²² "Middlesex-London Community Food Assessment," 59.

How to Test Your Soil

A good place to start is with Toronto Public Health's [Guide for Soil Testing in Urban Gardens](#). This guide includes information on the following steps:²³

1. Establish the level of concern
2. Test the soil
3. Take actions to reduce risk

OMAFRA provides a list of [accredited soil testing laboratories in Ontario](#). The labs provided are accredited to perform soil tests for pH, buffer pH, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, manganese index, zinc index and nitrate-N on Ontario soils. Of these laboratories, several are in or nearby London, and all accept soil samples by mail:

- [A&L Canada Laboratories Inc.](#) - London, ON
- [SGS Agrifood Laboratories](#) - Guelph, ON
- [University of Guelph Agriculture and Food Laboratory](#) - Guelph, ON
- [Stratford Agri-Analysis](#) - Stratford, ON

A&L Canada Laboratories Inc. provides a [Soil Sampling Guide](#) that describes how to collect the best soil sample for testing. They also provide a [factsheet on understanding soil tests](#), as well as a [Soil Analysis Reference Guide](#) that defines technical terms and optimal nutrient ranges. University of Guelph Laboratory Services offers a [residential lawn and garden fertility test](#) for \$45.

Gaps & Barriers

- Cost may be an issue for some residents, particularly those of lower income.

Growing Forward

1. City to consider helping backyard gardeners and urban farm entrepreneurs with future soil testing, including clear standards and financial assistance.
2. Research groups to do a map of London with suspected areas of contamination outlined for the public.

²³ "Guide For Soil Testing in Urban Gardens," *Toronto Public Health*, Published 2013, <https://www.torontomastergardeners.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Guide-for-Soil-Testing-in-Urban-Gardens.pdf>.

Food Forests

What are Food Forests?

Food forests are modeled on natural woodlands, with a wide range of plants grown in different vertical layers. Food forests are low maintenance ecosystems consisting of fruit and nut trees, fruit bearing shrubs and vines, herbs, and perennial vegetables. If done correctly, it is a form of companion planting where the plants help each other flourish by providing shade, attracting beneficial insects, and/or increasing yields. Food forests are another way to promote food security by making food free and accessible to those who need it the most.



Image Source: [FUAL](#)

London Context

There are a handful of food forests currently in London, including the Wood Street Park Food Forest, West Lions Park Gleaning Food Forest, Meredith Park Food Forest, the London Food Bank Food Forest, Montessori School Food Forest, and London's Carolinian Food Forest. The majority of food forests are planted and maintained by the local community on public lands. Of the existing food forests in the City, a few have received City funding totaling \$5,000 in the form of the since discontinued SPARKS! Neighbourhood Matching Fund or funding from the City's TreeMe grants.

The City of London has an [Urban Forest Strategy](#) and corresponding [Tree Planting Strategy](#) to guide the City in planting, maintaining, and protecting London’s urban trees to reach a tree canopy cover of 34% by 2065. The guiding principles of the Urban Forest Strategy are:²⁴

- 1. Plant more** - Expand and manage the urban forest strategically to maximise the social, environmental and economic returns.
 - Encourage community gardens to consider the use of food producing tree species (e.g., fruit and nut bearing trees) and provide education on the required maintenance and management of food producing tree species.
- 2. Protect more** - Protect and maintain London’s urban forest on public and private land where it is providing the benefits of the ‘right tree in the right place’ or is supporting the integrity of natural features.
- 3. Maintain better** - Maintain and monitor the urban forest over time and adjust management practices as needed using current information and research.
- 4. Engage the community** - Partner with the community to achieve urban forest goals.

As such, the City is supportive of tree planting to meet their urban forest goals. The fourth guiding principle, engage the community, is particularly relevant to community groups wishing to start a food forest of their own.



Image Source: [FUAL](#)

²⁴ “City of London Urban Forest Strategy - Enhancing the Forest City,” *City of London*, (2013). <https://www.london.ca/residents/Environment/Trees-Forests/Documents/London%20Urban%20Forestry%20Strategy%20Final.pdf>.

How to Start a Food Forest

To start a food forest in your neighbourhood, follow the recommended guidelines below:

1. Secure support of community/neighbours

- Sometimes, the biggest barrier to starting a food forest in your community is a neighbour!
 - They might be concerned about bird droppings, obstruction of view, noise, etc. and their concerns are valid and should be met with a mutually beneficial compromise.
- Neighbours are also your go-to resource for planting and long-term maintenance gardening assistance.

2. Apply for grants

- The City's [TreeMe Fund](#) provides grants to Londoners to plant trees on *private property* in their neighbourhood or on their commercial property.
- Any planting on City-owned property must have City approval. As per the official website of the City of London's [Tree Planting FAQs](#), individuals are not permitted to plant a tree on City property, which would include parks or boulevards.
- Apply for the [London Community Grants Program](#).
- Grant money could go towards hiring someone who is knowledgeable in permaculture to design the food forest.

3. Pick the right trees for the right environment

- The City of London has a [Native Edible Tree](#) guide. ReForest London, a non-profit organization, has created resources to help you decide which [trees](#) and [shrubs](#) to plant in London.

4. Start small

- First, be sure to first kill the grass! This can be done by covering with cardboard and putting soil on top.
- Start with a few trees at a time to be sure they can be adequately cared for in your neighbourhood.

5. Organize a planting day

- This will be a fun day where neighbours gather together to accomplish something they care deeply about!
- Make sure you get [locates](#) for the area to confirm there are no utilities and pipes in the area you are planting.

6. Maintain

- With perennial plants and native species, seasonal maintenance should be low, and replanting is not required.
- Will need to occasionally prune trees, do a "spring clean-up", collect ripe food if not yet picked, and water in times of drought.

Spotlight on Food Forests



Image Source: Dustin Bajer



Image Source: Vanessa Tignanelli



Image Source: Emily Stewart

MackInnon Food Forests

Since 2014, volunteers have been planting and maintaining food forests in Edmonton's River Valley as part of the City's Roots for Trees program. The food forests consist of edible, native plants and shrubs that are publicly accessible, including saskatoon berries, currants, elderberries, pin cherries, raspberries, and strawberries. The goals of the MackInnon Food Forests include creating a self-sufficient edible ecosystem that captures water, improves biodiversity, and builds community, among others.

Guelph Community Food Forest

In May 2016, 100 volunteers gathered to plant roughly 500 native species in Guelph's first Community Food Forest. The project is a collaborative effort of various community groups and the City. It was designed to educate people on food sustainability, urban green space design, water management, pollinator habitat, and natural heritage. The Community Food Forest will be maintained by volunteers.

Wood Street Park Food Forest

In 2015, discussions among residents of Kensington Village Association in West London led to community initiative to plant a food forest at Wood Street Park. A grant from the City of London and involvement of a permaculture designer enabled the planting of native fruit trees and perennial species. The Wood Street Food Forest now acts as a space where community members can gather for events, barbeques, and shared garden maintenance.

Growing Forward

1. City to provide a public map of all current food forests and potential food forest locations in London.
2. Consider launching a “gleaning” program (similar to [Not Far From The Tree](#) in Toronto) to harvest fruit from trees across London.



Image Source: [FUAL](#)

Institutional Growing

What is Institutional Growing?

Institutional growing includes, but is not limited to, the growing of food on school, prison, or hospital grounds. These gardens promote food literacy and security, enhance physical and mental health, and provide opportunities for community building.

London Context

As per the Food Systems chapter of [The London Plan](#), the City is supportive of housing community gardens on school, hospital, place of worship, and higher education institution grounds:

In cooperation with the school boards, school yards will be promoted as locations for community gardens due to their educational and community value. Similarly, hospitals, places of worship and higher education institutions will be encouraged to consider community gardens.

Spotlight on Western's Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden

The University of Western Ontario has an [Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden](#) located off of Perth Drive. The garden promotes Indigenous presence, Indigenous Knowledge exchanges, and community involvement while engaging the community in growing Indigenous organic and sustainable foods and plants.²⁵ Western also has a greenhouse, several rooftop gardens, and an outdoor food garden created by EnviroWestern, a student service group.



Image Source: [Indigenous Student Centre](#)

²⁵ "Indigenous Food and Medicine Garden," *Indigenous Student Centre*, Published 2020, https://indigenous.uwo.ca/about_us/medicine_garden.html.

How to Start a School Garden

School administrators and teachers who are interested in starting a garden at their school are encouraged to refer to the Backyard Gardening and School Gardens chapters of this guide (pages 24 and 88, respectively). Otherwise, the curriculum links document can be obtained from the TVDSB.

It is recommended that interested teachers who would like to start a school garden connect with the Environmental Education Coordinator, who is currently Erin Mutch (e.mutch@tvdsb.ca).

Gaps & Barriers

- Summer maintenance.
 - As there is nobody on the property of elementary and secondary in the months of July and August, harvesting summer fruits and vegetables has to be coordinated externally.
 - This represents one of the main reasons why there are not more school gardens in London.
 - Some schools have overcome this barrier by using planter boxes and growing from May-June, then resuming in September.

Growing Forward

- 1.** Schools to consider partnering with the neighbouring community whose residents could look after the school garden plots in the summer.

Urban Foodscaping

What is Urban Foodscaping?

Urban foodscaping is the practice of using available space, such as front lawns, curbs, boulevards, and rooftops, to name a few, to grow food. Compared to the aesthetic value of grass and annual plants, and the functional value of concrete, urban foodscapes provide numerous benefits, including:

- Free food
- Pollinator habitat
- Stormwater management
- Unique beauty



Image Source: [FUAL](#)

London Context

Urban foodscaping, such as edible landscaping and boulevard planting, is identified as a priority in the Urban Agriculture Strategy.²⁶ London plans to support urban foodscaping initiatives going forward according to supportive policy in the Food System chapter of [The London Plan](#):

Rooftop gardens, where buildings can support them, will be encouraged.

The provision of publicly accessible rooftop garden space and green roofs designed for food production or recreation may be eligible for bonusing, in conformity with the Bonus Zoning policies in the Our Tools part of this Plan.

The opportunity to promote food production on public lands such as parks and street rights-of-way will be explored.

²⁶ "Urban Agriculture Strategy," 44.

Spotlight on YOU Made It Cafe

YOU Made It Cafe is a social enterprise owned and operated by Youth Opportunities Limited (YOU). YOU Made It Cafe acts as a youth skills and employment program for youth facing barriers related to homelessness, unemployment, or lack of education. YOU Made It Cafe has a rooftop terrace garden in the heart of downtown that grows vegetables and herbs to use or sell in the downstairs cafe. The rooftop garden also acts as an educational opportunity for youth mentorship in growing food. The rooftop is available to cafe patrons in the summer months who can enjoy the seating with a view.^{27,28}



Image Source: [YOU Made It Cafe](#)

How to Foodscape

Londoners interested in urban foodscaping initiatives are encouraged to refer to the Backyard Gardening section of the Guide on page 24 for tips on what and how to plant. Otherwise, citizens interested in installing a rooftop or boulevard garden should be mindful of the location's access to water and potential contamination. Planting species that do not absorb chemicals as much is recommended if you believe your space could be contaminated. In some cases, it's best to plant pollinator plants in high traffic areas.

²⁷ "About," *YOU Made It Cafe*, (n.d.), <https://youmadeitcafe.ca/about-2>.

²⁸ "Youth Opportunities Limited," *Youth Opportunities Limited*, (n.d.), <https://www.you.ca/>.

Gaps & Barriers

- Adequate access to water on rooftops and boulevards can be an issue.
 - This barrier can be partially overcome by using a rainwater harvesting system, such as a rain barrel.
- Barriers identified in the Urban Agriculture Strategy include:
 - Siting and soil contamination
 - Planting height
 - Soil run-off
 - Limiting attraction of unwanted animals and other pests
 - Foraging guidelines aligned with naturalization goals

Growing Forward

1. Consider implementing a Green Roof By-law, such as [the City of Toronto has done](#), and require all commercial and apartment buildings greater than a certain area to install a green roof.
2. Based on thoughtfully designed studies, remove barriers to food production on public lands where this would not pose a safety hazard.



Image Source: [99.9 The Bay](#)

PROCESSING

What is Processing?

After growing, processing may be a great next step for practicing urban agriculture. Processing includes, but is not limited to “milling, cooling, drying, cooking, [and] packaging” food grown in urban agriculture.²⁹ Preserving food is also an important part of processing that ensures food grown can be saved & distributed in a timely manner within the community or the city.

Things to consider under processing:

- Kitchen space required to process the food and storage options.
- Compliance with food safety requirements.
- Scale of urban agriculture and the risk; such as contamination, storage, funding, etc. should also be considered.

London Context

1. Under the [Ontario Regulation 493/17: Food Premises](#), regulates the food safety requirements for food provided to the public, including requirements about food suppliers, temperature control, food handler certification, etc.
 - “Any food that is liable under law to inspection by the Government of Canada or Ontario, or by an agency of either, in a food premise must be obtained from a source that is subject to inspection by that entity unless otherwise permitted under this Regulation.”³⁰
 - In other words, food that is prepared at home cannot be sold to the public. This includes, but is not limited to, cupcakes made at home, quiche, or stir fry.
 - When food is provided to the public, food handler certification may be required under this regulation. See the Middlesex-London Health Unit’s [Food Handler Certification Program](#) for more information. The City of London [Food Premises Inspection and Mandatory Food Handler Certification By-Law](#) supports this requirement.
 - Exceptions:
 - Religious organizations, service clubs, fraternal organizations and farmers’ market food vendors may be exempt from the Regulation. To find out more please contact the MLHU.
2. [Ontario Regulation 119/11: Produce, Honey, and Maple Products](#) regulates the quality, labelling, packaging and food safety issues for fresh fruits and vegetables in the province of Ontario.
 - This applies to anyone who packs, transports, advertises, sells or offers produce for sale; including sales of fruits and vegetables at farmers’ markets and at Farm Gate Sales. The regulation sets out requirements specifically for, “definitions and applications, food safety and quality, grading for potatoes, packages and labels,

²⁹ Luc J.A. Mougeot, “Urban Agriculture: Definition, Presence, Potentials and Risks, and Policy Challenges,” International Development Research Center, Published November, 2000, <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/bitstream/handle/10625/26429/117785.pdf?sequence=12>

³⁰Ontario Regulation 493/17: FOOD PREMISES, <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/R17493>.

advertising and retail display signs, misrepresentation”.³¹ Currently, there are changes being made to the *Farm Product Grades and Sales Act*. For more information on how to conduct correct practices or to track these changes, please visit OMAFRA’s [Selling fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets and at the farm gate](#).

Processing Food Grown at Home

Food grown at home can be processed in a few ways. For more information on various ways to process food at home, see the [Government of Canada Food Safety](#) page and the [National Centre for Home Food Preservation](#).



Image Source: [Unlock Food](#)

1. Cleaning

Before handling any produce from your backyard, it is important to have a clean working environment. These steps can be followed to ensure a clean environment:

- Before handling any produce, it is essential to wash your hands with soap and warm water.
- Use separate cutting boards; one for produce and another one for raw meats, poultry, fish, and seafood.
- To avoid cross contamination, defer from using dishcloths. If used, change daily. Paper towels can be used to wipe down kitchen surfaces. It is also suggested that sponges not be used, since they can be home to many bacteria.
- It is important to clean and sanitize the cutting boards and utensils before and after preparing food.
- Before cooking, be sure to wash all the vegetables and fruits thoroughly under running water.

³¹Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, “*Selling fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets and at the farm gate*,” Last modified January 22, 2020, <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/fruitveg/sellingfruitsvegs.htm#Package>

Special Care

- Keep dogs and cats away from your garden to avoid contamination.
- Clean and healthy compost must be used to ensure a healthy produce.

2. Safe food storage

After the produce is harvested and cleaned, it is important to take appropriate measures to store the food correctly. The next section will focus on correct storage methods.

- **Chilling:** Produce should be stored in a cool and dry place to avoid food waste. Place produce in the fridge or freezer to help preserve it for a longer period of time.
- **Fridge and freezer storage:** The ideal temperatures for certain vegetables can be found under the [fridge and freezer storage](#) section on the Government of Canada's safe food storage page.

3. Canning

Another method for storing and preserving the food is through the process of canning. The [National Center for Home Food Preservation](#) describes a detailed procedure for canning fruit, fruit products, vegetables, vegetable products, and more.

What is Canning?

Home canning is a method used to preserve fresh foods in glass jars. It is a fun way to educate children on food skills, while sharing family recipes and preserving garden produce and/or seasonal foods.³²

- There are two main ways of canning food depending on its acidity level.
 - High acid food such as fruit must be canned using a boiling water canner to prevent bacteria from growing.
 - Low acid food like vegetables need a high-pressure canner to kill the bacteria.³³
 - Tomatoes need an acid such as vinegar to make it safer for preservation.
- When processing jams and jellies to avoid the growth of mold, it is important to take extra precaution. To access detailed recipes and steps please visit [Processing Jams and Jellies](#) by the USDA.
- It is important to follow the right methods when canning produce. Improper canning can lead to serious illness such as botulism.
 - Botulism is caused by a toxin produced by a specific bacterium.
- It can be found in improperly home-canned foods such as beets, peppers, mushrooms, green beans, and asparagus.³⁴

³² Unlock Food, "Introduction to Home Canning," Dieticians of Canada, Last modified 2020, <https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Cooking-Food-Preparation/Home-Canning.aspx>

³³ Dieticians of Canada, "Introduction to Home Canning," Last modified 2020, <https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Cooking-Food-Preparation/Home-Canning.aspx>

³⁴ Government of Canada, "Causes of Botulism," Ministry of Health, Last modified May 23, 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/botulism/causes.html>

- For more information, visit [Home Canning - How to Avoid Botulism](#) for a detailed procedure for pressure canning and boiling water canning.

4. Cottage Food

Cottage food refers to non-hazardous food items that can be shelved, canned, and will have a longer shelf life; can include pickles, jams, and breads. It is similar to canning which can be referred above. All prepared and processed food sold to the public must be made in an inspected kitchen. This is governed by food safety rules contained in [Ontario Regulation 492/17: Food Premises](#) under the [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#). In London there are a number of kitchen incubators that enable “cottage” food processing and preparation. When supporting food-selling activities within the built part of the City, the following issues should be considered:

- Potential conflicts with food businesses and other urban activities
- Basic infrastructure such as a handwashing station
- Food safety and handling
- Insurance



Image Source: [FUAL](#)

Gaps & Barriers

- The policies for processing are not clear; especially for selling certain foods made at home at farmers' markets, for example.
- Lack of public education and awareness about the available resources.
- Difficulty accessing information on correct health and safety practices.
- Unclear or vague terms and definitions for certain by-laws and policies. For example, when in conversation with the stakeholders it was noted that the policies are unclear when it comes to processing certain foods like maple syrup and honey in London.
 - Gap in logistics in terms of what is being produced, who is it going to be served to, which stakeholders are involved, etc.



Image Source: [AquaGrow Farms](#)

Situated in Mississauga, **AquaGrow Farms**, is an urban aquaponic farm that is nestled in a warehouse and run by the city's food bank. This method combines aquaculture (fish-farming) and hydroponics (soil less agriculture). Currently they have six grow beds, a seedling nursery and three fish tanks that will produce approximately 2,500 servings of fish and 28,000 servings of greens each year. The produce is then distributed to the member agencies to be cooked and served to the hungry members of the community. The food grown is processed and served within the local community right on spot.

Growing Forward

1. Excess food can be exchanged within the community through an organized barter system.
2. Have a processing station nearby any food preparation premises.
3. Food grown at home can be donated to local food banks and community kitchens.

Community Kitchens

What are Community Kitchens?

Two common types of community kitchens include:

1. Community Kitchens

- Places where the community can gather to cook together while learning about food preparation, healthy eating, processing, and preserving. The focus is heavily on education and the food prepared is consumed together.³⁵

2. Collective Kitchens

- A small group of people get together to make food which is then distributed equally to take home. Often, the recipes, grocery lists, and buying of the ingredients is done collectively. The participants pool their time, money, and skills.³⁶ These kitchens are also sometimes called ghost kitchens (which are usually commercial kitchens sub-let to a second business to process and package food for sale to the public).

Benefits of a Community Kitchen:

- Save money
- Community involvement
- Meeting new people
- Learning opportunities
- Improved budgeting and cooking skills



Image Source: [Growing Chefs Ontario](#)

³⁵ "Urban Agriculture Strategy," City of London, (2017), page 16, <https://www.london.ca/business/Planning-Development/current-topics/Documents/2017-Nov-UAS-Final.pdf>

³⁶ Robin Stevenson, "Collective Kitchens: The Power of Cooking," Canadian Living, Published March 25, 2014, <https://www.canadianliving.com/life-and-relationships/community-and-current-events/article/collective-kitchens-the-power-of-cooking>

Community Kitchens in London

Community kitchens in London are listed below. In order to access one of these facilities, please visit the website attached in the hyperlinks to contact the facilities. Some of these kitchens are public and some are not. They will be able to give you further direction on what is required to use a community kitchen. You can also contact the Middlesex-London Health Unit for more information.

Venue	Type of Kitchen (soup, banquet, collective, commercial, educational)
Churches	Soup (various locations throughout London)
YMCA	Soup and collective
Sister's of St Joseph Hospitality Centre	Soup
Salvation Army - Centre of Hope	Soup and education
Covent Garden Market	Educational (teaching kitchen upstairs)
Growing Chefs!	Collective and educational
Fanshawe College - Chef's Table	Educational
Ark Aid Street Mission Inc.	Soup, collective, and educational
St. Paul's Social Services	Soup and collective
Unity Project	Soup, collective, and educational
London Training Centre Kitchen	Educational

How to Start a Community Kitchen

The following steps were taken from [Alberta's Collective Kitchen Manual](#) and [Winnipeg's Handbook for Community Kitchen](#). These can be modified to meet your groups' needs and are meant to serve as a foundation for starting a community kitchen.

1. Organize a group

- It is important to start with a facilitator led meeting with the group. If you do not already have a ready-made group, then you can advertise or spread the word to the community to find potential interested members. The reason for conducting a meeting is to establish ground rules and some logistics before cooking.
- Next, it is important to develop the appropriate policies and procedures. In order to do this, the group can be directed by the facilitator towards some questions.
- Along with this, it will also be a good idea to set the group dynamics given the diverse interests in cooking and backgrounds. While the group is together, the ground rules should also be set to create a moral ground for the kitchen practices. These can be done through discussion or activities.

2. Find a Location

- The location of the community kitchen is important; especially to make it accessible for everyone. This can be done through ensuring that the kitchen is located nearby bus routes, having grocery stores nearby, facilities around the kitchen to get further community involvement, etc.

3. Find a Sponsor

- Depending on the facility, finding sponsors can help fund the purchase of initial equipment. The local organizations, groups, or the city can be contacted for possible options.

4. Organize Transportation

- Participants might need accommodation to get to the facility. Ride sharing or pick-ups and drop-offs can be determined at a cost or free of charge.



Image Source: [Ark Aid Street Mission](#)

5. Get Together and Cook

- While deciding the menu, the group can also think about how important a role nutrition plays in the selection of food. It is important to have a healthy yet balanced diet, and [Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating](#) helps design menus based on these.
- The group can get together to simply preserve fruits and veggies by making jams, jellies, pickles, and sauces.
- Communities can organize a day to bring the produce grown in their backyards, balconies, indoors, or even from their local food forest into the kitchen to preserve. As already mentioned, the food can then be cooked and distributed amongst the participants.

6. Evaluate

- A meeting can be held to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of the cooking.

Gaps & Barriers

- Lack of knowledge on the different types of community kitchens and their operations.
- Lack of appropriate definitions for community kitchens.
- There is no official list on the different types of public community kitchens that exist within London.
- Lack of policies and by-laws to integrate and coordinate a joint effort between urban agriculture and community kitchens.

Growing Forward

1. There needs to be a comprehensive list compiled with all the existing community kitchens and their functions within London.
2. With the changing by-laws the Middlesex-London Health Unit could also develop a "How to Guide" for community kitchens to ensure that the practices are the same throughout the city.

Resource Sharing

What is Resource Sharing?

Tool libraries, seed swaps, and other forms of sharing and lending help make resources, such as seeds and tools, available to the public and serve to facilitate community projects. Examples include gardening equipment such as rototillers; heritage seeds, which are in general commercially unavailable; and food processing equipment, such as dehydrators.³⁷

Tool Libraries

Tool libraries are libraries where, instead of books, there are tools that the community can borrow for any project. It is a community tool-sharing service that allows members to borrow domestic tools and equipment.³⁸

Currently there are no tool libraries in London; however, there is a strong interest in starting one. This was noted through the Friends of Urban Agriculture London Facebook group where a wish list for tools has been started. However, there are many barriers that come along with starting one.



Image Source: [@lessardimages](#)

The **Ottawa Tool Library** was founded to provide equal opportunity for everyone to be able to share resources. It functions just like a library but has tools instead of books.

Their only mission is to engage and empower the community to participate in sharing resources by providing access to tools and skills for everybody. These work great for people who don't have space to store their tools and is a great way to promote urban agriculture through community resources. The library also has workshops that are held throughout the year to help others gain expertise on how to use the tools.

³⁷ "Urban Agriculture Strategy," City of London, (2017), page 17,

<https://www.london.ca/business/Planning-Development/current-topics/Documents/2017-Nov-UAS-Final.pdf>

³⁸ n.d. "Calgary Tool Library," Wordpress, Published 2020, <https://calgarytoolibrary.org/about/>

- The London Public Library’s Central Branch has three sets of gardening tools through the Visiting Library for tool sharing. Each set is available for 3-week loan periods. The sets include various hand tools such as a kneeler stool, weeder, scooper, and soil rake, to name a few. Visit the [Central Branch](#) to learn how you can rent gardening tools for your urban agriculture project!

Spotlight on London Food Incubator

The London Food Incubator aids clients with overcoming significant workplace barriers to gain skills in a real-life job setting. It also used to house a community grocery store with cooking classes, educational programs and activities³⁹. This initiative is a great tool to resource share, through sharing skills within the community as well as educate and train the community. At the back of the previous grocery store there is a fully equipped kitchen that was open to individuals, restaurants, and start-ups to come and prepare meals using the kitchen. As of March 2020, the restaurants that made food here include, Glen Farms, Naturally Vegan, Urban Oven, Meals on Wheels Village Table, Fire Roasted Coffee, and more⁴⁰. This is a great way to promote economic growth within the city through space and equipment sharing.



Image Source: [Old East Village Grocer](#)

³⁹ The Old East Village Grocer, "Eat Well, Do Good," Published 2020, <https://www.oldeastvillagegrocer.com/>

⁴⁰ Hank Daniszewski, "The London Food Incubator is helping new companies get off the ground", London Free Press, Published March 13, 2017, <https://lfpres.com/2017/03/13/the-london-food-incubator-is-helping-new-companies-get-off-the-ground/wcm/3a55d424-1fc8-8b00-78e6-9d41325db6fa>

Gaps & Barriers

- Funding can be an issue.
- Storage and bookkeeping.
- Some sort of monitoring system needs to be established to track the tools and space.
- Thefts are also a barrier to having a tool library, hence it is essential to monitor and track.

Growing Forward

1. A library of things can be established where resources become available to everyone in the community
 - These can include seeds, gardening equipment, tools, etc.
 - It can bring the community closer while making resources accessible.



Image Source: [Torontoist](#)

Mobile Assets

What are Mobile Assets?

A mobile asset is a piece of mobile equipment, such as a cider press or bake oven, that can be moved from place to place within the community.

Ideas for Mobile Assets in London

- Cider Press
- Pizza Oven
- Egg Shelling Stations
- Vegetable Processor
- Solar Dehydrator

London's Mobile Cider Press

The Cider Press was brought in 2007 through the SPARKS funding. It was first debuted at KEVA's Harvest Party with apples brought from a farm, while enjoying a Heartaches Strings concert of the inaugural Ear to the Ground Community Concert Series.

To make the cider, the following steps are used:

1. Apples are washed
2. Apples are chopped and ground into smaller bits with the grinder (which comes with the press)
3. The grinds are then put into the press to be squeezed for fresh cider!



Image Source: [Gabor Sass](#)

Gaps & Barriers

- It can be a liability since there is no formal monitoring that takes place when it comes to accessibility, usage, maintenance, etc.
- Some of them are seasonal and can be in demand more than the other causing a shortage within the community.

Growing Forward

- 1.** There needs to be awareness and education about the existing mobile assets within the community.
- 2.** The community needs to requests assets for their events so that the assets can get used and circulated between different communities within the city.
- 3.** There is an opportunity to promote community canning, preserving, and dehydrating.

DISTRIBUTION

Farmers' Markets & Mixed Markets

What is a Farmers' Market?

According to [Farmers' Markets Ontario](#), a "true farmers' market" has at least 51% of the farmer retailers growing what they sell.⁴¹ However, other types of farmers' markets exist across the province and within the City of London. Other mixed-farmer, re-selling, and artisan markets that have less than 51% of vendors growing what they sell can still operate, but they must follow specific food safety requirements, as discussed below in London Context.⁴²

London Context

Farmers' markets are considered to be food premises', meaning they must be inspected by the MLHU, under Ontario's *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. True farmers' markets are exempt from Ontario Regulation 493/17: Food Premises according to section 2.⁴³ Ontario's [Operational Approaches for Food Safety Guideline, 2019](#) outlines the farmers' market exemption assessment.⁴⁴ To discuss specific requirements that may apply to your farmers' market and to submit a [Notice of Intent to Operate a Food Premise form](#) contact the MLHU. OMAFRA also has a helpful Factsheet: [Direct Farm Marketing in Ontario - A Primer](#).

Currently in the City of London, long-term farmers' markets cannot be operated on city property or on residential spaces.⁴⁵ However, permission can be given to have a short-term and occasional farmers' market or other temporary community sales in city parks. For more information on food sales, safety, and signage regulations, please see Direct Food Sales on page 62.

Current Farmers' Markets in London:

- [Western Fair](#)
- [Covent Garden Market](#)
- [Gibraltar Weekend Market](#)
- [Trails End Farmers' Market](#)
- [West 5 Farmers Market](#)
- [Masonville Farmers' Market](#)
- [Brescia Farmer's Market](#)

⁴¹ "Application Information: Membership Types," *Farmers' Markets Ontario*, <https://www.farmersmarketontario.com/application-information/>.

⁴² Ontario Regulation 493/17: FOOD PREMISES, <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/R17493>.

⁴³ Ontario Regulation 493/17: FOOD PREMISES.

⁴⁴ "Operational Approaches for Food Safety Guideline, 2019," *Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care*, http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/docs/protocols_guidelines/Operational_Approaches_For_Food_Safety_Guideline_2019_en.pdf.

⁴⁵ "Zoning By-law No. Z.-1," *City of London*, <https://www.london.ca/business/Planning-Development/zoning-by-law/Pages/Z1-Zoning.aspx>.

How to Start a Farmers' Market

1. Pick Your Type

- Determine if you want to operate a "true farmers' market" where 51% of vendors grow what they sell. By selecting a "true farmers' market", you may be exempt from some food safety requirements. However, you may also choose to be a mixed farmer, re-selling, and artisan market. If a more temporary community sale better fits your goals, see Direct Food Sales on page 62.

2. Choose a Location

- Find out if the location you have selected can have a farmers' market. You may need to seek special permission from the City and/or receive a license. Check out [Zoning By-law No. Z.-1](#) and contact [Zoning and Licensing](#) for more information.

3. Contact the Middlesex-London Health Unit

- Once you have determined which type of farmers' market you would like to operate; you must notify the Middlesex-London Health Unit of your market. The Middlesex-London Health Unit will risk assess your market based on the types of food at your market. Traceability is a top priority, and the Middlesex-London Health Unit will ensure that the market organizers and vendors meet all food premises and food safety regulations.
 - Please submit a [Notice of Intent to Operate a Food Premise form](#) and identify which months your farmers' market will run.

4. Contact & Select Vendors:

- Find vendors that meet the requirements of the type of farmers' market you have selected, which may include producers only or those who have permits for re-selling.
 - The market organizer will need to provide a list of the names and contact numbers for each vendor to the Middlesex-London Health Unit.

Gaps & Barriers

- Setting up occasional or small-scale farmers' markets can be challenging for both new organizers and vendors.
- Difficulty choosing a location due to gaps in by-laws.

Growing Forward

1. Improve the collaboration between small-scale farmers' markets and the Middlesex-London Health Unit by gathering additional feedback from vendors and/or organizers.
2. Make accessible a contact sheet for local farmers, gardeners, and artisans who would like to participate in farmers' markets in order to assist new market organizers in securing and supporting vendors.
3. Continue to work collaboratively between the community and the City to find good farmers' market locations.

Local Food Procurement

What is Local Food Procurement?

Sustain Ontario's [Local Sustainable Food Procurement in Municipalities and the Broader Public Sector](#) defines local food procurement as:

"The purchase of goods and services, normally obtained at the lowest possible cost in consideration with other qualifiers such as quality of the product. Local food procurement is the formal acquisition of food defined as local."⁴⁶

In other words, local food procurement is the act of purchasing and supplying local food in order to feed a community.

The [London Urban Agriculture Strategy](#) highlights that local food procurement can:

"Serve as an economic incentive for entrepreneurial urban agriculture activities, along with support for regional farmers, and as an important way to strengthen the local food system, increase food security, and address food sovereignty."⁴⁷

In Ontario, local food is often determined using provincial borders.⁴⁸ However, local food procurement policies for municipalities can help communities define what local food means to them.



Image Source: [FUAL](#)

⁴⁶ "Local Sustainable Food Procurement for Municipalities and the Broader Public Sector: Toolkit," *Sustain Ontario*, (2015): 3, https://sustainontario.com/custom/uploads/2015/12/Toolkit_Final25-11.pdf?utm_source=SOsite&utm_medium=blog&utm_campaign=procurement%20toolkit.

⁴⁷ "Urban Agriculture Strategy," 22.

⁴⁸ "Toolkit," 3.

London Context

The City of London currently does not have a local food procurement policy. However, the Urban Agriculture Strategy identified local food procurement as a priority and an area of interest for the community.

How to Build a Local Procurement Policy

Sustain Ontario has put together a new toolkit for [Local Sustainable Food Procurement in Municipalities and the Broader Public Sector](#) to help municipalities set guidelines and policies for local food procurement. The new toolkit has both a [Toolkit](#) and a [Workbook](#) that have great steps and recommendations that may be helpful for the City of London.



Image Source: [@foodshareto](#)

Gaps & Barriers

- Currently no official local food procurement policy in the City of London.
- There is a lack of educational initiatives that actively promoting and highlighting the benefits of local food procurement.

Growing Forward

1. Establish a local food procurement policy for the City of London.
2. Make use of Sustain Ontario's Local Sustainable Food Procurement for Municipalities and the Broader Public Sector [Toolkit](#) and [Workbook](#).

Direct Food Sales

What are Direct Food Sales?

Urban agriculture is not only a great way to grow food for your own household but can also be an opportunity to sell the food you grow. Direct food sales within the City can help provide local food to the community and support entrepreneurial economic activity.⁴⁹ The provincial and City level policies that regulate direct food sales differ depending on the type of food you want to sell and where you want to sell from. This Guide will focus specifically on the policies and steps for Farm Gate Sales, household sales, and other temporary community sales.

Definitions

- **Farm Gate Sales**

“The use of land, buildings or structures for the purpose of selling agricultural products grown on the property to the general public. This small-scale farm market may or may not have structures in which to sell the products. For the purpose of this definition, Farm Gate Sales does not include a Farm Market or a Farm Food and Products Market”.⁵⁰

- **Farm Market**

“The use of land, buildings or structures for the purpose of selling fruit and vegetables to the general public. The fruit and vegetables sold in a farm market must be grown exclusively by the operator on the property owned by the operator of the said farm market. For the purposes of this definition it does not include a Farm Food and Products Market”.⁵¹

- **Farm Food and Products Market**

“A retail store located on a farm, where farm food, fruits and vegetables, meat and dairy products, and handicraft products are sold, a portion of which are produced and/or processed on the farm. The market may include the processing of farm food, a portion of which are produced on the farm, into finished food products. An eat-in restaurant, ancillary to the permitted market use may also be permitted to a maximum 15% of the gross floor area on the site”.⁵²

⁴⁹ “Urban Agriculture Strategy,” 23.

⁵⁰ “Application by: City of London Allowing ‘Farm Gate Sales’ on Lands within the Urban Growth Boundary,” *City of London*, (November 2019), <https://pub-london.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=68786>.

⁵¹ “Allowing ‘Farm Gate Sales’”.

⁵² “Allowing ‘Farm Gate Sales’”.

- **Household sales:**

“The sale by an occupant of a dwelling unit, on his own premises, of household goods belonging to him”.⁵³

- In other words, selling food from your property that you have also grown on your property falls under household sales.

- **Other temporary community sales**

Temporary, special occasion, or pop-up food sales that wish to be held in public locations - such as City Parks and community gardens.

London Context

Farm Gate Sales

An [amendment to the Zoning By-Law Z-1 in November 2019](#) defined and allowed Farm Gate Sales within London’s Urban Growth Boundary. Prior to these amendments, Farm Markets were permissible on land zoned as Agricultural (AG). However, there are no properties within the Urban Growth Boundary that are zoned Agricultural (AG). Farm Gate Sales are allowed on urban farms by a site-specific zoning by-law amendment within the Urban Reserve (UR) Zone that is within the Urban Growth Boundary.



Image Source: [@urbanrootslondon](#)

A second [amendment in December 2019](#) was filed to allow produce to be sold from an existing urban farm within Urban Growth Boundary. Urban Roots was already operating as an urban farm on land that was under the Open Space (OS1) Zone. The OS1 Zone permitted the farm, but not food sales from the farm. As such, an amendment was made that applied only to Urban Roots and allowed for Farm Gate Sales. The amendment changed the zone from Open Space (OS1) to Open Space Special Provision (OS1(____)) Zone. Once again, this amendment only applies to the

⁵³ “Zoning By-law No. Z.-1,” City of London, <https://www.london.ca/business/Planning-Development/zoning-by-law/Pages/Z1-Zoning.aspx>.

Urban Roots property. Applications for other sites wishing to conduct farmgate sales in the Urban Growth Boundary can be reviewed, contact [City Planning](#) for more information.⁵⁴

Household Sales

Under Section 4.11 of the current [Zoning By-law Z.-1](#), household sales are treated the same as Garage Sales. Under the amended Section 4.11 (Household Sales) of Zoning By-law Z-1 now allows residents to sell produce grown on their properties within the Urban Growth Boundary up to 20 times a year.⁵⁵

Other Temporary Community Sales

To date, direct food sales from community gardens are not permitted, as they were found to be “inconsistent with the community garden principles and guidelines”⁵⁶. However, the growers are allowed to informally share food between themselves for personal use.

Food sales on city-owned parks is regulated by [Part 4.1 of the Parks and Recreation Area By-law PR-2](#): “Activities prohibited-subject to approval”, which includes various sales.⁵⁷ Special approval can therefore be given by the Managing Director - Parks and Recreation for temporary food sales on city-owned parks.⁵⁸

Food Safety

When selling food, it is important to follow all food safety requirements and to notify the Middlesex-London Health Unit. Below are important provincial food safety policies and guidelines:

- Ontario Regulation 493/17: Food Premises⁵⁹
- [Safe Food Handling Tips](#)

When selling food at the farmgate, proper labelling and signage is also important for ensuring food safety and quality. The [Ontario Regulation 119/11: PRODUCE, HONEY AND MAPLE PRODUCTS](#) provides information on labelling and signage regulations. You can also visit OMAFRA’s page on [Selling fruits and vegetables at farmers’ markets and at the farm gate](#) for summarized information on proper labelling and signage.

For signs specifically, OMAFRA indicates that all produce grown or harvested in Canada that is being displayed and sold to consumers must have a sign on or immediately over the display.⁶⁰ Signage helps consumers and producers communicate where the food was grown, which is useful when people are trying to procure local food. The retail signs must include:

⁵⁴ “21 Norlan Avenue: Zoning By-law Amendment,” *City of London*, (December 2019), <http://www.london.ca/business/Planning-Development/land-use-applications/Pages/Z-9111.aspx>.

⁵⁵ “Amend Section 4.11 in Zoning By-law Z.-1.” *City of London*, (July 2020).
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1X3GYWE0eHwUB-WyCSs-njv18HvxehMH/view>

⁵⁶ “Allowing ‘Farm Gate Sales’”.

⁵⁷ “Parks and Recreation Area By-Law,” *City of London*, Consolidated July 26, 2018, <https://www.london.ca/city-hall/by-laws/Documents/parks-recreation.pdf>.

⁵⁸ “Allowing ‘Farm Gate Sales’”.

⁵⁹ Ontario Regulation 493/17: FOOD PREMISES, <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/R17493>.

⁶⁰ “Selling fruits and vegetables at farmers’ markets and at the farm gate,” *Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs*, Last modified January 22, 2020,
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/fruitveg/sellingfruitsvegs.htm#Signs>.

1. The country or province in which the produce was grown or harvested
 - Use the words "Product of", "Produce of", "Grown in" or "Country of Origin" followed by the name of the country in which the produce was grown or harvested. This applies to produce grown or harvested in a country other than Canada. **Example:** Product of USA, or;
 - Use the words "Product of", "Produce of", "Grown in" or "Country of Origin" followed by the word "Canada" or the name of the province where the produce was grown or harvested. This applies to produce grown or harvested in Canada. **Examples:** Product of Canada, Grown in Ontario

2. In the case of peppers, the word "sweet" or "hot" as appropriate.

3. If the produce is sold by weight, the price per unit of weight.⁶¹

How to Have Direct Food Sales

1. Get Informed

- Read the specific provincial and City policies for your type of sale: Farm Gate, Household, or Other temporary community sales. Contact the [Middlesex-London Health Unit](#) for more information.

2. Be Safe

- Follow proper food safety guidelines, such as for handling and signage. This section on Direct Food Sales has focused on whole fresh produce only and not processed foods. Produce that has been cut up is considered a processed food.

Gaps & Barriers

- Knowledge gap on which food safety regulations, such as signage, apply to household sales.
- Policy barrier to selling processed foods - such as homemade goods like cupcakes and jam.
- Access to land for growing and selling within the Urban Growth Boundary continues to be a barrier. Since Farm Gate Sales are still limited to very specific lands within the City, there may still be some policy barriers for different circumstances.
- Lack of clarity for how Farm Gate Sales will work on future urban farms. Currently, the process of approval for Farm Gate Sales on urban farms is done on a case by case basis.

⁶¹ "Selling fruits and vegetables".

Growing Forward

- 1.** More active encouragement and educational initiatives on the benefits of growing and selling can help promote urban agriculture and household sales.
- 2.** More collaboration with the Middlesex-London Health Unit as household sales become more prominent may be beneficial.
- 3.** Consider opportunities for SPIN-Farming in the community.
- 4.** Continue to monitor the policy barriers for direct food sales, specifically for urban farms, within the City. Action is currently community driven and City supported.

FOOD LOSS & RECOVERY

Food Waste Reduction & Recovery

What is Food Waste Reduction & Recovery?

Food waste is a growing concern across communities not only because it contributes to greenhouse gas emissions that impact the environment, but it also creates a financial burden on municipalities and individual households. By throwing out food daily, the average London household is wasting about \$600 a year.⁶² Overall, the residential waste diversion rate in London is currently 45%, which means 55% of household waste ends up in the landfill.⁶³ About 60% of items that end up as landfill garbage are actually compostable or digestible.⁶⁴

Three major steps for dealing with food loss & recovery include:

1. Reducing the amount of food being wasted in the first place.
2. Recovering surplus food and using it in the community.
3. Keeping food that is wasted out of the landfill.

There are many things that the City of London could do - and is doing - to reduce food waste at the household level and to recover surplus food from farmers and businesses that can still be used to feed the community. Recovering food means collecting extra food from households, farms, business, and other groups that may otherwise be wasted, so that it can be used by other members of the community instead. By recovering surplus food, London can reduce food waste and support local organizations and initiatives that are helping feed the City.

Even though a lot can be done to reduce food waste in the first place, communities also need to know how to properly dispose of food waste in a way that keeps it out of the landfill. For more information on how you can compost and make the most of your food waste, see Community Composting and Backyard Composting (page 74 and 78, respectively).

London Context

Reducing waste and diverting waste away from the landfill is a growing area of focus for communities. In Ontario, the push for food waste reduction and recovery is driven by the [Waste-Free Ontario Act](#) and The [Food Organic Waste Policy Statement](#) issued in 2018. In order to plan for the future and align with the provincial directions, London has specifically developed the [Resource Recovery Strategy](#), which is a long term plan for reducing waste and improving the recovery of resources. The Resource Recovery Strategy considers the environmental, social, and financial benefits of waste diversion and resource recovery, including reduced GHG emissions, resident satisfaction, cost and convenience of City programs, and the creation of local jobs.⁶⁵

⁶² Bryan Bicknell, "Londoners throw out \$600 in food every year: Western study, *CTV London*, Published April 11, 2019, <https://london.ctvnews.ca/londoners-throw-out-600-in-food-every-year-western-study-1.4375749>.

⁶³ "Resource Recovery Strategy," *City of London*, <https://getinvolved.london.ca/whywasteresource>.

⁶⁴ "60% Waste Diversion Action Plan," *City of London*, <https://www.london.ca/residents/Garbage-Recycling/waste-management-planning/Documents/60WasteDiversionActionPlanMainBodyVersion2August2018.pdf>.

⁶⁵ "Resource Recovery Strategy".

As part of the Resource Recovery Strategy, London has also developed the [60% Waste Diversion Action Plan](#) in order to help push waste diversion forward in the community. The Plan outlines various initiatives and programs that will help London reach the primary goal of increasing the waste diversion rate from 45% to 60% by the end of 2022.⁶⁶ One new program that Londoners can expect from the plan is a Green Bin program for curbside organics collection.

To keep updated on the implementation of the Resource Recovery Strategy and the 60% Waste Diversion Action Plan, make sure to check out the City’s online engagement site: [Get Involved London](#).



Image Source: London Food Coalition Inc.

The London Food Coalition Inc. is a group of not-for-profits doing food sharing in London, who strive to reduce poverty by recovering and redistributing food. The coalition has grown over time and now has its very own food truck, which collects food from businesses such as Costco, Western University, Walmart, Giant Tiger, and Starbucks. The food collected is brought to their food hub at the Salvation Army, where member agencies can come and pick up the food. Member agencies are then able to use the food for various initiatives, such as community meals and after school programs. If you would like to support The London Food Coalition Inc. check out their calendar to find them at an event in London. There may also be opportunities for food gleaned from farmers’ fields to be donated, contact The London Food Coalition if interested.

⁶⁶ “60% Waste Diversion Action Plan”.

Food Safety

If reducing food waste and recovering food interests you, there are a variety of policies and guidelines that will help ensure you handle food safely. The Government of Canada's [Safe Food Handling Tips](#) is a good resource for food safety information for consumers, industry, and professionals.

An area of food safety that is often misunderstood by many households is [how to read food date labels and packaging](#), in order to know if the food in question is still safe to consume. If you want to help reduce food waste or work to recover food in the community, you need to be able to properly read food date labels and packaging. Proper storage is also very important for food safety and reducing food waste. First, know the difference between a "best before" date and an expiration date:

- **Durable life**

- Indicates the anticipated amount of time an unopened food product will keep its freshness, taste, nutritional value and other qualities when stored under appropriate conditions. A 'best before' date tells you when the 'durable life' period ends.

- **The "best before" date**

- Does not guarantee product safety, but it does give you information about the freshness and potential shelf-life of the unopened food you are buying. This must appear on pre-packaged foods that will keep fresh for 90 days or less.

- **Expiration date**

- Must appear on formulated liquid diets, foods for use in a very low-energy diet, meal replacements, nutritional supplements and infant formulas. After the expiration date, the food may not have the same nutrient content declared on the label. If the expiration date has passed, throw away the food".⁶⁷

If you are looking for more industry specific information and policies on food safety, please see:

- [Regulations for the Food Industry](#) from OMAFRA, which includes [The Food Safety and Quality Act, 2001](#) and [Ontario Regulation 119/11: PRODUCE, HONEY AND MAPLE PRODUCTS](#).

For those interested in learning more about food recovery and food safety for food banks, check out [Feed Ontario](#) and [Food Banks Canada](#).

⁶⁷ "How to read food date labels and packaging," Government of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/general-food-safety-tips/how-read-food-date-labels-packaging.html>.

Spotlight on The London Food Bank

The London Food Bank has been part of the London community for 34 years and now supports more than 3350 families a month. Food recovery continues to be an important part of the organization, and in 2019 fresh produce made up 54% of donations.

As a part of their [Community Harvest](#) initiative, the London Food Bank has been rescuing produce from farms, farmers' markets, and local gardeners that otherwise would have been wasted. The food bank now also recovers food - such as produce, bread, meat, and dairy - from local grocery stores that were not going to sell before the "best before" date. All food recovery follows proper storage and food safety guidelines throughout the process. Once produce is collected from farms, farmers' markets, local gardeners, or grocery stores the London Food Bank is able to then ensure it can be redistributed to the community. ⁶⁸

The London Food Bank accepts and promotes the collection of food gleaned from farmers' fields through various initiatives. If you would like to get involved, their [Plant a Row, Grow a Row](#) initiative encourages "gardeners to grow an extra row of their favourite veggies and donate the harvest to the London Food Bank".⁶⁹ Occasionally, the London Food Bank also has "[harvest mobs](#)" where volunteers can help harvest food from farmers offering their surplus produce to the food bank.



Image Source: [London Food Bank](#)

⁶⁸ "Community Harvest," *London Food Bank*, <http://www.londonfoodbank.ca/learn/community-harvest/>.

⁶⁹ "Plant a Row, Grow a Row," *London Food Bank*, <http://www.londonfoodbank.ca/learn/plant-a-row-grow-a-row/>.

How to Reduce and Recover Food Waste

1. Reduce Your Food Waste

- Helpful Tips:
 - Only buy the amount of food you will consume.
 - Make more use of your leftovers.
 - Know the difference between “best before” dates and expiration dates.

2. Recover Food Waste

- Consider donating surplus food or gleaned food to local initiatives, such as the London Food Bank or the London Vegan Food Bank.
- If you are interested in collecting recovered food waste on a larger scale, make sure you are aware of food safety standards. Reach out to the MLHU to learn about inspection requirements.

3. Divert Food Waste Away from the Landfill

- Compost food waste whenever possible, such as through backyard composting. By composting your own food waste, you can help the environment and your own garden flourish! For more information, see Backyard Composting on page 78.

Gaps & Barriers

- Despite great programs and initiatives throughout the community, a lack of awareness and education on the impacts of food waste continues to be a barrier for moving forward.
- The over-purchasing of food by households continues to contribute to food waste in London. Even within recovery programs and composting, real change will not be seen unless people work hard to waste less food in the first place.

Growing Forward

1. Support existing and future food waste reduction and recovery programs in London through increased awareness on the environmental, social, and financial impacts of food waste.
2. The City could continue to offer more educational initiatives to help increase awareness of food waste and to also provide residents valuable tips on how to reduce the amount of food wasted in their households.
3. Develop a network of contacts for farmers who want to get rid of excess food they will not be harvesting. (suggestion from the Agricultural Advisory Committee)
4. As urban agriculture grows stronger in the City, more opportunities for gleaning surplus food from urban farms and backyard gardens may be possible and can help support local initiatives that are working hard to feed the City.



Image Source: [London Food Bank](#)

Community Composting

What is Community Composting?

A community compost can look different depending on your neighbourhood, your goals for the community compost, and what land you will be using. In general, community composting refers to communal or shared composting in a public or community space. Community composts are often made within community gardens. In addition to supporting a garden, a community compost can help a neighbourhood keep their food waste out of the landfill and can help foster connections within the community.

Currently Urban Roots London has a Community Compost program. They will weigh, record and process your scraps into compost to be used on our farm. Your contribution will put nutrients back into the ground. Find out what you can bring and when [here](#).



Image Source: [FUAL](#)

London Context

Various provincial [guidelines](#) and [standards](#) control the operation of composting facilities, which can impact the ability to create community composts. A lack of clear provincial criteria for different kinds of compost operations creates a barrier to community composting in London.

No regulations or guidelines for just community composting could be found for the City of London. However, the [London Community Gardens Program Guidelines](#) provides some guidance on composting within community gardens. *Guideline #1805 - Composting in Community Gardens* applies to "all Gardeners who have plots on municipally owned Community Gardens and who are conducting composting".⁷⁰ The following standards have to be followed:

⁷⁰ "London Community Gardens Program Guideline," 13.

“Bin composting is preferred to open compost piles as open piles can attract unwelcome rodents and pests. Gardeners who compost in their own plot must ensure the pile is maintained in a clean and tidy manner and must not exceed a quarter of the total size of the plot. Open compost piles must be removed by November 30th.

Compost bins must be responsibly constructed and located within the Gardener’s plot.

It is prohibited to allow compost to overflow from the compost container.

Gardeners are prohibited from putting anything in the bin that attracts pests, such as meat, dairy, breads or grains, or other items that are hazardous to one’s health, such as pet droppings.

Compost debris that will not fit into a Gardener’s compost bin or open pile should be bagged and left for roadside pickup at the garden based on the Yard Materials Collection schedule as identified in City of London’s Waste Reduction and Conservation Calendar.

All compost must be cleaned up and organized for the off-season by November 30th of each calendar year.

People who do not have a plot in the Community Garden are prohibited from using the Community Garden composting bins.”⁷¹

How to Start a Community Compost

The steps to starting a community compost that is not in a community garden are still unclear for the City of London. FoodShare put together a [Guide to Mid-sized Composting](#) operations that may be helpful for creating more community composts in London.

- 1. Inquire:** Find out from the City if the land you want to use can have a community compost.
- 2. Choose a Bin:** Research different types of bin composting to know which will best meet your neighbourhood’s goals.
- 3. Get Informed:** Learn about proper composting techniques to help reduce pests and odour. For more information on composting in general see Backyard Composting on page 78.
- 4. Build a Team:** Put together a neighbourhood team with clearly defined roles. Having designated roles can help to ensure the compost is properly maintained.
- 5. Educate:** Create educational signage that clearly shows what can go in the composter.
- 6. Compost Away!**

⁷¹ “London Community Gardens Program Guideline,” 14.

Gaps & Barriers

- A knowledge gap is a lack of clear understanding of how and where community composts can be operated. Unclear provincial regulations for different kinds and sizes of composting continue to add to the knowledge gap in London.
- Information on existing community composts and 'best practice' guidelines is limited.
- A fear of pests and odours when composting continues to be a deterrent for many people.
- Since community composts can be accessed by a wider group of people, there is an increased risk for non-compostable items to end up in the composter.
- Challenges around managing the compost can also happen as participating members and existing roles change.



Image Source: [Growing Chefs!](#)

Growing Forward

1. To help promote community composting in London, the City can create clearer guidelines on where community composts can be operated and how to get permission to do so.
2. Increased educational resources and initiatives that highlight the benefits of community composting for neighbourhoods can also help to promote community composting in the City.
3. More information on proper composting practices and examples of effective signage for community composts can also help to ensure that concerns about pests, odour, and conflict are minimized.
4. Consider starting with the composting of yard and garden waste.
5. Community composting may become even more beneficial as urban agriculture continues to grow within London.



Image Source: [@foodshareto](#)

Members of the Toronto community can bring their organic food waste from the kitchen to be composted at the **FoodShare Compost Program**, which is next to their urban farm located at Burnhamthorpe Collegiate. To encourage community members to bring their kitchen scraps, Foodscape offers vouchers for fresh produce grown on their farm to those you bring their kitchen scraps to be composted.

Backyard Composting

What is Backyard Composting?

Backyard composting includes composting at the household level, usually within your yard. There are two main categories of compostable materials which are meant to be added in layers to your compost bin:

1. Greens - Nitrogen Rich Materials⁷²

- Kitchen scraps: vegetables, fruits, crushed eggshells, tea bags, coffee grounds with filters, and paper towels
- Garden and yard materials
- Grass clippings
 - These can also be left on your lawn as a natural fertilizer!

2. Browns - Carbon Rich Materials⁷³

- Dry leaves
- Sawdust and shavings
- Finely ground wood chips
- Well shredded paper
- Shredded egg cartons and cardboard

If you are a gardener, backyard composting is a great way to put your organic waste to good use. For example, you can use the nutrient rich finished compost to make compost tea and apply it to your soil, or just directly add your compost to your soil.

- **Finished compost:** a dark, crumbly topsoil that has a pleasant, earthy smell. You should not be able to see any of the original organic waste.⁷⁴
- **Compost tea:** mix finished compost with water and let sit for a couple of days to make a natural, organic fertilizer.⁷⁵

Backyard composters can help your household reduce the amount of food waste that you send to landfill. Different types of composters are better for different types of organic waste. Not all composters can handle meat, dairy, and pet waste. Putting meat, dairy, or pet waste in the wrong type of composter may increase the risk of pests and odours. If you would like to be able to compost any type of food and pet waste, you may wish to purchase a [Bardmatic™ Digester](#). Overall, composting is a safe and simple way to manage your organic waste.

⁷² "Composting at Home," City of London, Last modified May 13, 2019, <https://www.london.ca/residents/Garbage-Recycling/Yard-Materials/Pages/Composting-at-Home.aspx>

⁷³ "Composting at Home"

⁷⁴ "Composting at Home".

⁷⁵ "A Guide to Backyard Composting," Evergreen, <https://www.evergreen.ca/tools-publications/a-guide-to-backyard-composting/>.

London Context

There are currently no policies in London regulating backyard composting. The City does encourage backyard composting as a great way to reduce the amount of household food waste that ends up in the landfill. The MLHU recommends using methods that reduce pests and odours.

Spotlight on Backyard Composting

Becky Ellis is an avid backyard composter in London. For Becky, backyard composting is a great way to help her backyard gardens flourish and keep the household's organic waste out of the landfill. By using a combination of different types of composters, Becky is able to compost food waste including cooked and oily foods, pet waste, and yard materials. Three different composters that Becky uses are a Bardmatic™ Digester, Vermicomposter (Worm Composting), and a Three Bin Composter.



Image Sources: Jenna May Clune

Bardmatic™ Digester

- Available to purchase from the City
- Compost any food and pet waste
- You do not take the compost out since it goes directly into the ground

Vermicomposter (Worm Composting)

- Can build yourself
- Becky used a Rubbermaid bin
- Have to be more careful with what you put in
- Worms are not as resilient to the cold weather

Three Bin Composter

- Shift compost between the 3 compartments over time
- Can build yourself
- Becky used pallets
- Becky's favourite composting system - great to use in your garden!

How to Start Your Backyard Compost

1. Get informed

- Choose a composter that can best handle the organic waste you have. Not all composters can compost everything. Read up on some key tips for setting up and maintaining your compost.
 - If you want to compost meat, dairy, and pet waste you may want to consider a Bardmatic™ Digester.
 - Check out the City of London's [Composting at Home](#) and Evergreen's [A Guide to Backyard Composting](#).

2. Pick a location

- Choose a spot in your yard that is away from your door, that can be easily accessed year-round, that is sunny, and can get rain but is also well-drained.⁷⁶

3. Build or purchase your composter

- Check out FoodShare's detailed step-by-step guide for building your own [Three Bin Composter](#). Make sure to follow the directions for setting up the type of composter you have selected. The City of London [sells various composters](#) for \$35 at the City of London EnviroDepots located at:
 - 28 Clarke Rd.
 - 3502 Manning Dr.
 - 1450 Oxford St. W
 - 21462 Clarke Rd.

4. Layer

- Save your leaves and layer with food scraps. You can also layer your green and brown materials.⁷⁷

5. Mix and stir your compost

- If you are layering properly you may not need to mix and stir your pile.⁷⁸ However, it may be a good idea to mix and stir your compost occasionally to add air.

6. Check

- Strong unpleasant odours may mean your pile does not have enough air or that it is too wet. If that is the case, mix your pile to add air or add dry brown materials.⁷⁹ Make sure your compost pile has a lid and bury food with brown materials to help minimize the risk of pests.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ "A Guide to Backyard Composting".

⁷⁷ "City_CompostersSale: Backyard Composting," *City of London*, https://www.london.ca/residents/Garbage-Recycling/Yard-Materials/Documents/City%20of%20London_Composters%20for%20Sale%202019.pdf.

⁷⁸ "Composting at Home".

⁷⁹ "Composting at Home".

⁸⁰ "A Guide to Backyard Composting".

7. Put to Use

- Once your organic waste has turned into finished compost, use it in your garden!

Gaps & Barriers

- Living in a multi-unit residential building, such as owning a condo, or renting can be barriers to starting backyard composting due to space availability and building rules.
- Fear of pests and odours continues to be a barrier for more uptake of backyard composting in the City.

Growing Forward

1. Messaging around backyard composting could be tied to information on the importance of **Food Waste Reduction & Recovery**.
2. Continue developing posters on how-to compost and workshops offered by the City may help to give households the confidence they need to start their own backyard composter.

EDUCATION & CONNECTION

Food Hubs

What is a Food Hub?

According to the [London Urban Agriculture Strategy](#), Food Hubs can have unique meanings for different communities, and can take many forms whether physical or virtual.⁸¹ The overarching idea of a Food Hub is that it is a cooperative and collaborative entity where a community's food-related resources are found. They provide the opportunity to educate, provide resources, foster food security and emergency response capability, and local employment. Food Hubs engage with all sorts of groups in multifaceted activities to achieve the common goal of advancing urban agriculture. Ultimately, Food Hubs serve as an incubator for urban agriculture and help to make it accessible to all groups within a community.



Image Source: [Neighbourhood Food Hub](#)

Food Hubs in London

The City of London is home to many Food Hubs where community members can congregate to cook in community kitchens, share gardening tools from the Public Library's tool library, build their capacity for skills development in workshops, or distribute local produce at farmers' markets.⁸² A great place to start with many of these hubs is subscribing to their newsletters, where you will find information on upcoming community events and/or workshop details and explore what you are looking to get out of the Food Hub.

⁸¹ "Urban Agriculture Strategy", 30.

⁸² "Urban Agriculture Strategy", 30.

- The London Urban Agriculture Strategy identifies community kitchens as creating spaces where people can come together to learn about food preparation, healthy eating, processing, and preserving.⁸³ Please refer to the Processing chapter of this Guide for getting involved with community kitchens around London.
- The London Community Resource Centre (LCRC) formed the [Grow Cook Learn](#) program to provide people opportunities to grow, prepare, preserve, and enjoy local food and act as a social platform to bring members of the community together. Grow Cook Learn offers cooking with seasonal and local food workshops, [online resources](#), a Facebook community/online presence, and facilitates a number of projects and initiatives around the community.



Image Source: [Neighbourhood Food Hub](#)

The Neighbourhood Food Hub in Toronto is a community-focused space that connects the community to fresh, healthy food and provides access to learning and skills development. They support community kitchens and preparation space, access to local food services, food skills training and programs, and community events and gathering space. Some of their food programming includes intergenerational cooking classes, pickling, canning and preserving workshops, Good Food Market offering fresh produce, and gardening workshops.

⁸³ "Urban Agriculture Strategy", 30.

- [Harvest Bucks](#) is a food security initiative of the MLHU created to give individuals access to local fresh food and give vouchers to individuals to purchase local fresh fruits and vegetables. Furthermore, the program aims to increase knowledge and familiarity with farmers' markets, local grocers and producers, and increase the comprehensiveness of community-based food programming. In order for businesses and/or organizations to honor Harvest Bucks they must provide some sort of food education, training, or literacy program to the recipients of their produce.
- Community Gardens London has an [online communications hub](#) which aims to facilitate exchange of information and provide a broad list of resources and useful links to the community to increase the potential for urban agriculture.
- Farmers' markets are an excellent place to provide education about growing, cooking, and producing, and hold a space for cross cultural information sharing and community building through agriculture.
 - [Covent Garden Market](#) is open 7 days a week for the community to engage with local vendors and purchase fresh produce. It holds free weekly cooking classes every Saturday and offers a variety of workshops, including permaculture and food literacy. In addition to classes and workshops, the Covent Garden Market's calendar is a great *free* resource to connect people to the seasons of food. Their newsletter goes out Thursdays at 11:00 am sharing updates and events. Covent Garden Market also gives tours to different community groups that use Harvest Bucks for fresh, local fruits and vegetables.
- [Friends of Urban Agriculture London](#) (FUAL) is a group of individuals pushing forward the urban agriculture agenda and bringing Londoners together who are invested in practicing it. They coordinate a network of individuals and organizations, organize events to raise awareness, and facilitate the implementation of urban agriculture projects. FUAL provides an extensive list of urban garden [resources](#), an events calendar, and list of working groups for all things urban agriculture.



Image Source: [FUAL](#)

- [The London Food Coalition](#) collects and disseminates information on community food security and accepts excess food from grocery stores at their Food Hub, distributing to different agencies around the community.
- [Beautiful Edibles](#) is a social enterprise that designs, installs, and cares for urban gardens and provides mentoring opportunities through custom workshops and occasional talks about evidence and advocacy for fresh, organic, and sustainable food. Beautiful Edibles works with not for profits, social enterprises, and charities to foster resilience and food prosperity in London.
- [The Middlesex-London Food Policy Council's](#) mission is to be a forum for discussing local food issues, empower citizens to be involved in food system decisions, foster coordination between different sectors in the food system, create, evaluate and influence policy, and support programs and services that address local needs. They are involved in a number of actions within the community to contribute to a healthy, safe, equitable and ecologically responsible local food system. Among their resources are online tools and information, a [list of food banks and support services](#), platforms to discuss local food, and a council meeting calendar.

Gaps & Barriers

- Financial barriers with starting, staffing and maintaining Food Hubs.
- Lack of awareness on Food Hubs around London, there is no comprehensive document or point of contact for Food Hubs.

Spotlight on The Grove at Western Fair District

A more recent Food Hub development is The Grove at Western Fair District (The Grove). The future business strategy was announced by the Western Fair Association in October 2019. **“The Grove** is the District’s agri-business hub where participants share resources, space, and connections to create the right conditions for innovation, education, and growth.”⁸⁴ With connecting, leading, community, and education at their core, The Grove will bring together agri-food businesses, producers, educators, entrepreneurs, and other leaders to incubate and accelerate agriculture.



Image Source: [The Grove at Western Fair District](https://www.thegrovetfd.com)

Growing Forward

1. Brick and mortar Food Hubs should involve sustainable building design and technology to encompass sustainability.
2. Link Food Hubs with food banks, depots and/or emergency food cupboards to foster accessibility.
3. Emphasize collaboration between the City, developers, commercial building owners, government, and not for profits to create an environment where Food Hubs can thrive and promote a more sustainable city.
4. Explore possible locations for an independent tool library and start collecting tools and equipment for inventory.

⁸⁴ “The Grove,” The Grove, Western Fair District, 2019, <https://www.thegrovetfd.com>.

School Gardens

What is a School Garden?

School gardens serve as a valuable outlet to provide hands on, experiential learning opportunities to students of all ages. School gardens could be actual gardens or raised beds, greenhouses, or grow towers, which are soil-less towers that grow greens and herbs indoors. Concepts and attributes of school gardens can be linked to the Ontario curriculum in classes such as physical education, social studies, science, critical thinking, and community building.

The food produced in school gardens can be used in the school's nutrition, breakfast, and/or farm to table snack programs. With the benefits of school gardens, it is no wonder educators and administrators are taking an interest; they connect children to food and enhance their understanding of the food system, increase their food literacy, and, according to the Urban Agriculture Strategy, can increase parental and community involvement in the school and be used as an entry point for other environmental education.⁸⁵



Image Source: [Sustainable Food Edmonton](#)

In 2013, Sustainable Food Edmonton created the **Urban Ag High** program to provide experiential learning opportunities to high school students through urban agriculture. The program directly links urban agriculture projects to the Alberta Program of Studies and provides workshops, tools and resources to educators and administrators who want to incorporate urban agriculture into the classroom. Urban Ag High also provides two \$500 Seed Grants to schools in the greater Edmonton area to pursue urban agriculture projects.

What Grows in School Gardens?

School gardens typically grow herbs, vegetables like carrots, cherry tomatoes, radishes, and leafy greens. If fruits and vegetables are not harvested and instead drop to the ground, they can attract animals and pests. Since many school gardens are on a take-what-you-need basis, students, parents, and staff all have the opportunity to harvest produce. Schools are encouraged to grow whatever is reflective of their culture!

⁸⁵ "Urban Agriculture Strategy", 31.

School Garden Resources in London

- The MLHU offers [Healthy Eating Toolkits](#) for elementary and secondary schools.
- The [Ontario Student Nutrition Program](#) is working with community partners, including the London District Catholic and Thames Valley District School Boards, to offer community-based student nutrition, breakfast, snack, and lunch programming.
- Thames Valley District School Board sponsors the London Children’s Museum’s [Free Family Garden Workshops](#) where families can drop in and care for and harvest from school gardens. In July and August, families can participate in Dissect a Seed, All About Bugs, Critter Contribution, and Edible Garden workshops at participating schools. For more information and to register, email nicolel@londonchildrensmuseum.ca.

How to Start a School Garden

Please note that this does not serve as an exhaustive manual on how to start a school garden. If you are interested in starting a school garden, reach out to your affiliated school board to find out what the exact process and requirements are. You should also notify the [Middlesex-London Health Unit](#) to request a guide and training on best practices for food safety at school.

1. Background research

- For ideas and inspiration you are encouraged to visit existing school gardens and attend workshops, such as the [Free Family Garden Workshops](#) by London Children’s Museum.

2. Put together a school garden team

- Put together a school garden team including your school’s principal, students, interested parents, and staff.
- Identify the expected benefits of the garden; for example, access to nutritious food, increased physical activity, and increased understanding of food systems.
- Delegate roles for each member of the team; for example, scheduling days for each class to maintain the garden.

3. Complete an environmental scan of your school and broader community

- Gather information that could support the implementation of your project; for example, any community groups that can contribute knowledge or skills, or what gardening tools your school has or does not have.

4. Create a vision and identify concrete objectives

- Clearly identify what you plan to achieve through the school garden; for example, supplement your school's nutrition program and encourage healthy eating, or teach about food systems.
- Identify how your school’s curriculum will link to learning opportunities in the school garden. Your school board may have a curriculum link document.

5. Identify a garden site

- Things to consider when choosing a site for your school garden include access to water, soil quality, sunlight.

6. Take action and build your school garden

- Create a budget for your project and collect all required resources, including things like building tools and materials, watering cans, mulch, compost, and soil.
- You are encouraged to refer to the Backyard Gardening on page 24 for more information and resources.
- Once you have your materials, you are ready to get started on your school garden.

7. Enjoy fresh and nutritious food with your students and community!

Spotlight: Thames Valley District School Board

The Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) is supportive of schools, educators, and parents that are interested in implementing school gardens as part of School Ground Greening.

School Ground Greening projects include outdoor classrooms, reading circles, vegetable growing, and butterfly gardens. They provide a [School Ground Greening Process](#) document detailing the project phases and their requirements. Furthermore, the TVDSB created a curriculum document for grades kindergarten to grade six, linking school gardens to physical education, social studies, science, critical thinking, and community building. The document is shared with schools that are interested in starting a school garden. Within the TVDSB, if you are interested in starting a school garden, contact Erin Mutch, Environmental Education and Management Learning Coordinator: e.mutch@tvdsb.ca for all information.

Spotlight: Jean Paul II Catholic Secondary School

In 2015, Jean Paul II Catholic Secondary School opened an innovative outdoor learning space called The Urban Garden Project. The space features areas for food production and horticultural education, sustainable design, and water conservation. It was funded by a \$50,000 Healthy Eating Grant from the Ministry of Education. Students grow annuals, vegetables, and herbs in raised, wheelchair accessible beds. During the school year they are used for the breakfast program three days per week, providing healthy breakfast to approximately 250 students. In the summer months, the London Intercommunity Health Centre maintains the garden and uses the produce so it doesn't go to waste. The sustainable outdoor learning space also features a compost area, drip irrigation, permeable pavers, and a sensory garden which is irrigated through an underground rainwater collection system. The Urban Garden Project uses urban agriculture as an experiential learning opportunity, benefiting Jean Paul II students and teachers.



Image Source: [Investing in Children](#)

Gaps & Barriers

- Not having food systems as part of the Ontario curriculum.
- School gardens are not inspected by the Middlesex-London Health Unit nor do they inspect farm to table snack programs.
- Lack of maintenance during summer months.
- Potential lack of water access on school grounds, especially during the summer months.

Helpful Hint: Cherry tomatoes, squash, sweet potato, and beets seem to do fine over the summer months with low maintenance and just rainwater!

Growing Forward

1. Food grown in school gardens should be traceable. The Middlesex-London Health Unit must be able to track the food through all stages of growing, processing and final consumption.
2. School gardens must function within the parameters established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit.
3. Understand the connections between food systems and the Ontario curriculum and use the curriculum document created by the TVDSB.
4. Connect schools with urban agriculture organizations, the City, and other urban agriculture groups.
5. Have ongoing maintenance over summer months, with programs such as The Children's Museum [Family Garden Workshops](#), or parent volunteers and dedicated teachers.
6. If barriers to having a school garden cannot be overcome, then participate in and support programs that connect farmers and agriculture. Please see the next section *Community Education & Connection* for opportunities in London.
7. School boards or the city should create school garden how-to guides to guide schools through the planning and implementation processes.

Community Education & Training

What is Community Education & Training?

Community education and training is an integral component of urban agriculture. As the Strategy describes, it can take many forms, such as workshops, community festivals, or written and/or spoken materials provided to the community.⁸⁶ Increasing food literacy, education, training, and food skills can occur through workshops, online resources, and garden site visits, for example.

All facets of urban agriculture, from growing to the final consumer, can offer valuable lessons on how it relates to healthy eating, environmental sustainability, biodiversity, pollinator health, organic food production, composting, rainwater harvesting, and climate change. Effective community education and training can be one of the biggest drivers for enhancing and increasing urban agriculture in London, having a powerful impact on embedding urban agriculture into the City's culture and promoting sustainability over the long term.



Image Source: [ecosource](#)

EcoSource started in Mississauga and has expanded throughout the Region of Peel to provide sustainable urban agriculture education, tools, and resources to the community. At the core of their urban agriculture programming is a 15,000 square-foot teaching garden used to give hands-on workshops about gardening, ecosystems, native plants, and environmental stewardship to the community.

London Context

Fortunately, there are many opportunities in and around London for the community to receive and participate in community education and training, both in person and online. Whether you are an educator wanting to take your students on a fieldtrip, or an individual or community group looking to take a workshop or attend events, there will be something for you!

- The MLHU provides food literacy programs such as [Let's Get Cookin'](#) which teaches basic cooking skills to children and youth grades 5 and up.⁸⁷ They also offer a variety of other [food and healthy eating](#) and [food safety](#) programming and resources.

⁸⁶ "Urban Agriculture Strategy", 32.

⁸⁷ "Let's Get Cookin'," London-Middlesex Health Unit, December 16, 2019, <https://www.healthunit.com/lets-get-cookin>

- The London Training Centre offers a 3 week [Local Food Skills Program](#) where participants get classroom and experiential learning in a commercial kitchen. Participants can receive certification. Successful participants of the program can receive Safe Food Handling, Service Excellence, WHMIS 2015, Smart Serve, and Worker Health & Safety Awareness certifications.
- If you are looking to receive education and training on urban beekeeping, [LOLA Bees](#) (London Ontario Learning Apiary) is an urban beekeeping project that is currently planning workshops and experiential learning opportunities for the community and students through passive learning spaces, demonstration gardens, and murals.
- A number of gardening and urban agriculture working groups and clubs around London facilitate courses, expos, events, and guest speakers for community members to learn and build their skills capacity:
 - The [London-Middlesex Master Gardeners](#) provide opportunities to hear guest speakers, attend classes and conferences. [Seeds to Table](#), for example, is an 8-week gardening course for beginner or intermediate gardeners to teach you to grow inexpensive, healthy, and great-tasting vegetables for yourself and your family.⁸⁸
 - [Gardening in the City](#) is a series of speakers from the London-Middlesex Master Gardeners held at the London Central Library.
- If you are in search of training for small business purposes, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) has an [Urban Agriculture Business Information Bundle](#) about producing food in cities, among other online urban agriculture resources.
- [Growing Chefs!](#) increases food literacy through experiential learning connected to the Ontario curriculum. Classes and educators can go to learn how food systems and cooking connect to math, science, geography and/or social studies! They offer food literacy, education, and garden resources for the community, such as field trips, cooking classes and a local food systems summer camp. The field trips are available for grades 4-8 through the harvest season (May – June, and September – October) where students will engage with food and growing through the learning garden.
- Growing Chefs! and the Western Fair District partner to connect consumers to food systems and bring students to the [Agriplex](#) to learn about farming and food literacy. Together they host [Agri-Education Week](#) for Grades 6 to 8 classes to participate in interactive food workshops. The Agriplex also has a community teaching and involvement garden, beehives, and pollinator areas on site for visitors to see honeybee demonstrations.

⁸⁸ "Seeds to Table Course," London-Middlesex Master Gardeners, March, 2020, <http://londonmiddlesexmastergardeners.com/seeds-to-table-gardening-course-mar17-to-may5-2020/>



Image Source: [@growingchefsontario](#)

- The urban farm [Urban Roots](#) aims to build a healthy, empowered community that is engaged with the food system. They offer school programming that connects food skills with the Ontario curriculum; younger children are taught concepts such as why pollinators are important, and older children learn about sustainability and climate change, food systems, global versus local, and why urban agriculture is important. Urban Roots also donates education programming to various organizations such as Life Spin and Crouch Resource Centre. School programming is run on a reaching-out basis, so if you would like more information, or are interested in having your class or community group participate, contact education@urbanrootslondon.ca.
- [The Greenhouse Academy](#) is a 60,000 square foot facility which offers experiential learning opportunities to students grades 1-12. The greenhouse grows vegetables among other trees and flowers for the food bank, where students help maintain the greenhouse. Students get the opportunity to connect their classroom learning to a real-world setting and learn about healthy eating, environmental stewardship, entrepreneurship, and community building.

Gaps & Barriers

- Many educators are not aware that field trips to urban farms are an available learning opportunity.
- Lack of funding available to make the field trips accessible to any school or community group that wants to participate.
- The capacity to create lesson plans and staff the field trips if urban farms (e.g. Urban Roots) and/or community gardens are run by volunteers.



Image Source: [TVDSB](#)

Growing Forward

1. Since urban farm learning programs are largely weather dependent, moving forward there should be a contingency plan for unpredictable weather patterns. For example, having an indoor learning space if the weather is not suitable for field learning.
2. Funding available for urban agriculture related field trips.

Relevant Policies

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/05a11>

Accredited Soil Testing Laboratories in Ontario:

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/resource/soillabs.htm>

City of Toronto Green Roof By-law: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/green-roofs/green-roof-bylaw/>

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>

Food and Healthy Eating: <https://www.healthunit.com/food-and-healthy-eating>

Food Safety in Schools: <https://www.healthunit.com/food-safety-in-schools>

Food Premises Inspection and Mandatory Food Handler Certification By-law:

<https://www.london.ca/city-hall/by-laws/Documents/foodhandlerPH16.pdf>

Guideline for the Production of Compost in Ontario: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/guideline-production-compost-ontario#section-12>

Health Protection and Promotion Act: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h07>

Honeybee Registration Form:

http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/bees/info_registration.htm

London's 21 Norlan Avenue: Zoning By-law Amendment:

<http://www.london.ca/business/Planning-Development/land-use-applications/Pages/Z-9111.aspx>

London's 60% Waste Diversion Action Plan: <https://www.london.ca/residents/Garbage-Recycling/waste-management-planning/Documents/60WasteDiversionActionPlanMainBodyVersion2August2018.pdf>

London Community Gardens: <http://www.london.ca/residents/Parks/Community-Projects/Pages/London-Community-Gardens.aspx>

London's Food Charter: <https://www.london.ca/residents/children-youth/child-care/Documents/London's%20Food%20Charter.pdf>

London's Food Charter: <https://www.london.ca/residents/children-youth/child-care/Documents/London's%20Food%20Charter.pdf>

London's Lawns and Gardens Launch Page: <https://www.london.ca/residents/Property-Matters/Lawns-Gardens/Pages/default.aspx>

London's Native Edible Tree Guide: <https://www.london.ca/residents/Environment/Trees-Forests/Pages/EdibleTree.aspx>

London's Native Edible Tree Guide: <https://www.london.ca/residents/Environment/Trees-Forests/Pages/EdibleTree.aspx>

London's Parks and Recreation Area By-Law:

<https://www.london.ca/city-hall/by-laws/Documents/parks-recreation.pdf>

London's Property Standards By-law: <https://www.london.ca/city-hall/by-laws/Documents/propertystandards.pdf>

London's Resource Recovery Strategy: <https://getinvolved.london.ca/whywasteresource>

London's TreeMe Fund: <https://www.london.ca/city-hall/funding-grants/community-funding/Pages/treeME.aspx>

London's Tree Planting Strategy: <https://www.london.ca/residents/Environment/Trees-Forests/Documents/2017%20Tree%20Planting%20Strategy%20final.pdf>

London's Urban Forest Strategy: <https://www.london.ca/residents/Environment/Trees-Forests/Documents/London%20Urban%20Forestry%20Strategy%20Final.pdf>

London's Yard & Lot Maintenance By-law: <https://www.london.ca/city-hall/by-laws/Documents/yardPW9.pdf>

London's Zoning By-law No. Z.-1: <https://www.london.ca/business/Planning-Development/zoning-by-law/Pages/Z1-Zoning.aspx>

London's Zoning By-law No. Z.-1 'Farm Gate Sales' Amendment: <https://pub-london.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=68786>

London's Zoning By-law Z.-1 Section 4.11 Amendment:
<https://www.london.ca/business/Planning-Development/land-use-applications/Pages/Z-9166.aspx>

National Center for Home Food Preservation: https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_home.html

OMAFRA's Direct Farm Marketing in Ontario - A Primer:
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/busdev/facts/16-025.htm>

OMAFRA's Grade, Container and Label Requirements for Honey in Ontario:
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/honey/containerlabelhoney.htm>

OMAFRA's Overview of Beekeeping Regulations in Ontario:
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/inspection/bees/beekeepingregulations.htm#figure1>

OMAFRA's Regulations for the Food Industry:
http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/food/fid_regulations.htm

OMAFRA's Urban Agriculture Business Information Bundle:
<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock/urbanagbib/welcome.htm>

Ontario Bees Act: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90b06>

Ontario Compost Quality Standards: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-compost-quality-standards#section-2>

Ontario's Food and Organic Waste Policy Statement: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/food-and-organic-waste-policy-statement>

Ontario's Food Safety and Quality Act: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/01f20>

Ontario Public Health Standards: Protocols and Guidelines:
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/protocolsguidelines.aspx

Ontario Regulation 119/11: PRODUCE, HONEY AND MAPLE PRODUCTS:
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110119>

Ontario Regulation 493/17: FOOD PREMISES:
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/R17493>

Ontario Student Nutrition Program:

<https://www.southwesthealthline.ca/displayservice.aspx?id=142613>

Ontario Weed Control Act: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90w05>

Operational Approaches for Food Safety Guideline (2019):

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/docs/protocols_guidelines/Operational Approaches For Food Safety Guideline 2019 en.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/docs/protocols_guidelines/Operational_Approaches_For_Food_Safety_Guideline_2019_en.pdf)

Safe Food Storage: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/general-food-safety-tips/safe-food-storage.html#a6>

The London Plan: <https://www.london.ca/business/Planning-Development/Official-Plan/Pages/The-London-Plan.aspx>

Toronto Public Health’s Guide for Soil Testing in Urban Gardens:

<https://www.torontomastergardeners.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Guide-for-Soil-Testing-in-Urban-Gardens.pdf>

Vacant Land Inventory: <https://www.london.ca/business/Resources/Guideline-Documents/Pages/Vacant-Land-Inventory.aspx>

Waste-Free Ontario Act: <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/S16012>

Zoning By-Law: <https://www.london.ca/business/Planning-Development/zoning-by-law/Pages/Z1-Zoning.aspx>

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