

Dan Small

WPT Garden & Landscaping Expo, Feb. 2019

dansmalloutdoorsradio@gmail.com

414-588-4082

RELOCALIZING FOOD PRODUCTION: PROJECTS FOR INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Let's look at some things we can do that increase our resilience regarding food. You'll find details about many of these in sources listed in the Resources handout. Some of these are things individuals or families can do, others are projects for groups and some require widespread community action. **(Any one of these, by the way, could be a topic for a talk all by itself.)**

1. Start or support a CSA – community-supported agriculture. There are a number of small CSAs throughout Wisconsin, including some in this area.
2. Promote the creation and use of more community gardens. (There's a very active community garden in Madison.)
3. Add to community and home gardens more plants that feed pollinators.
4. Make and distribute little homes for nonstinging mason bees, much-needed, excellent native pollinators. This can be done in group workshops, which will also promote community.
5. Create a resource to pair new gardeners with experienced ones who enjoy sharing their knowledge and skills. (Model: UW's Master Gardener Program www.wimastergardener.org)
6. Promote land sharing, such as neighbors with adjacent backyards gardening together, sharing produce
7. Do a Web search for "urban homesteading" for books and articles with great DIY info. for urbanites.
8. Use the lasagna gardening technique to start organic, earth friendly, no-till, no-dig garden beds anywhere, even on concrete. Briefly, if starting in your yard, just cover the grass with cardboard or layers of newspaper first. Pile on layers of green (live plant matter) and brown (dried plant matter), manure, etc. let it compost over the winter and plant in the spring.
9. Create seed swapping events.
10. Create tool-sharing libraries for a variety of tools and small machines.
11. Take up container gardening if you have mobility issues or no available open ground.

12. Consider roof gardening. Make sure the roof can hold the load. Plant in containers, rather than covering the roof with soil, which can weigh 100 lbs. per sq. ft. Check with your landlord and on building codes first.
13. Grow vining crops on trellises or fences to save space: tomatoes, pole beans, peas, cucumbers, squash.... You can use containers to do this in paved areas.
14. Create a rain garden of deep-rooted native plants in a depression that will store moisture from rain.
15. Look into the results of municipalities that are utilizing “green infrastructure” - green rooftops, roadside plantings, carefully landscaped parks, rain gardens, rain barrels, etc. - to reduce polluted runoff and create water catchment for plants and trees. Seattle has an incentive to install rain barrels on private property. Portland, Oregon plans to build 2,200 green infrastructure installations around the city and has a runoff retention standard that applies to building projects with even small amounts of impervious surfaces. Philadelphia’s plan will catch an inch of rain in a storm.
16. Make driveways, sidewalks, patios, etc. of materials such as bricks, flagstones, stone, bark chips or porous asphalt and concrete that encourage infiltration of rain. Design curving walkways and leave porous spaces between steppers.
17. Grow some medicinal herbs and learn to use them.
18. Learn how to forage wild plants, including healthful “weeds” in your yard and around town
19. Activist types may consider doing some “guerilla gardening.” Paraphrasing Wikipedia: Guerilla gardeners raise plants on land that is abandoned or perceived to be neglected by its legal owner. Some guerrilla gardeners sow and tend a vegetable patch secretly, at night, but some garden openly, which can be seen as a form of activism.
20. Create a food coop focused on 100-mile radius foods. (good models: Outpost in Mequon & Milwaukee, Willy Street Coop in Madison, Viroqua Food Coop, People’s Food Coop in La Crosse)
21. Turn garbage destined for a landfill into luscious, rich compost instead, on both household and municipal level
22. Create a networking resource to connect homeowners with space to grow a garden with folks who need a place to garden, for win/win sharing and community building.
23. Plant food-bearing trees and shrubs around the city, with assigned caretakers.
24. Include gardening in local school curricula. (model: Marcy Elementary in Menomonee Falls – feature on Outdoor Wisconsin Show 3103)
25. Establish food gardens at or near schools that students learn to tend, producing food they eat at school when school is in session and take home when it’s not. (Model: Marcy Elementary – see above)
26. Break some planting holes in over-paved areas around the city and plant food-bearing trees and shrubs in them. Obviously, not a suggested project for individuals, but a great one for cities to take on.

27. Build a root cellar in your below-ground-level basement. Store food you grow or purchase from local growers.

28. Learn how to store various foods in cool spots around your house.

29. Learn to dehydrate and lacto-ferment foods for storage.

30. Learn how to save vegetable seeds from year to year, so you have a free, reliable supply.

31. Learn to breed vegetables that will be naturally best suited to your location, for best production.

32. Work to change any local regulations that limit sensible home production of food, so residents can...

- Keep urban hens in chicken tractors
- Raise backyard meat rabbits
- Raise backyard bees
- Operate individual or neighborhood produce stands
- Grow home gardens both in front and back yards. With attractive edible landscaping in front, of course.

33. To reduce environmental damage, slow climate change and increase food security, create a local food web vs. long-distance, one-way chains. Russian home gardens produce 40% of Russia's food. Americans could do this, too, but for full food security, the help of local farmers growing food for local people will be needed to feed communities. (model: WW II Victory Gardens)

34. Increase your skill set and discover more ways to increase your resilience in today's world by reading some of the articles and books in the Resources handout, which also includes a couple of great courses with a central focus on community action.

With a little education, a lot of determination, and some help from your friends and fellow community members, I'm confident you can start moving toward relocalizing your food production and bringing that 2,000-mile Caesar salad back home. With spring just around the corner, now is a great time to get started!