

Urban Ag Guide 2019

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Urban gardening and farming are a growing trend in urban centers across the country. Every year sustainable and locally produced food is increasingly sought-after, and community gardening has grown along with it. In fact, previous [studies](#) have shown that gardening increases individual's life satisfaction, vigor, psychological well-being, positive effects, sense of community, and cognitive function. Further, greening a parcel through urban agricultural

practices can improve the environment, build amenities, revitalize neighborhoods, and have direct benefits to residents' food access and nutrition.

Time-tested, there is no better way to get more locally produced food than growing it yourself. The City of St. Louis has been slower to embrace urban agriculture efforts, but interest from residents is growing throughout the city. Our city's rate of vacancy and blight as well as the inequitable access to healthy food options are contributing to this rise in interest by galvanizing all sectors, from city government to community residents, to adopt more innovative greenspace projects including urban farming initiatives.

The city has made some strides when it comes to supporting urban agriculture as detailed in the [City of St. Louis Sustainability Plan](#) from January 2013, the [City Climate Adaptation and Action Plan](#) from 2017, Mayor Krewson's July 2018: [A Plan to Reduce Vacant Lots and Buildings in the City of St. Louis](#), and [City Ordinance 70608](#), which allows residents to keep chickens. However, there is still more work to be done to ensure that urban agriculture is accessible for all residents, particularly those most impacted by low food access and blight.

The information in this guide is intended to assist anyone looking to start an urban agriculture project in St. Louis. Because of the wealth of general urban agriculture resources available, we have chosen to focus on considerations and circumstances specific to St. Louis. More general resources are included in the [Funding and Resources](#) section at the end of this guide. We hope that this guide will not only prove useful to you, but also further support community-driven food production and innovation in St. Louis.

Introduction

What type of growing project should you start?

The first decision you will have to make is what type of garden or farm you want to start. The simplest distinction between gardens and farms is that gardens typically produce food that is used by the gardeners for personal use, while farms produce food at a larger scale for other people's benefit and consumption.

Home Gardens

The oldest form of urban agriculture, backyard gardens, have historically been an important source of supplemental and even primary nutrition in St. Louis City neighborhoods. Home gardens not only increase access to fresh foods in neighborhoods where fresh food outlets are

few and far between, but they can also be a great springboard for larger, commercial projects. If you are considering starting an urban farm, we first recommend transforming your backyard over to food production to gain experience with the complexities of growing food in an urban environment.

The [St. Louis Department of Public Safety](#) defines a home garden as a garden less than one acre in size that is maintained by one or more individuals who reside in a dwelling unit on the subject property who grow and harvest food or horticultural products for either personal consumption or for sale or donation.

Community Gardens

Community gardens have sprouted throughout the St. Louis region and have often proven to be very successful. In community gardens, the food is grown communally in one large garden and distributed amongst the gardeners, or each gardener is assigned an individual bed and keeps the food they grow. The structure and management of community gardens can vary widely. Most commonly, a community garden will have one or two garden leaders who manage membership, fees and other administrative details. Garden maintenance is typically collaborative, with gardeners maintaining their own beds individually, and the common areas being a shared responsibility. The laws, regulations, and permits surrounding community gardens are significantly looser than those pertaining to farms.

The [St. Louis Department of Public Safety](#) defines a community garden: an area of land less than one acre in size that is managed and maintained by a group of individuals to grow and harvest food and/or horticultural products for personal or group consumption or for sale or donation. A community garden may be divided into separate garden plots for cultivation by one or more individuals or may be farmed collectively by members of the group. It may also include common areas maintained and used by the group such as tool storage sheds.

Urban Farms

Urban farms are cultivated with the intent of growing food for sale or for community benefit. They include what used to be called [market gardens](#), as well as larger agricultural projects in urban areas. They are usually larger than community gardens, and because they are intended for commercial production, are subject to further regulations. A more comprehensive breakdown of these regulations will be provided below, and they include business licensing, conditional use permitting, and food safety regulations. An urban farm may or may not be the farmer's primary source of income (currently in St. Louis, they typically are not). (For more information on the

different types of urban agriculture, and a definition of market gardens, see pages 4 and 22 of the study [“Seeding the City.”](#))

The [St. Louis Department of Public Safety](#) defines an urban farm as: an area, land or structure, of one or more acre that is managed and maintained by an individual, group, or organization where homegrown products are produced to be sold or donated. An urban farm includes but is not limited to outdoor growing operations, indoor growing operations, vertical farms, aquaponics, aquaculture, hydroponics, and rooftop farms.

Community Engagement

Maintaining a strong relationship with your community is essential for any type of urban agriculture operation, whether a community garden or urban farm. Consistent and strong community relationships will help you build strong partnerships and trust, find resources, contribute to the longevity of your site, and ensure that your actions are truly benefiting those around you.

For community gardens, outreach is necessary since you will need to gather enough people to fill the garden and sustain its maintenance. This can be one of the most challenging aspects of starting a community garden. Community gardens require a lot of work, even once they are established. The more local residents you can get involved and committed, the more likely it is that your garden will be successful. For more information on community garden outreach and guidelines for starting a garden, refer to MU Extension’s [Community Gardening Toolkit](#).

Community outreach is equally essential for urban farms, although unfortunately more often overlooked. Trust and buy-in through community engagement and input enables a farm to not only have a better chance of long-term survival, but that it is also aligned with the actual needs and wants of the community.

Community outreach should always be conducted **prior to and during** your project. Good community outreach involves building relationships with members of the local neighborhood association, local community centers (such as a church or school), residents and city officials at local ward meetings, or hosting community events yourself. No matter what form your outreach takes, it is key to make sure that it is meaningful, equitable, and is focused around the local community. For more information and guidance on meaningful community engagement, refer to [Cornell University’s Small Farms Guide](#).

Understanding the desires, needs, and historical context of the surrounding community that you are working with is also crucial, particularly in the City of St. Louis, which has a long history of racial inequality and segregation. **To truly serve a community, you must understand the systems that shape it, as well as your own place in those systems.** For more

information on racial inequity in St. Louis, we recommend the report, [Segregation in St. Louis: Dismantling the Divide](#).

Why is equity so important in urban agriculture?

Urban agriculture can be a tool for community building, economic empowerment, and food security, but it can only truly affect change when it acknowledges the multitude of factors that contribute to the community's needs in the first place. This approach is part of what's known as **food justice**: the idea that everyone deserves access to healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate food. By working for equity, urban agriculturalists can ensure that their positive impact goes beyond the fruits and vegetables they grow and that they are not contributing to unintended negative consequences like gentrification in their community. Also, since food equity is also a racial equity issue, it is essential to understand the [intersectionality](#) of income, race, and food security. To learn more about food justice, refer to this [article](#).

Gentrification

One of the unintended consequences that can result from urban agriculture is **gentrification**. [Research by the Brookings Institute](#) defines gentrification as “the process by which higher income households displace significant numbers of lower income residents of a neighborhood, thus changing the essential character and flavor” or the social fabric of the neighborhood.

Some of the outcomes of urban agriculture can be beautification and increased property values, two factors that can attract developers and inflate the cost of rent. It is important to keep these possibilities in mind when planning your urban agriculture project.

For more information about gentrification and urban agriculture, refer to the following resources:

- [Gentrification Explainer Video](#), Urban Displacement Project - a UCLA and UC Berkeley collaboration
- [Ensuring Equitable Growth](#), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- [Evolution or gentrification: Do urban farms lead to higher rents?](#), Grist
- [Urban Farms Wrestle with Gentrification and Displacement](#), Civil Eats
- [Green spaces may breathe new life into north St. Louis but residents need to be on board](#), St. Louis Public Radio

Selecting & Accessing Land

Site Selection

There are many important questions you should ask when considering a site for urban agriculture. Some of the most important questions should include:

- **Do you live in the community that surrounds the site?** Ideally, the person looking to start a garden or farm should live and/or work in the community they want to grow.
- **Do you have support from neighbors both on the block and in the neighborhood as a whole?** Even if you live or work in the community, it is essential to get support from nearby residents and those from the greater neighborhood.
- **Who is benefitting from this operation?** Whenever possible, the operation should also hire people from the community, not outsiders.
- **Is the food you grow being sold or donated within your community?**

For more information about the importance of these questions, please refer to the previous section on community engagement

Additional Considerations:

- **Does the site get enough sunlight to support the plants you want to grow?**
- **How big is the site?** If you want to start a community garden, can it accommodate all the people interested in participating? Remember that it is important to ensure community support and input to secure long term success of your site! If you want to start an urban farm, can it produce enough to support your long-term goals?
- **Do you have enough workers or community volunteers to keep your garden or farm running smoothly and productively?**
- **Is the site visible from the street?** Visible sites are usually safer and may attract more neighborhood support.
- **Is there adequate parking space near the site for gardeners and farm workers or event customers if you sell on-site?**
- **Who currently owns the site?** How difficult will it be to gain ownership/access to the land? Could you perhaps partner with a current landowner to grow on the land?
- **What is the site's land use history?** Depending on its prior usage, there may be soil contamination that must be addressed before being safe enough to grow food (more on this in the next section).

Accessing Land

Once you have identified a site, you must secure the legal right to use it. For community gardeners, the simplest approach is to find private property and obtain the permission of the landowner. Another approach available to community gardeners is to apply for the [Land Reutilization Authority \(LRA\) Garden Lease Program](#), which allows you to lease a vacant parcel for up to five years for a total amount of five dollars at the rate of one dollar per year. Currently, however, there are no guarantees in place for the lessee to be able to remain on the land after the

five year lease nor is the lessee protected from the parcel being sold for development for the duration of the lease, receiving only a 60-day notice. If your community garden becomes well-established with committed support that can show it will remain a strong project for years to come, you may be eligible to apply to [Gateway Greening's Land Trust](#) to ensure that the garden is protected from future development. The Gateway Greening Land Trust, Inc. conserves citizen-created agriculture projects to remain community managed, and protected for future generations in St. Louis, Missouri.

[Accessing land for urban farms](#) can be trickier, as they often require more land than a community garden. While you can go the route of leasing or obtaining permission to use a site, it is beneficial to have long-term access to the land so that you can invest in the infrastructure necessary for a larger growing operation. If you are interested in converting vacant land, you can search the LRA's inventory [here](#). Also, LRA land can also be available through auction during back-tax sales during [St. Louis City Land Tax Sales](#) which are held five times a year and the land is sold without any liens attached. However, these sales can be highly technical and complicated so they stress consulting an attorney before bidding on any parcel of property. Also, consider that there are some title companies that will not ensure a title that was owned by a Sheriff's claim. Learn more about [Tax Sales here](#).

If you are interested in purchasing LRA-owned land to start your garden or farm, getting support from your **local Alderperson** is critical. Aldermen can be very helpful and knowledgeable when dealing with local politics, whether that is at the neighborhood- or city-level. Also, the LRA is known to prioritize projects with strong aldermanic support.

It is generally understood that LRA seeks to sell the properties in their inventory for purposes that generate the highest possible tax revenue, and for what they deem the most productive use. These uses are typically the development of homes and businesses, and LRA strives to sell their most desirable parcels for these types of development. Therefore, it may be best to look for parcels in the LRA inventory that are not well suited for homes or businesses, such as non-corner lots unusually-shaped lots with slopes, those that have been in LRA inventory for more than ten years, and have less than 39 feet frontage.

You should also keep in mind that for an urban farm, you may have to obtain a conditional use permit from the City's Board of Public Service (or from the relevant municipal authority if your site is not in the City of St. Louis). Conditional use permits are required if the site on which you will establish your farm is a residentially-zoned plot. Other types of zoning districts may or may not require a conditional use permit for urban farms; to learn the [zoning district](#) of your site and verify the permit requirement, you may [contact the Administrative Assistant of the City's Zoning Section](#).

Lastly, land protection can be an important consideration for invested growing operations. By removing the rights to develop on farmland through a [conservation easement](#) or restriction land

can be preserved for agriculture use.¹ Although conservation easements are less likely to be used in urban areas where the parcels tend to be small, they have been used successfully.

Insurance

Note that LRA now requires [general liability insurance](#) for agriculture projects on LRA-owned and leased property that is not adjacent to the gardener's or farmer's residence. For community gardens, liability insurance can be very expensive if it is sought individually. Therefore, the best approach may be to request a larger organization that already has liability coverage to sponsor the garden. For instance, Gateway Greening offers a [low-cost pooled liability insurance program](#) to community gardens, including gardens that are **not** in the [Gateway Greening network](#). Other options might include local community land trusts like the aforementioned [Gateway Greening Land Trust](#), neighborhood associations, churches, or other institutions rooted in the community that already have liability insurance and would be supportive of your project.

Urban farms will require general liability insurance and perhaps product liability insurance as well. If your farm is a nonprofit venture, you may obtain an insurance policy through companies that work exclusively with nonprofit organizations, such as First Nonprofit Insurance Company. If the farm is on the same parcel as your place of residence, it may be covered by homeowners' insurance (but you should verify this with your insurance provider). Additionally, [membership in the Missouri Farmers' Union](#) entails a \$1,000 liability insurance policy. Generally, urban farms may check with companies offering agricultural insurance policies.

Soil

If you are planning to grow food directly in the soil present on your site, it is extremely important that you first research the history of the land's use to assess if there could be any trace of possible toxic contaminants. Because these substances can be highly toxic to humans, young or old, it is important to ensure that crops grown on urban sites do not absorb them.

Unfortunately for residents and urban growers alike, the consequences of past and current industry in the St. Louis region can be found in much of the city's soil today.

Industry has been an important part of St. Louis' history since the 1800s. After the civil war, shipping and manufacturing expanded dramatically, due in part to the city's central location in the country and access to rail and water transportation. Sites that were previously home to factories, gas stations, smelters, and houses built before 1978 have a high chance of being contaminated by lead, petroleum, or other heavy metals. Unfortunately, up to 89% of homes in the City of St. Louis were built before 1980 and are therefore at risk for soil contamination unless they have been tested or remediated and known to be [safe](#). Additionally, Missouri has the

¹<https://illinoisfarmlink.org/web/sites/default/files/2019-04/Farmland-Access-in-Urban-Settings-LFG.pdf>

largest active primary lead smelter in the United States (Herculaneum) and the largest secondary lead smelter in the [world](#).

See the infographics below to learn more about the most common contaminants found in the region and what you can do to avoid contamination in your food:

[\[Common contaminants and what you can do infographic\]](#)

Adding compost dilutes the concentration of toxic substances and binds to metals, making them less bioavailable. To learn more, check out [EPA's Remediation guide](#) and this [article](#) explaining the process.

A new treatment for heavy metal contamination is biochar. Biochar is the by-product of incomplete burning of biomass and has promising soil benefits. To learn more about biochar, [click here](#).²

If you are determined to grow food in existing soil on previously [vacant land](#) and on a large scale (as opposed to a small residential garden), you will want to seriously consider testing your soil and if needed, remediating it. Due to the increasing awareness of soil toxicity as a barrier for redevelopment and land use as well as a detriment to our environment and public health, most especially in urban neighborhoods, the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) developed a [Brownfields & Land Revitalization Program](#) in 1995. A brownfield is defined as “a property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant” and it's estimated more than 450,000 exist in the U.S.³ Brownfields often exist in disinvested neighborhoods and areas with blight, deteriorated infrastructure, or other challenges. For more information about brownfield redevelopment, see the [EPA's Anatomy of Brownfield Redevelopment Guide](#).

Unfortunately, to this date, definitive advisory standards and practices for agricultural redevelopment do not exist in many parts of the country. Neither the [EPA](#) nor [USDA](#) have standards that regulate the quality of soil as a growing medium. Additionally, the processes for testing and remediating brownfields can be time consuming, costly, and funding opportunities are highly competitive.

Further, for additional information on urban agriculture and soil toxicity, as well as an overview of the process of soil remediation and best management practices, refer to the EPA's guide: [Brownfields and Urban Agriculture: Interim Guidelines for Safe Gardening Practices](#).

Remediation

² <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4562/87932134556abd9c3e9b7206f37098d6fde3.pdf>

³ <https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/overview-epas-brownfields-program>

Step 1- Soil Testing: If you think that the soil on your site could be contaminated, the first step is to get it tested. There are a few ways to do this in St. Louis:

1. **MU Extension Soil Testing**- *Open to anyone*
MU Extension offers some soil testing, such as heavy metals, for a fee (up to \$75 per sample). This is not as comprehensive as an environmental site assessment but may be a good place to start if you suspect the presence of a specific contaminant.
2. **The Agency on Toxic Substances and Disease Registry** offers outreach events called **soilSHOPS** which promotes health education to help people learn if their soil is contaminated with lead by providing **free** immediate soil testing, and how to reduce exposures to contaminated soil and produce. Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
3. **Site-Specific Assessment Program**- *Open to individuals and nonprofits*
This program is funded by the EPA and provides an environmental site assessment at no cost to the applicant. This assessment includes two phases: Phase 1 consists of background research and Phase 2 consists of additional testing if problems are raised during Phase 1. Note, **it does not include any funds for remediation.** You do not need to own the property, but you do need to have plans to own it and be able to provide legal permission for DNR to enter onto the site.

Step 2- Soil Remediation: If contaminants are found in your soil, the next step is remediation.

1. DNR's **Brownfields Voluntary Cleanup Program** (BVCP)- If the Phase 2 assessment from the DNR Site-Specific Assessment Program shows that there is contamination on the site, the next step is remediation. This program provides oversight of the remediation process and issues a certification when it is complete, **but does not cover any costs.** There are a few options for funding.

Remediation Funding Resources:

- a. **Brownfields Remediation Program (MO Department of Economic Development)**- *Open to individuals and for-profits*, as long as they will create jobs. This program is designed to incentivize cleanup of contaminated sites with development in mind. 100% of costs are covered, but reimbursement comes in the form of tax credits, not a grant. The land must be occupied by a business after it is cleaned up, and the business must either create 10 jobs or retain 25. It is important to note that you must submit a cost-benefit analysis of your plan, and the program will only fund it if there is a net economic gain (job creation is a major factor in this).
- b. **EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant**- *Open to nonprofits and governments*
This grant provides up to \$500,000 over three (3) years in order to cover the costs of site remediation. 20% of the costs must be shared by the applicant, but it can be in the form of money, labor, materials, or services. The organization may

also request a waiver if they are experiencing economic hardship. Note: the applicant **must own** the property.

For more resources on in-home lead testing and remediation for St. Louis residents, refer to page 179 (SP-65 Lead based paint Hazards) in the **City of St. Louis 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan & Annual Action Plan.**

Water

Water access is a crucial aspect of urban agriculture and may take a bit of searching. Your approach for finding water will also likely be different for a community garden versus an urban farm.

Community Gardens

If the site you have chosen to install a community garden does not already have a water supply, check with neighbors or nearby organizations. Churches, community centers, or local businesses often allow community gardens to tap in and use their water. If you have started a community garden you can apply to Gateway Greening's [water access program](#). This program is open to all community gardens throughout the city, including gardens not in the Gateway Greening network. Once enrolled in the program the city will waive the water bill to your community garden.

The city also allows community gardens to use fire hydrants if the proper permits are filed. To apply for the permits, you will need to write a letter as directed by the City of St. Louis Water Division on their [hydrant use permits page](#). Your local Alderperson can help you file for these permits and have the deposit and fees waived, so there is no upfront cost to borrowing a hydrant key and adaptor for the season. Once you have completed the proper permits, the St. Louis Water Division will issue the necessary equipment and you will be able to access water from a fire hydrant near your garden. Contact the [City of St. Louis Water Division](#) for more information.

If you are willing to invest more in the infrastructure of your garden, you can install a **waterline** from the main to your garden. This requires a permit from the City of St. Louis Water Division, and the hiring of a contractor to dig the line and install the tap. This is a considerably more expensive option, but it can ensure that your site has reliable water access for the future. If you do not own your site, however, this may not be a worthwhile investment. [For more information on tap installations, refer to the City of St. Louis Water Division.](#)

Urban Farms

While obtaining a permit to use a fire hydrant is an option, it will probably not adequately serve the watering needs of an urban farm. A farm project will most likely need to install a waterline and meter, and will be required to pay the metered rate. You will need a contractor in order to tap into a water main.

The rules and regulations regarding water tap installations are different for large and small tap installations. This refers to the size of the water main that exists on the property. You may contact the City of St. Louis [Water Division](#) to find out the size of the main at your property and for more information. Click on the links below to see the rules applicable to the different sized mains:

- [Large](#) (over 6 inches at the main),
- [Small](#) (water tap installations, being smaller than 6 inches).

Additionally, an urban farm may need an irrigation system. More information on this can be found in the [Infrastructure](#) section of this guide.

Project Clear

Because water access can be expensive, it is a good strategy to use rainwater collection systems, such as [rain barrels](#). Rain barrels provide free water for your garden and decrease the amount of stormwater runoff that enters the sewer system. The [Metropolitan Sewer District \(MSD\)](#) has a program called [Project Clear](#) that provides grant reimbursements for rainscaping and green infrastructure projects (landscaping that captures rainwater runoff). Traditional vegetable gardens are not eligible for grant money, but infrastructure such as rain barrels and cisterns are. Many edible [native plants](#) are also eligible for funding, such as the pawpaw tree. [Custom Foodscaping](#), one of the [approved contractors](#) for the program, specializes in creating edible landscaping.

Even if a project does not include food-producing plants, rainscaping infrastructure could be integrated within a farming ecosystem and provide significant benefits by attracting pollinators and improving soil and water quality, for example.

Infrastructure

Depending on the purpose of your agriculture project and your production goals, you may need to invest in different types of infrastructure. Some examples include:

- [Raised beds](#) are important if you are concerned about possible soil contamination. They can also help make your garden more accessible for those with disabilities. For more

information on how to make your garden accessible, refer to [The Definitive Guide to Making Your Garden Accessible](#).

- Fencing- A building permit is required for installing a fence regardless of zoning district. In zones A-E (residential zones) fences may be up to 4' high in the front of the lot, and up to 6' high in the back. In zones F-L (non-residential and commercial zones), fences may be 6' high around the entire lot.
- [Hoop houses](#) (aka [High Tunnels](#)) and other structures for growing season extension
- Irrigation- for large-scale operations, you will need an irrigation system in order to keep your crops healthy. [Drip irrigation systems](#) are often used for urban agriculture and do an excellent job of conserving water. For more information, refer to [Colorado State University's fact sheet](#).
- Hand-washing and wash station- It is typically best practice to have a designated hand washing area on any growing operation site. As for a wash station, although it is not a food safety precaution to have one, they can come in handy when needing to wash off root vegetables, for example.
- [Compost](#) bins provide a natural source of nutrients for your plants and are a safe and low-cost way of recycling organic waste such as food scraps and grass clippings. Gateway Greening provides [information on composting](#). It is important that you maintain your compost bin so that it does not smell or attract pests, and it is a good idea to keep it away from your neighbor's property to avoid a smelly nuisance.
- Toolshed - A toolshed is useful for storing all of your needed equipment on site. It is important to securely lock your shed and keep items such as seeds and feed off the ground and out of reach of rodents.
- Storage and processing space (for commercial urban farms)

As mentioned above, a commercial urban farm may require a conditional use permit depending on its zoning district. Additionally, zoning also affects the rules and regulations surrounding infrastructure projects. Any building, like a shed or storage area, that will be built on the land is considered an "accessory building." The restrictions on accessory buildings are based on the size of the building and the zoning district. For clarification, you may refer to MCE's [Guide to Greenhouses in St. Louis](#) or contact [the City of St. Louis Building Division](#). You may also look through the [City's zoning code](#).

It is worth contacting the City of St. Louis Building Division if you plan on building an accessory building of any sort. If the building is over 120 square feet, it will require a building permit. All the information regarding what projects need permits, fees, and other building regulations [can be found on the Building Division's website](#).

Animals

Chickens are some of the most common farm animals in urban areas. They can be raised for their fertile manure or eggs. In the City of St. Louis, you may own up to eight (8) total fowl on a residentially zoned parcel, and **none** of which may be a rooster. In 2017, the St. Louis Board of Alderman passed Board Bill 52 (see [City Ordinance 70608](#)), which amends, repeals, and enacts several ordinances pertaining to the keeping of fowl in the City of St. Louis to better enable residents to keep fowl and clarifies related regulations and requirements. For more information about keeping chickens, please visit the [Keeping Chickens in St. Louis FAQ](#).

Beekeeping also holds many benefits for the urban gardener. Bees not only make honey, but they also produce wax and accumulate pollen, which can be used in a wide range of products from candles to cosmetics. In St. Louis City, residents may have up to five beehives ([see City code 15.140](#)), which is adequate to sustain commercial production. If you are planning on having a beehive on your garden or farm, you will need to install a fence to protect both the bees and potential trespassers who may be allergic. Additionally, if you are starting a community garden, be sure to discuss as a group how to handle situations with potentially allergic visitors. If you are new to beekeeping, the [Eastern Missouri Beekeepers Association](#) and the more local [St. Louis Beekeepers](#) are very helpful resources.

Selling Produce, Eggs, & Honey

In response to increasing interest and demand for sustainable and urban agriculture as evidenced by the results of [MCE's City-Wide 2016 Urban Agriculture Survey](#), the City of St. Louis Department of Public Safety has released a [policy memo](#) defining and reviewing urban agriculture practices in the City of St. Louis. This memo clarifies regulations surrounding the sale of produce, eggs, and honey from urban agriculture.

As per the memo, **all home gardens and community gardens are permitted in every zoning district** and urban farms are conditional uses in every district, so long as such gardens and farms adhere to the following restrictions and limitations:

1. The sale of raw, unprocessed produce, to include eggs and honey, from home or community gardens or urban farms is permitted without a license or taxation so long as they are sold from the same premises from which they were grown or harvested
2. Sales may take place from May through November between 7 a.m. and sundown, up to 3 days per week and 30 days per year

3. The sale area cannot exceed 50 square feet, any canopy must not exceed 10' by 10', and any signage must be professionally made and no larger than four (4) square feet
4. The garden cannot use farming equipment with an engine greater than 30 horsepower, motorized equipment cannot be used between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m., and the garden cannot be a nuisance to neighbors

Food Processing

Commercial urban agriculture projects are subject to further regulations if the food harvested is processed for sale. **Food processing** is the transformation of crops into [value-added products](#) like jams, pickles, baked goods, etc. It includes any process that changes raw foodstuffs into a variety of different prepared foods.

There is a [Cottage Food Law](#) in Missouri, meaning that certain value-added foods produced in a home kitchen, such as breads and jams, can be sold directly to the consumer without a permit. For more information about cottage food laws, refer to The Missouri [Department of Health and Senior Services' "Frequently Asked Questions."](#) Non-cottage processed foods, such as those requiring refrigeration, require a permit and are subject to health inspections. The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services has [a brochure](#) summarizing the requirements applicable to food processing operations.

Business Plans & Financing

If you want to start an urban farm, it is essential that you create a business plan to help you figure out your goals, needs, and possible setbacks. The EPA has published a comprehensive guide to urban agriculture business plans, which can be found [here](#).

Unless you have all of the money that you need upfront, you will probably need a loan in order to get your operation started. One option for this is through the USDA's [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#). They offer a variety of loans, including ownership, operating, and microloans, as well as a special program for women and minority farmers.

In order to apply for these loans, you will need to register with the FSA. You will need to make an appointment with your [local FSA office](#). When you go to the appointment, make sure that you have the following information:

- Name
- Address
- Phone Number
- Email Address
- SSN/TIN
- Entity Organization Documentation

- Survey Plat or deed for owned land
- Leases for leased land if available
- Information for affiliated owner/operators
- Information about the crops you intend to produce

For more information about farm loan programs, refer to the USDA [guide](#) or contact your local FSA office.

Financing may also be available from a local institution, such as a bank. If your farm has a community focus, you may be able to receive support from a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). In St. Louis, groups such as [Justine Petersen](#), [Gateway](#), and the [International Institute of St. Louis](#) provide these services.

Funding and Resources

The USDA has put together an excellent guide to federal funding and programs for urban agriculture. These range from assistance with business planning to infrastructure, and can be found [here](#).

In addition to these national-scale programs, below are some resources specific to the St. Louis region:

Technical Assistance

University of Missouri - Extension

The University of Missouri has [Extension offices](#) in every county with the mission of supporting gardeners and farmers. They have programs, classes, information, as well as other resources, including soil testing. The University of Missouri Extension has developed a [comprehensive toolkit](#) for new and existing community gardens. The closest Extension office is in Kirkwood.

Lincoln University

The [Innovative Small Farmers' Outreach Programs \(ISFOP\)](#), a Cooperative Extension program, works with Missouri's small farmers by providing growers with technical and educational assistance through farm visits, workshops and conferences at little or no cost to the residents of Missouri. Their main office is on the campus of Lincoln University in Jefferson City and their outreach centers are located in Kansas City, St. Louis, and Southeast Missouri. For a list of useful topics and links, [click here](#).

Missouri Beginning Farmers

A good resource for gardeners throughout the state of Missouri is [the Beginning Farmers website](#). It is set up by the University of Missouri Extension Office to help farmers get started and be as successful as possible.

Missouri Botanical Garden

The Missouri Botanical Garden offers a lot of valuable help to home gardeners, including information on [vegetable gardening](#) and sustainable gardening. In addition to the factsheets, visual guides, and other advice posted on the [Gardening Help webpage](#), the Missouri Botanical Garden offers a number of gardening classes through the Kemper Center for Home Gardening.

Infrastructure

Gateway Greening

[Gateway Greening](#) provides a variety of programs and services to urban gardeners with the goal of creating a safe, healthy, and sustainable urban environment. Gateway Greening's programs range from assistance in setting up community and youth gardens to educational workshops, volunteering opportunities on a demonstration garden, a library lending scheme, a how-to video series, and much more!

Brightside St. Louis

Brightside St. Louis' mission is to create a cleaner, greener, more environmentally-friendly St. Louis. Brightside offers a number of services and resources for urban gardeners, such as information on rain catching and using native plants, a [demonstration garden](#), and a [neighborhood greening program](#) that provides plants and tools to approved community supported projects.

Metropolitan Sewer District

[MSD's Project Clear](#) program provides *reimbursement* grants for gardens that provide rainscaping that helps prevent rainwater runoff from running into the sewer drains. These grants can potentially be used to fund infrastructure that captures rain, such as cisterns and certain landscaping.

Community Engagement

Neighborhood Leadership Academy - Missouri University Extension
"Community Building Principles"

Creative Reaction Lab

[“Equity- Centered Community Design Field Guide”](#)

National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD)

[“Core Principles for Public Engagement”](#) developed in Spring 2009 collaboratively by members and leaders of the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD), the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2), the Co-Intelligence Institute, and many others.

[Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing](#)

Praxis Project - Power Analysis Module

A possible resource to use is the [Power Analysis Module](#)

See also the White Supremacy Culture in Orgs [reflection](#) and [worksheet](#).

Business and Marketing

St. Louis City Business Assistance Center

Housed in the St. Louis City government, the [Business Assistance Center](#) provides assistance in licensing and permitting new businesses in the City. The BAC provides prospective business owners with information on various requirements, and helps them process their applications.

Missouri Farm to School

The Farm to School program aims to promote the use of locally grown produce in the cafeterias of schools and other institutions in order to strengthen the connections between communities, local producers, and healthy and nutritious food. Participation in the Farm to School program can be an important financial benefit to growers. [The Missouri Farm to School website](#) has very helpful information for farmers and vendors, including a list of steps to get involved and other resources. The National Farm to School Network also has a webpage for [Missouri resources and policies](#).

Known & Grown STL

[Known & Grown STL](#) focuses on supporting a thriving, local, equitable, food system within the St. Louis foodshed (150 miles of St. Louis) and exists to help farmers spread the word about their practices, their products, and the principles that ground their food. Participating farms must adhere to Good Stewardship farm practices.

Land Access

STL Growers & Landowners Facebook Group

The [STL Growers & Landowners](#) facebook group, moderated by the St. Louis Food Policy Coalition, is designed to connect urban growers, landowners, and anybody else looking to collaborate on land access and urban agriculture projects in the St. Louis Foodshed (150 miles from St. Louis). Once approved, members can view where others are looking for or have land and reach out to other members.

Land Reutilization Authority (LRA)

[St. Louis Development Corporation \(SLDC\)](#) facilitates real estate development throughout the City of St. Louis. It is the goal of SLDC to bring all City property into productive and effective use using a variety of tools and resources. SLDC, through the LRA, manages, maintains, markets, and sells agency-owned vacant and abandoned buildings and property. Use the [land bank search tool](#) and find real estate owned by LRA and available for sale.

Gateway Greening Land Trust, Inc.

The [Gateway Greening's Land Trust](#) conserves citizen-created agriculture projects to remain community managed, and protected for future generations in St. Louis, Missouri.

Policy and Activism

Missouri Coalition for the Environment is a leading convenor of stakeholders and residents on food policy concerns in the City of St. Louis. Read below about our two collaborative efforts.

St. Louis Food Policy Coalition

The [St. Louis Food Policy Coalition](#) (STLFPC) brings together numerous organizations and individuals working throughout the St. Louis region to address our food system needs, from food access to sustainable agriculture and community and economic development. The STLFPC works to shape public policy and promote a thriving local food system that supports the health, community, environment, and economy of the Greater St. Louis area. STLFPC is housed within [Missouri Coalition for the Environment](#), Missouri's independent, citizens' environmental organization for clean water, clean air, clean energy, and a healthy environment.

Food Equity Advisory Board (FEAB)

The [Food Equity Advisory Board \(FEAB\)](#) is an engaged group of community champions who advocate on behalf of their peers to help promote a thriving, local food system that supports the wants and needs of the overall community — its health, environment, and economy. A community champion is involved, passionate, and connected with the region they serve and the fight for food justice. FEAB works to ensure every community member has a voice for positive, concrete change. It serves as a resource to connect community members with information and individuals that empower them to take action. FEAB works in partnership with the St. Louis

Food Policy Coalition (STLFPC) to ensure the Coalition's goals and projects are aligned with the true needs of the communities they serve and that those communities are being heard by businesses and organizations throughout the city.

Recommended Reading

Gardening & Farming

- *The Essential Urban Farmer*, by Novella Carpenter and Willow Rosenthal
- MU Extension's [Community Gardening Toolkit](#)
- [Market Gardening Start Up Guide](#) by City Farmer

Soil & Water

- [Brownfields and Urban Agriculture: Interim Guidelines for Safe Gardening Practices](#)
- MCE's Soil Toxicity Infographic (on website)
- For information brownfields redevelopment, see the [EPA's Anatomy of Brownfield Redevelopment Guide](#).
- Soul FIRE FARM (betonite clay?)

Race, Equity, & Urban Land Access

- [Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm's Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land](#), by Leah Penniman
- [Farmland Access in Urban Settings](#) by Land for Good
- [Segregation in St. Louis: Dismantling the Divide](#), a report from For the Sake of All
- [Food Studies: Who's doing the judging in the food justice movement](#) by Grist.org
- [MCE's full statement on equity](#)
- [Evolution or gentrification: Do urban farms lead to higher rents?](#), Grist
- [Urban Farms Wrestle with Gentrification and Displacement](#), Civil Eats
- [Green spaces may breathe new life into north St. Louis but residents need to be on board](#), St. Louis Public Radio'

Gentrification and Urban Agriculture

- [Gentrification Explainer Video](#), Urban Displacement Project - a UCLA and UC Berkeley collaboration
- [Ensuring Equitable Growth](#), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- [Evolution or gentrification: Do urban farms lead to higher rents?](#), Grist
- [Urban Farms Wrestle with Gentrification and Displacement](#), Civil Eats
- [Green spaces may breathe new life into north St. Louis but residents need to be on board](#), St. Louis Public Radio