

2019 Crop Report



Santa Clara County

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Welcome!

It is my pleasure to present the 2019 Santa Clara County Crop Report. The efforts of our agricultural industry are displayed as the acreage, yield and gross value of commodities produced in Santa Clara County. It is important to note that the values presented in this report are gross values and do not reflect net profits or losses to our agricultural producers.

The gross value of Santa Clara County's agricultural production for 2019 is \$305,067,000, an increase of 3.1% from the 2018 value of \$295,837,000.

Nursery crops are back in the number one position with a value of \$81,215,000, after falling behind mushrooms in 2018. With the closing of one mushroom farm and the opening of two large nurseries in south county, the nursery industry has a firm hold as the top agricultural crop in Santa Clara County. Mushrooms also had a strong year with a value of \$78,646,000. In 2019, 20 different agricultural commodities grown in Santa Clara County exceeded \$1,000,000 in crop value.

Lettuce continues its third place on the list from previous years. Pepper production dropped by \$2,529,000 from 2018 but is still securing its number four position on the list. Walnut acreage is on the rise

because young trees are beginning to mature and come into production. This trend will continue for a year or two, with trees coming into full production.

This year's Crop Report highlights the urban agriculture in Santa Clara County. urban agriculture convenes and educates the community about farming, nature, and sustainability. More importantly, it can improve food sovereignty and provide food access for those in need. In this report, you will discover interesting facts and hear from two important figures in urban agriculture that made significant impacts in our communities.

I would like to express my gratitude for the continuing cooperation of all individuals, growers, and agencies who contribute the information necessary to prepare this report. I wish to thank my staff and, in particular, acknowledge the efforts of Lori Oleson, Ericka Mora, Paulo Philippidis, Angela Xue, Lucy Diekmann and Nidia Aguirre who made the publication of this report possible.

JOSEPH C. DEVINEY
Agricultural Commissioner
Sealer Of Weights & Measures

Front cover photo by SJSU Community Garden
Left and back cover: Veggjelution Community Farm, East San Jose

URBAN AGRICULTURE



What is Urban Agriculture?

Simply put, urban agriculture is growing food within cities or around their edges. This food may be intended for sale, but can also be for personal consumption, education, or donation. Examples of urban agriculture include urban farms, community gardens, backyard gardens, school gardens, beekeeping, and backyard poultry flocks. Some urban growers use unique spaces—like rooftops—and more intensive growing systems, such as vertical farms, hydroponics, and aquaponics.

One important distinction between urban agriculture and rural agriculture is that urban agriculture often has a larger social and environmental mission. This

means that in addition to producing food, urban farms and gardens use agriculture as a way to benefit the broader community. Goals often include educating people about how food is produced; building

community; improving access to fresh, healthy food; revitalizing vacant or underused lots; or helping communities have a greater say in their food system.

Top photo by SJSU Community Garden
Bottom Left: Hidden Villa, Los Altos Hills
Below: The Forge Garden, Santa Clara University



2019 URBAN AGRICULTURE

IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY



FARMS AND GARDENS

COMMUNITY GARDENS

35

OTHER URBAN AGRICULTURE SITES

51

SIZE RANGE



0.25- 11 acres

FOOD PRODUCTION

AVERAGE HARVESTED

5,839 lbs

AVERAGE DONATED

1,524 lbs

AVERAGE CROP DIVERSITY

49 crops/site



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

AVERAGE # OF STUDENTS

1,754

AVERAGE # OF VOLUNTEERS

630

12 FARMS AND GARDENS PROVIDED DATA

Apiary New

This year we added apiary, or beekeeping, to the report, showing the value of our many small honeybee enthusiasts. Bees are a critical part of agricultural

production. Bee hobbyists are on the rise, with larger apiaries coming in for seasonal crops throughout the year.

775 hives registered

Total apiary value, including beeswax and honey, \$260,000



Santa Clara Unified School District Farm

Bee Safe Program

Santa Clara County Department of Agriculture supports apiaries in our county through our Bee Safe Program, which conducts apiary registration, training, and outreach. The program is also designed to protect bees and beekeepers in the events of:

1. Theft of apiary and apiary equipment
2. Colony weakness or loss due to inadequate foraging opportunities
3. Colony weakness or loss due to pest and disease pressure
4. Colony weakness, distress or loss due to pesticide exposure



Santa Clara Unified School District Farm

BeeWhere

BeeWhere is an online portal created to bring beekeepers and pesticide applicators together by tracking and safeguarding hive locations across California using simple mapping tools. The goal of this program is to prevent colony weakness due to pesticide exposure, pest and disease pressures and inadequate forage, and to prevent theft. Pesticide applicators and advisors will not receive any information about the specific locations of the bee colonies.

Beekeepers are required to register with the county annually. For more information, please go to our website:

<https://www.sccgov.org/sites/ag/BeeWhere/Pages/home.aspx>

Organic Agriculture



Registrant Type	No. Registered
Producers	37
Handlers	19
Processors	1

Santa Clara County has 78 organic growing locations for a total of 2,410 acres.

Seed and Timber Crops

Seed Crop	Year	Harvest Acreage	Total
Vegetable and Flower	2019	629	\$3,068,000
	2018	634	\$3,490,000

Forest Crop	Year	Production Total	Unit	Total
Timber	2019	1505	MBF	\$1,149,000
	2018	1178	MBF	\$1,110,000

Million Dollar Crops

The gross value of Santa Clara County's agricultural production for 2019 was **\$305,067,000**

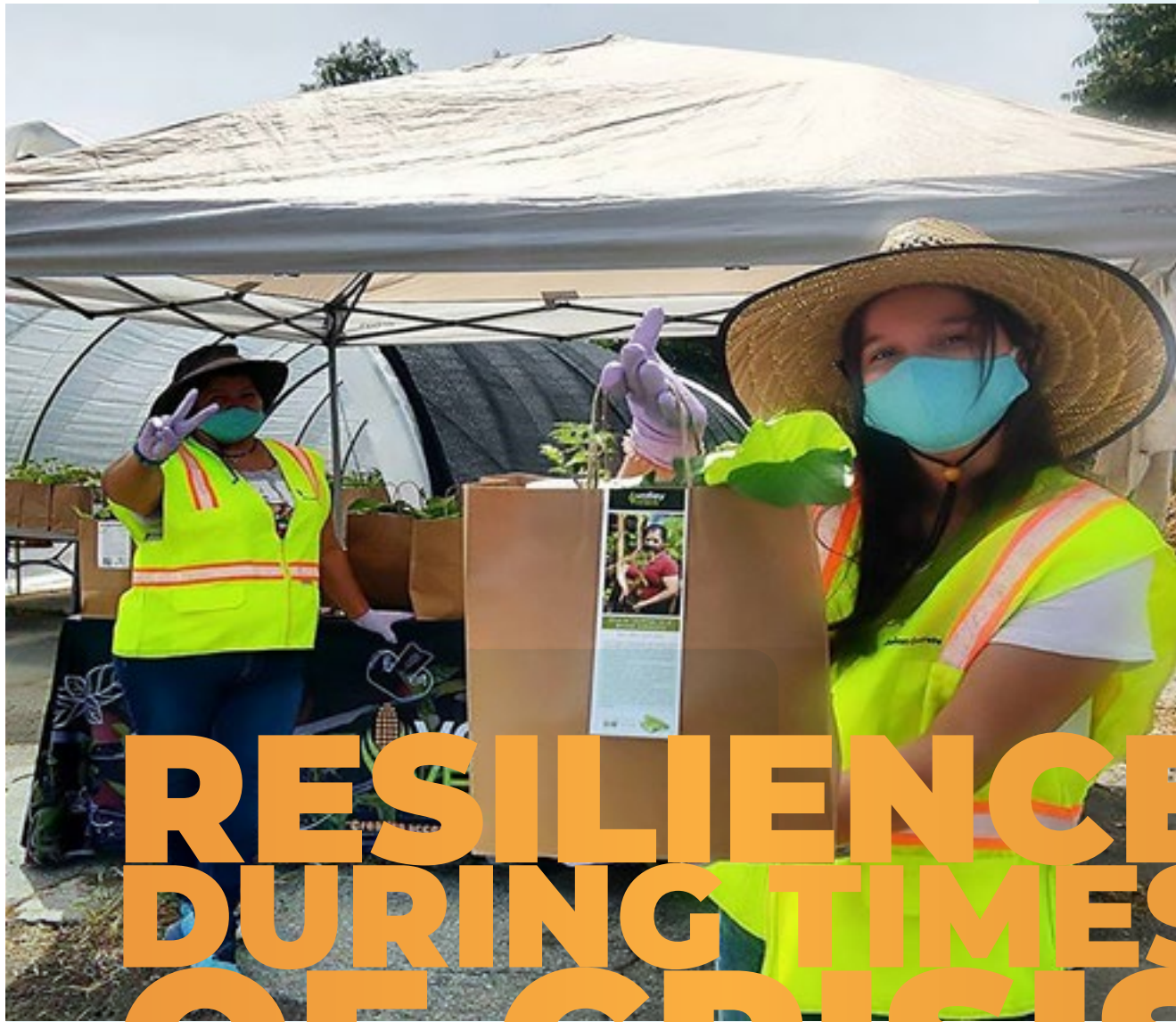


NO.	CROP	YEAR	VALUE
1	Nursery Crops	2019	\$81,215,000
		2018	\$80,776,000
2	Mushrooms	2019	\$78,646,000
		2018	\$82,511,000
3	Lettuce (All)	2019	\$18,322,000
		2018	\$17,559,000
4	Peppers (Bell)	2019	\$12,081,000
		2018	\$14,610,000
5	Wine Grapes (All)	2019	\$11,545,000
		2018	\$10,658,000
6	Tomatoes (Fresh)	2019	\$10,698,000
		2018	\$10,573,000
7	Asian Vegetables	2019	\$9,329,000
		2018	\$8,822,000
8	Cabbage	2019	\$8,990,000
		2018	\$1,354,000
9	Spinach	2019	\$8,482,000
		2018	\$4,523,000
10	Corn	2019	\$7,159,000
		2018	\$6,943,000
11	Peppers (Wax and Chili)	2019	\$6,253,000
		2018	\$7,610,000
12	Beans (All)	2019	\$5,570,000
		2018	\$7,500,000
13	Broccoli	2019	\$5,038,000
		2018	\$5,301,000
14	Salad Greens	2019	\$4,659,000
		2018	\$4,435,000

NO.	CROP	YEAR	VALUE
15	Steers and Heifers	2019	\$3,489,000
		2018	\$3,375,000
16	Rangeland	2019	\$3,315,000
		2018	\$3,509,000
17	Seed Crops	2019	\$3,068,000
		2018	\$3,459,000
18	Garlic	2019	\$2,209,000
		2018	\$5,477,000
19	Tomatoes (Processing)	2019	\$2,104,000
		2018	\$1,408,000
20	Squash	2019	\$1,260,000
		2018	\$656,000
21	Timber	2019	\$1,149,000
		2018	\$1,100,000
	Other Crops	2019	\$20,486,000
		2018	\$13,303,000
TOTAL		2019	\$305,067,000
		2018	\$295,837,000



Veggielution Community Farm, East San Jose



RESILIENCE DURING TIMES OF CRISIS

During the Covid-19 pandemic, urban farms and gardens have shown how nimble local organizations can be in responding to a crisis. Urban agriculture groups have pivoted quickly to meet new community needs for food.

Fresh Produce Donations

The need for food assistance in Santa Clara County has risen dramatically because of Covid-19. In response, urban farms have

increased their donations of fresh produce to food pantries. The Stanford Educational Farm has been donating their produce to the A La Carte program, which then delivers it to Loaves and Fishes Family Kitchen in San Jose. Faithful Farm at Levi Stadium, which usually grows food for restaurants at the stadium, started growing crops for donation instead. By September 2020, they had donated three tons of food to Hunger at Home. In Los

Altos Hills, Hidden Villa's farm has increased its regular donations of fresh produce to the Community Services Agency of Mountain View. Living Classroom has donated 480 pounds of produce from the 18 school gardens it maintains to local community service agencies.

Farm Boxes

Within just two weeks of the shelter-in-place order, Veggelution had created Eastside Connect

in partnership with Spade & Plow. This new program built on Veggelution's community connections and Spade & Plow's Community Supported Agriculture (or CSA) expertise to provide free weekly deliveries of fresh produce to 40 families in East San Jose and boxes of fresh produce for another 160 families to pick up at the farm. Santa Clara University's Forge Garden and Bronco Urban Gardens (BUG) have been delivering free farmboxes to 22 families that would normally participate in their garden education programming. The Forge and BUG have continued to donate produce to the campus food pantry and a local women's shelter.

Seedling Giveaways & Garden Support

Covid-19 has inspired a new wave of interest in gardening and local organizations have stepped up to help. Valley Verde organized seedling giveaways, which provided

nearly 12,000 seedlings to more than 2,450 families. Valley Verde grew its own culturally diverse seedlings and received seedling donations from local partners, including the Stanford Educational Farm, the Forge Garden, and the UC Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County. To help San Jose residents grow their own food, Sacred Heart Community Service's La Mesa Verde program adapted its garden bed build to comply with the Public Health Order for physical distancing. This spring, La Mesa Verde installed 36 new garden beds and distributed 2,185 seedlings to over 120 families. Many organizations have switched to webinars, videos, and virtual garden tours to teach about gardening. For instance, Taylor St. Farm is offering the Virtual ABCs of Farming for children and their parents as well as providing free vegetables and seedlings to community members.

As the pandemic progresses, urban agriculture organizations continue to adapt to meet community needs. As they do so, their impact—in terms of food shared, gardens built, seedlings distributed, and classes taught—will continue to grow.



Top left and right photos by Valley Verde, San Jose
Above photo by La Mesa Verde, San Jose

HEALTHY FOOD FOR ALL

One of the main goals for urban agriculture is increasing access to fresh produce. Our urban farms and gardens can be a valuable supplemental source of seasonal, culturally appropriate fruits and vegetables.

Food Security

Many urban farms and gardens donate produce to people in need. For instance, Loaves and Fishes Organic Farm in San Jose gives everything they grow to organizations that feed the hungry. San Jose State University's Community Garden donates much of its harvest to

the Spartan Food Pantry, which serves food-insecure students.

Gardeners can grow a meaningful amount of food for themselves. One study found that low-income gardeners in the county harvested an average of 1.23 lbs of vegetables per square foot and saved \$339 in food costs. Programs like La Mesa Verde support gardeners by providing raised garden beds, gardening workshops, and a network of other gardeners for support. Community gardens also offer residents a valuable space to grow their own food and interact with other gardeners. In Mountain

View, residents came together to form the Soil & Water Garden, a community garden where space, work, and decision making is shared, and participants learn from each other how to produce food.

School Food

Produce from urban farms also appears on school cafeteria menus. Since August 2017, Santa Clara Unified School District (SCUSD) has run its own 11-acre farm in Sunnyvale. So far, this farm has provided more than 40,000 pounds of organically grown produce, feeding 15,500 students in 26 schools. Vegetables and fruits from the farm are served in school salad bars. Farm tomatoes are also made into sauce for cafeteria staples like lasagna. Organic produce is typically too expensive to purchase on a limited school food budget,

Countywide Comprehensive Food System Workplan

Santa Clara County is in the process of developing a comprehensive food system workplan initiated by the Board of Supervisors. The workplan will address six major components including:

- 1) Expanding Access to Healthy Food Resources for Families Facing Food Insecurity*
- 2) Supporting Food Suppliers*
- 3) Expanding Use of Agricultural Land for Healthy Food Production*
- 4) Manufacturing and Processing of Food*
- 5) Encouraging Healthy Procurement, Food Sales, and Purchasing*
- 6) Supporting Joint Food Waste & Recovery Efforts*

This workplan will improve and coordinate the wide array of food system programs and partners to better respond to short term and long-term food system needs for our communities.

so the farm offers an important source of organically grown fruits and vegetables. With access to a school farm, students also learn about agriculture and nutrition, building a strong foundation for life-long healthy eating habits.

Restaurants

People in Santa Clara County can find urban-grown produce on restaurants' menus. Some like the Grandview Restaurant in San Jose or Chez TJ in Mountain View operate their own farm or garden. Luna Vez, a backyard farm in Los Altos Hills, grows specialty crops for local restaurants. One early partnership provided chefs at Maum in Palo Alto with a local source for hard-to-find Korean vegetables and herbs like minari (Korean watercress) and perilla.

Taylor Street Farm, Downtown San Jose



Taylor Street Farm, Downtown San Jose

Vegetable Crops



Item	Year	Harvested Acreage	Tons/Acre	Production Total Tons	Value Per Unit	Value
Asian Vegetables	2019	781	18.9	14,760.9	\$632	\$9,329,000
	2018	731	20.7	15,131.7	\$583	\$8,822,000
Beans	2019	1,015	4.0	4,060.0	\$1,372	\$5,570,000
	2018	1,306	3.4	4,440.4	\$1,689	\$7,500,000
Broccoli	2019	577	9.9	5,712.3	\$882	\$5,038,000
	2018	595	9.6	5,712.0	\$928	\$5,301,000
Cabbage	2019	456	31.0	14,136.0	\$636	\$8,990,000
	2018	127	20.7	2,628.9	\$515	\$1,354,000
Corn	2019	1,351	9.2	12,429.2	\$576	\$7,159,000
	2018	1,414	10.0	14,140.0	\$491	\$6,943,000
Garlic	2019	571	5.8	3,311.8	\$667	\$2,209,000
	2018	598	7.1	4,245.8	\$1,290	\$5,477,000
Salad Greens*	2019	735	5.7	4,189.5	\$1,112	\$4,659,000
	2018	716	6.8	4,868.8	\$911	\$4,435,000
Lettuce (Romaine, Leaf, Head)	2019	2,215	11.3	25,029.5	\$732	\$18,322,000
	2018	2,349	14.6	34,295.4	\$512	\$17,559,000
Mushrooms	2019	138	119.5	16,491.0	\$4,769	\$78,646,000
	2018	144	122.2	17,596.8	\$4,689	\$82,511,000
Onions (Dry)	2019	66	10.0	660.0	\$369	\$244,000
	2018	71	14.3	1,015.3	\$640	\$650,000
Peppers (Bell)	2019	914	34.6	31,624.4	\$382	\$12,081,000
	2018	1,072	35.4	37,948.8	\$385	\$14,610,000
Peppers (Wax and Chili)	2019	407	29.1	11,843.7	\$528	\$6,253,000
	2018	418	33.1	13,835.8	\$550	\$7,610,000
Spinach	2019	1,564	5.5	8,602.0	\$986	\$8,482,000
	2018	676	5.4	3,650.4	\$1,239	\$4,523,000
Squash	2019	248	10.2	2,529.6	\$498	\$1,260,000
	2018	217	4.9	1,063.3	\$617	\$656,000
Tomatoes (Fresh)	2019	1,094	17.4	19,035.6	\$562	\$10,698,000
	2018	1,000	22.4	22,400.0	\$472	\$10,573,000
Tomatoes (Processed)	2019	464	57.4	26,633.6	\$79	\$2,104,000
	2018	348	57.0	19,836.0	\$71	\$1,408,000
Miscellaneous**	2019	1,824	----	----	----	\$14,168,000
	2018	961	----	----	----	\$7,252,000
TOTAL	2019	13,639				\$195,212,000
	2018	12,743				\$187,184,000

*Arugula, Endive, Frisee, Mizuna, Mustard, Radicchio, Spring Mix, Swiss Chard

**Artichokes, Cauliflower, Celery, Cucumber, Herbs, Parsley, Pumpkins, Shallots, etc.

Fruit and Nut Crops

Item	Year	Harvested Acreage	Tons per Acre	Production Total Tons	Value per Unit	Total
Apricots	2019	143	1.2	171.6	\$1,579	\$271,000
	2018	147	2.1	308.7	\$1,331	\$411,000
Cherries	2019	173	0.3	51.9	\$5,256	\$273,000
	2018	369	0.5	184.5	\$3,298	\$608,000
Wine Grapes (White)	2019	492	3.9	1,918.8	\$1,498	\$2,874,000
	2018	491	4.3	2,111.3	\$1,383	\$2,920,000
Wine Grapes (Red)	2019	1,207	3.2	3,862.4	\$2,245	\$8,671,000
	2018	1,182	3.5	4,137	\$2,010	\$7,738,000
Total Red and White	2019	1,699	----	----	----	\$11,545,000
	2018	1,673	----	----	----	\$10,658,000
Walnuts	2019	243	1.0	243	\$2,777	\$962,000
	2018	243	1.0	243	\$2,777	\$675,000
Persimmons**	2019	43	3.3	141.9	\$1,498	\$213,000
Miscellaneous*	2019	225	----	----	----	\$2,422,000
	2018	245	----	----	----	\$2,311,000
TOTAL	2019	2,621	----	----	----	\$15,686,000
	2018	2,677	----	----	----	\$14,663,000

*Includes: Apples, Bushberries, Kiwis, Nectarines, Olives, Peaches, Plums, Prunes, Strawberries, etc.

**2018 Includes Persimmons



Field Crops

Item	Year	Harvested Acreage	Tons Per Acre	Production Total	Unit	Value Per Unit	Total
Hay (Grain)	2019	3,167	1.9	6,017	Ton	\$125	\$752,000
	2018	3,506	2.3	8,064	Ton	\$128	\$1,032,000
Pasture (Irrigated)	2019	----	----	----	----	----	----
	2018	319	----	----	Acre	\$220	\$70,000
Range	2019	254,977	----	----	Acre	\$13	\$3,315,000
	2018	269,953	----	----	Acre	\$13	\$3,509,000
Miscellaneous*	2019	170	----	----	----	----	\$95,000
	2018	242	----	----	----	----	\$103,000
TOTAL	2019	258,314	----	----	----	----	\$4,162,000
	2018	274,020	----	----	----	----	\$4,714,000

*Includes: Alfalfa, Triticale, etc.



Left: Santa Clara Unified School District Farm
Below: Demonstration Garden, UCCE* Master Gardeners

GROWING IN CREATIVE SPACES

Affordable and stable access to land is a significant challenge for urban farmers and gardeners. Several innovative ways to increase space for urban agriculture are highlighted below.

Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones

Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones (UAIZs) offer a property tax reduction to landowners who allow their undeveloped parcels to be used for urban agriculture for at least five years. Thanks to ordinances adopted by the County of Santa Clara and the City of San Jose, this program

is available for vacant land within San Jose city limits and in unincorporated areas of the county.

In 2016, Valley Verde became the first to use the UAIZ program in San Jose. On an 11,000-square foot site in downtown San Jose, Valley Verde built a demonstration garden and installed greenhouses where they raise culturally preferred vegetable seedlings (such as, bitter melon and epazote) that are given to members of their home gardening program and sold to the public. Having access to this land has allowed Valley Verde to expand their programs and impact.



* University of California Cooperative Extension

Urban Agriculture and Housing

It is becoming more common to find gardens, and even farms, incorporated into both affordable and market-rate housing developments. HomeFirst's new tiny home community, which opened in San Jose in February 2020, includes raised garden beds. There is a small urban farm on the second story green roof of First Community Housing's

Second Street Studios project, which opened in 2019 to serve formerly homeless individuals. The farm provides residents with fresh produce and the opportunity to learn about growing their own food. In Santa Clara, Farmscape manages a community garden at Mansion Grove apartments. Residents have the option to work together in the garden alongside a professional farmer and receive produce from the garden weekly.

Food Justice happens when, in community, we exercise our right to grow, sell, and eat culturally appropriate, fresh, nutritious, and accessible food, cultivated locally while caring for the well-being of the earth, workers, and animals. (La Mesa Verde, 2019)

Resources for UAIZ

Interested landowners and urban agriculture project creators can learn how to get involved in UAIZs at <https://farmsanjose.org>

To see a map of parcels that meet the UAIZ eligibility criteria visit

http://cesantaclara.ucanr.edu/Urban_SmallFarms/UAIZ_1/UAIZ_parcel_finder/

Veggielution Community Farm, East San Jose



Urban Agriculture at Work

Many corporate campuses have added gardens or other forms of urban agriculture. These sites can provide fresh food to cafeterias or for employees to take home. They are also a tangible symbol of a business's commitment to sustainability, using less water than turf grass, while adding to the beauty of the landscape. In addition, these sites serve as natural gathering places—for employees or for hands-on classes—that can complement employee wellness programs.



Rooftop Farms and Gardens offer an innovative way to expand agricultural production in cities. They can be as simple as a few planters on the roof to more elaborate setups where plants grow directly in soil that covers a large portion, or all, of the roof.

One local example is the ¼-acre Faithful Farm at Levi Stadium. Located 176 feet off the ground, this farm grows more than 40 different crops and herbs for use in stadium restaurants and catering.

Top and bottom: Faithful Farm, Levi's Stadium - Photos by San Francisco 49ers



Nursery Crops

ITEM	YEAR	HOUSE (SQ FT)	FIELD ACRES	SOLD BY PRODUCERS	VALUE PER UNIT	VALUE PER UNIT	TOTAL
Bedding Plants	2019	1,895,009	50	1,903,032	Flats	Various	\$23,055,000
	2018	1,805,040	42	1,441,524	Flats	Various	\$17,499,000
Christmas Trees	2019	-----	294	6,256	Trees	\$65	\$406,000
	2018	-----	277	2018	Trees	\$60	\$392,000
Ornamental Trees (Roses, Shrubs)	2019	246,740	320	2,286,589	Plants	Various	\$28,126,000
	2018	201,400	222	2,263,259	Plants	Various	\$31,613,000
Herbaceous Perennials	2019	190,400	35	506,829	Plants	Various	\$7,879,000
	2018	185,800	31	528,320	Plants	Various	\$7,256,000
Miscellaneous*	2019	2,273,150	191	----	----	----	\$21,749,000
	2018	2,296,800	187	----	----	----	\$24,016,000
Total	2019						\$81,215,000
	2018						\$80,776,000

*indoor decoratives, Orchids, Propagative Materials, Turf, Succulents, Vegetable Plants, Floral Crops (Cut Flowers), etc.





ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

Many of the county's urban farms and gardens serve as educational sites where the public can learn about food production and other aspects of the food system. Structured education programs provide hands-on training in how to grow food, start a food business, care for the local environment, compost, and eat healthfully.

Youth Education

School gardens offer the opportunity for hands-on outdoor activities. Students who participate in school garden programs have shown an increased preference for fruits and vegetables. A study from 2014 found that about 60% of Santa Clara County schools have gardens on site, although school gardens were less prevalent in low-income neighborhoods. Several organizations support garden-based learning at school sites. These include Living Classroom, Santa Clara University's Bronco Urban Gardens program, and San Jose State's CommUniverCity, which offers garden education during the school day and in an afterschool club. In addition to

building new school gardens, the California Native Garden Foundation is training teachers to use gardens for outdoor science education. In Morgan Hill, Ann Sobrato High School has a farm associated with its Future Farmers of America program, while Los Gatos High School offers an agroecology program using their school garden. In Mountain View, Soil & Water Garden offers hands-on, outdoor learning for preschool children and their families.

Field trips allow students to experience an urban farm or garden directly. Some programs that offer field trips and/or summer camps include Veggielution and Taylor St. Farm in San Jose, the Santa Clara Unified School District Farm in Santa Clara, the Generation Connection Teaching Garden at the Santa Clara Adult Education campus, Deer Hollow Farm in Los Altos, and Hidden Villa in Los Altos Hills. The UC Master Gardener Program offers field trips to their demonstration garden in Martial Cottle Park, with lessons on healthy eating, native bees, and garden habitats.

Photos: Hidden Villa, Los Altos Hills

Livestock and Poultry

Item	Year	Number of Head	Production Total (Live Weight)	Unit	Value Per Unit	Total
Steers and Heifers	2019	3,813	25,101	CWT	\$139	\$3,489,000
	2018	3,560	24,450	CWT	\$138	\$3,374,000
Cows and Bulls	2019	608	6,404	CWT	\$82	\$525,000
	2018	572	6,578	CWT	\$74	\$487,000
Miscellaneous*	2019	-----	-----	-----	-----	\$301,000
	2018	-----	-----	-----	-----	\$250,000
TOTAL	2019	-----	-----	-----	-----	\$4,315,000
	2018	-----	-----	-----	-----	\$4,111,000

*Includes: Chicken Eggs, Goats, Llamas, Pigs, Sheep, etc.



Colleges & Universities

In the past decade, local colleges and universities have created their own farms and gardens to serve as outdoor classrooms. This trend includes Santa Clara University's 1/2-acre Forge Garden and the 6-acre O'Donohue Family Stanford Educational Farm. San Jose State University's community garden is a place for students to learn about organic production, while the community garden at De Anza College provides vegetables and herbs to the cafeteria. These sites offer college students hands-on learning opportunities, both inside and outside of their classes.



Adult Education

There are many local opportunities for adults to learn farming and gardening. University of California

Cooperative Extension offers a wide range of classes on gardening and composting. Some organizations also teach community members how to advocate for a more equitable, healthy, and sustainable food system. Food justice is part of the La Mesa Verde curriculum and members successfully encouraged the San Jose City Council to adopt Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones. Hidden Villa recently launched the Food for Thought Initiative, which aims to inspire participants to improve the food system; topics have included regenerative agriculture and local food sourcing.

Above: Valley Verde in Downtown San Jose

Below: Veggielution Community Farm in East San Jose

Food Sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations; and it defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. (Shared by Valley Verde, originally from Declaration of Nyéléni, the first global forum on food sovereignty, Mali, 2007)



Above: The Forge Garden, Santa Clara University

Left photo by SJSU Community Garden
Below photo by La Mesa Verde, San Jose



Environmental Benefits

Taken together, urban agriculture sites create a significant amount of green space in cities. Urban agriculture helps to improve air quality by filtering airborne pollution; reduce the urban heat island effect by cooling temperatures; and lessen storm-water runoff by collecting rainwater. Urban agriculture supports biodiversity, providing habitat and food for pollinators

and conserving plant diversity as gardeners save seeds and cultivate a wide variety of plants. When composting is incorporated into agricultural sites, urban food waste becomes a resource for growing more food. Making and applying compost reduces greenhouse gas emissions by diverting food waste from landfills and adding carbon to the soil.

In addition, the human connection to nature that takes place in gardens and on farms is beneficial for people's well-being. Gardening offers opportunities for outdoor physical activity and supports mental health by reducing stress, strengthening people's relationship with nature, providing a sense of accomplishment and purpose, and more.



Q&A with Greg Leonard



How did your journey in urban agriculture begin?

I have been growing things since I was six years old. The first time my grandfather showed me you could get food out of the ground I thought it was magic, that is where it all began. To this day it still feels magical to me.

In 1970s, I was involved in a community garden project in Palo Alto, which later evolved into the Rinconada Community Garden. From 2008 to 2013, I worked at Full Circle Farm, an urban farm in Sunnyvale that provided education

programs and supplied food for the Santa Clara Unified School District.

After Full Circle Farm, I spent a year and a half volunteering both on the ground and as a Board member at Veggielution, a community farm with a mission to connect people from diverse backgrounds through food and farming to build community in East San Jose. In 2017, I became the Executive Director of the Land Trust of Santa Clara Valley, and later retired in March of 2020.

Now I am putting all my effort into my own small property in Los Altos

Hills called Alto Verde Farm. My colleague, Long Tran, has been working here with me since 1996. His knowledge of trees, plants, soil and irrigation systems is unsurpassed.

Why is urban agriculture important and what makes it so unique?

I like to use the “Three-legged stool” analogy to describe the importance of urban farms to the community, with the three legs being a combination of food, education, and community. Urban agriculture provides a unique kind of education. It is the only experience kids in urban areas may have in agriculture. For the community, urban agriculture adds value by offering a unique place for the community to gather and be together. You can do each of these



“Urban agriculture is a ‘three-legged stool’. It supplies food, provides education, and offers a place for the community to gather”

three things in other places, but urban agriculture is the only place for them to flourish all together – community, education, and food access. It is important to have as many urban farms in as many communities and neighborhoods as possible for people to have access to the “three-legged stool”.

Challenges faced by urban farms and gardens?

Land values in Santa Clara County are the overwhelming issue in almost all cases of urban ag decision making. That is why most urban agriculture sites are associated with parks, like Veggielution, or schools, like Full Circle Farm.

What kind of role is urban agriculture playing in the current COVID-19 pandemic?

This pandemic has revealed that our food supply chain is not as robust as people thought. Many people are beginning to look into urban agriculture as an alternative. Local urban and peri-urban farms were crushed with orders at the beginning of the shelter-in-place order. When nurseries reopened, they were overwhelmed by lines of people waiting to get plants and seedlings.

Urban agriculture contributes to the resiliency of local food systems because it by-passes so much of the distribution system that has been so problematic during the current crisis. The demand on local farms in both urban and peri-urban settings during this pandemic has been overwhelming, which I think speaks for itself.

What changes do you wish to see for urban agriculture in the future?

More flexibility in planning and licensing so farms and gardens have a chance to become part of neighborhoods and contribute to them. Longer-term agreements for the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone* (UAIIZ) contracts can allow farmers to make

the investments necessary to make the contracts worthwhile.

There has always been some resistance to urban farms and community gardens. Many people do not like the way they look or smell. If people are willing to learn more about urban farming and give these operations a chance, urban agriculture can really benefit the community.



Photo by Santa Clara Unified School District Farm

Looking ahead, what do you see in the future of urban agriculture?

I think there will be a residual of higher interest in purchasing food from alternative supply chains such as urban farms and other Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Many long-lasting relationships between local farmers and their customers will continue after the current pandemic crisis. This pandemic is going to introduce many new people to the joys of feeding themselves from sources much closer to their homes, whether it is a hyper-local farm, a community garden plot, or their back yard.



Long Tran
Photo by Greg Leonard

*The Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone (UAIIZ) is a voluntary contract between the county and a property owner of vacant, unimproved, or blighted property whereby the property owner agrees to keep the property in active agricultural use for five years in exchange for a property tax benefit.

Q&A with Raul Lozano



From Theater to La Mesa Verde to Valley Verde

In 2008, I left my position as the executive director at a local Chicano theater company. It is the same year when the housing market crashed. Economy was shrinking, many people lost their jobs, and food banks were inundated. Witnessing all this happening got me in to thinking if there is a way for people to practice food sovereignty and be less reliant on food banks. That is where it all began.

I started the La Mesa Verde project and nested it for the first two

years at Sacred Heart Community Service as a response to the food security emergency resulting from the housing crisis. I enjoy gardening and went through the master gardener training in the 90's, but I knew nothing about the system players in urban agriculture when I first started.

During my time at La Mesa Verde, I had the vision of providing low-income communities with the opportunities to generate earned income through gardening. The business plan was to grow multi-ethnic seedlings for participants

in our programs and to wholesale markets and nurseries. This is a unique niche that has not been filled by the market, so we would have virtually no competitors. Sacred Heart Community Services was excited about the idea, but unfortunately did not have funding.

I decided to put my vision in practice and founded Valley Verde in 2010 to carry out the multi-ethnic seedling business plan I envisioned. The goal is to expand impact and increase sustainability of home organic home gardens for low income families in Santa Clara County. Our Super Jardineros greenhouse program teaches families how to grow quality seedlings that can be sold on the retail market. For families participating in this program, we provide training and install greenhouses in their backyard free of charge. If they grow retail quality seedlings we will buy all the seedlings from them, which is about \$3,000/year worth of income. Valley Verde is working towards our vision to become the go to place for people in the area to get multi-ethnic seedlings.

Social Justice in Urban Agriculture

At the beginning of my urban agriculture career, I attended a permaculture class in Santa Cruz. I noticed that I was the only

"I believe we need to be going into low income communities instead of expecting them to come to us. People in low income communities live such difficult lives already for them to reach out and come to information meetings."



person of color in the class. I soon discovered that in fact none of the urban agriculture entities were going into the low-income food insecure communities. None of them were culturally aware of these communities, and very few of them have ever attempted to connect with the low-income communities.

Even though the multiethnic communities make up over 50% of the population in California, we are not being served. Our effort became bigger than just a garden. It quickly became a fight for social justice. I believe we need to be going into low income

communities instead of expecting them to come to us. People in low income communities live such difficult lives already for them to reach out and come to information meetings.

The urban agriculture movement has been growing for 20-30 years, but none of it is in touch with low-income families and multi-ethnic families in Santa Clara County to have any real meaningful impact. I am hoping Valley Verde can serve as a model to initiate more inclusion in the urban agriculture environment.

Valley Verde's COVID-19 Response

The food security emergency resulted from the pandemic is very familiar to me in comparison to the 2008 housing crash.

When COVID-19 was brought to the public attention in January 2020, it felt so familiar to me, I began to worry that something similar to the food system crisis caused by unemployment in 2008 may happen again.

In response to this crisis, we provided spring seedlings to any

low-income and unemployed families so they could plant a spring garden in their backyards to have access to fresh organic vegetables, no questions asked. With drive-thru pickups and the help of Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition with seedlings distribution, we were able to serve over 1,500 families in May 2020. We are currently working on gathering funding to plan for another seeding giveaway in October 2020.

Addressing Climate Change

It is important to educate families on how they can play their role in addressing climate change. Water has been an issue in the past and will continue to be in the future. Will families be able to pay for water if the cost of water goes up? Some families dropped out of our program during the last drought due to high water price. We are teaching our families about soil health and how it can contribute to carbon sequestration and how to water their gardens wisely water is also part of the conversation when we teach families about gardening.

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