

## Empowerment of women through kitchen gardens - conceptualizing Urban agriculture - Opportunities and challenges

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**Abstract:** Increasing urbanization has made living space very scarce and sparse. The urbanites have lost backyards, back up gardens and community spaces. The need for fresh vegetables and green leaves is increasing at the same time hence urban householders are turning towards kitchen gardens and urban farming. Creating an organic kitchen garden has become a fashion and passion with urbanites. Especially women are showing interest in kitchen gardening. This concept is gaining popularity as more and more women are looking at kitchen garden as a strategy towards empowerment and sustainability. Space constraints cultivating a garden for pesticide free vegetables and fruit may seem like a far-fetched idea. But this is seen as an achievable idea for women in urban India. This is assisting women to increase their responsiveness about nutritional intake value and diet consciousness among urban women.

**Keywords:** Urban agriculture , kitchen gardens , empowering women , Opportunities , challenges

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### I. Introduction

Kitchen gardens are gaining popularity as women are finding paths of empowerment through kitchen gardening. This is enhancing their leisure time activities as well as their diet conscious minds. kitchen garden information is supplied by several NGOs and small farmer associations. The following organizations are helping metro city urbanites towards kitchen farming.

1. Delhi leafs
2. Good life greens
3. Green farms
4. Health leafs
5. Kitchen dens
6. Metro greens
7. Metro leafs
8. Micro farms
9. New leafs
10. Organic greens
11. Organic kitchens
12. Urban agro
13. Urban greens

### II. Requirements

1. Perennial plants such as drumstick, banana, papaya, curry leaf, gooseberry, mango, guava, custard apple, sapota etc., should be planted at the rear end of the garden, so that they may not shade other crops;
2. The adjacent space near the central footpath can be utilised for growing different short duration varieties such as coriander, fenugreek, mint etc. These crops can be cultivated in different seasons;
3. The fence surrounding the garden can be utilized for growing creepers and gourds such as sponge gourd, bitter gourd, snake gourd etc.;
4. The compost pits should be placed in the corner of the garden;
5. The garden should be divided into small plots with raised bunds. In the bunds one can grow root crops such as onion, turmeric, ginger etc.

Kitchen gardens are helping urban women towards health care and diet awareness. These organic products are finding consumers in the nearby community. encourage families to set up 'kitchen gardens' as a strategy to support healthy diets and livelihoods by growing organic vegetables and fruits given this generates income through the sale of the production surplus in the local markets.

**Considerations;** Women in urban localities are finding supportive collaboration from corporate companies such as Kellogg's towards small organic farming culture. The company is providing women with training on kitchen farming. The training modules include nutrition and sustainable gardening practices such as field preparation, low cost organic fertilizer preparation and post-harvest care of vegetables.

**Benefits of nutrition-** Malnutrition is a serious public health issue in urban households as well. Urban children are suffering from obesity, stunted growth, overweight, sight problems, vitamin A deficiency. Besides these children are suffering from ill effects of urban pollution and urban contamination. Hence kitchen gardens will address the malnutrition and impoverishment among children.

**Benefits of income generation -** There is also support for expanding economic base through production, processing, packaging and marketing. This also enhances their entrepreneurial activities and creates small jobs. Urban families tend to save money through small scale farming in kitchen gardens by reducing increased expenditure on food consumables. The organic quality of the vegetables grown always is health supportive hence the expenditure on illness and doctor counseling is also saved.

**Benefits of food security-** The urban farming also serves as an answer to chronic food insecurity among urban poor.

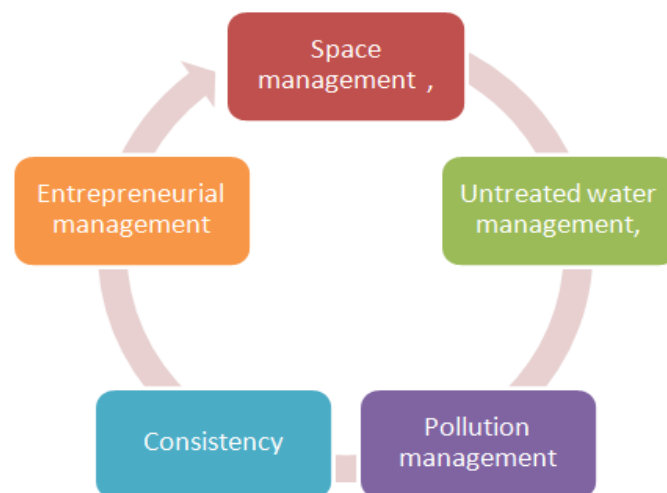
**Benefits of society and community-** There are several social benefits as well. It enhances the social and emotional wellbeing among urban households. Families come to embrace food security, increased nutrition, increased income, and increased diet awareness. This supports them together in a community of wellness and good feeling.

**Benefits of diet and physical activity-** Urbanites feel less stress and less tension this naturally adds to their general health improvement. Urban women can now feel relaxed and calming. Urban gardens are often places of social interaction and community grouping. This contributes to overall social and emotional wellbeing of the community. By improving the social networking the kitchen garden facilitates awareness and interaction.

**Benefits of health awareness-** Urban farming also helps physical activity and body health. Starting and maintaining a garden contributes to several types of physical activity. The urban pollution and contamination which pose a threat to women's health can be eradicated through physical activity involved in maintaining kitchen gardens.

**Benefits of greener landscape-** This also benefits urban livelihood and landscaping. Green initiatives not only help individual's health but it also supports urban livelihood look. Vacant lands, small left-handed corners are utilized for farming which augments the green look. The reduction in ozone and particulate matter will help urbanites to improve their health combating urban pollution.

**Challenges :** Even though there are several advantages the kitchen farming is also filled with several challenges. As shown in this diagram



1. **Issues of space -**In urban areas space is very scarce it is very difficult to make room for living and finding space for gardening is very difficult. Besides most of the urban living is through sky scraper apartments and tiny pocket sized houses. Using the space where whole community has ownership is very difficult. Individual houses are very less in metro cities hence the community farming becomes a distant dream.
2. **Issues of untreated water-** The utilization of untreated waste water may cause water borne diseases. Urban people who are highly sensitive in their health immunity may dislike.
3. **Issues of urban pollution & contamination-** Besides urban life is fully contaminated and full of pollution hence the farming catches the insects and pesticides more easily. Besides the soil, the waste water and the

automobile pollution around decreases fertility of the farm products grown. This again decreases taste, flavor, and savor of the products which becomes almost rejected by consumers. . Besides the nutrients in the products grown suspiciously becomes fewer and less. Urban air pollution is so strong that the agricultural yields also decrease and hence people who start the kitchen garden often lose interest in continuing them.

4. **Issues of consistency-** This lack of consistency poses a severe threat to the concept of kitchen gardens.

### **III. Conclusion**

Thus kitchen garden are becoming a part of the urban life style, besides they are adding towards enhancing health care awareness. It is also helping towards enhancing household nutrition and generates miniature income too. Collaborative efforts form food processing companies can add to their furthering of this urban farming culture. The challenges posed by urban contamination is a severe threat to these kitchen farms and Urban air pollution is so strong that the agricultural yields also decrease and hence people who start the kitchen garden often lose interest in continuing them. This lack of consistency poses a severe threat to the concept of kitchen gardens. Amidst all these challenges Kitchen gardens have become a key part of urban agriculture and more & more women are indulging in kitchen gardening. Governments and NGOs need to focus on helping these women with garden requirements and motivate them towards furthering farming effortlessly.

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