

Urban Gardening and Growing Requirements

Historically, in prairie towns and cities, urban properties were sizeable, houses were modestly sized, and a significant amount of space was devoted to trees, shrubs, lawns and gardens. As a result, people had the luxury to spread out.

The way that modern urban yards are sized and laid out has changed a great deal in the last 10-20 years. Houses take up most of the space. People don't have much time for gardening (in the classic sense). However, with the change in space has come a revolution or a renaissance, of sorts. While people can't fit a large, traditional garden into their yards, they do have a desire to grow things that will supplement or augment their homes and living space.

The popularity of online interest and sharing boards (e.g. Pinterest) has made it very simple for people to find and implement a huge number of ideas. While many of these ideas have tremendous merit, it is important for people to consider the basic requirements of the plants that they grow, to ensure that they are successful.

There are many things that plants MUST have to grow well (healthy and efficiently). On a basic level, plants need only a few, essential things. They need adequate light, air, a growing medium (soil), water, nutrients, temperatures, space and freedom from encroachment and pests. You might make a case for a few other, specific items, but on a basic level, this is all they need. A deficiency or excess of one or all of them will result in weak or poor plant growth or potentially damage. Urban gardeners (all gardeners) should evaluate each gardening idea for merit and make adjustments as required.

Ask yourself if plants are getting at least 6-8 hours of good sunlight a day, if they are not freezing or baking (or both), if there is good drainage of water from whatever growing medium they are in and if they are receiving sufficient nutrients to support their growth at all stages? Do they have enough depth of growing medium to develop normally? Are they spaced so that they can grow normally, they aren't being crowded out by their neighbours and they aren't competing for resources? Are you able to make adjustments for changes that occur as plants get older, bigger and shift from vegetative growth to fruiting?

These questions and more should be asked each time that you consider trying any urban garden project. Each project will have limitations, whether in terms of the plants that can be grown or the amount of adjustment that is required. No project is necessarily impossible, but some may not yield the results that you might envision. Plan beyond sourcing the materials. Plan for success in growing.