


GATHERING "WILD" FOOD

IN THE CITY

The role of foraging in urban ecosystems

Recent 'green' planning initiatives envision food production, including urban agriculture and livestock production, as desirable elements of sustainable cities.



Drawing on research from Baltimore, New York City, Philadelphia and Seattle, the researchers showed that foraging is a vibrant and ongoing practice.

One New Yorker began foraging with a great-grandmother from Greece, who, after emigrating to the USA, carried on her village tradition of foraging for greens.

Another was inspired to learn about foraging when she saw a friend adding plant leaves to her sandwich as they were eating outdoors.



Can't you take them off the tree first?

Interviewees frequently expressed joy in the flavours and what they believe are the healthy benefits of wild foods as well as the satisfaction of eating something they have picked themselves.




However, parks run the risk of becoming 'museumified' landscapes which humans can look at and pass through, but where harvesting is strongly discouraged.



The paper suggests that foraging does occur in cities, suburbs or peri-urban areas often as a subversive practice in parks or in-between spaces such as planting strips, alleyways or abandoned lots.

The authors argue that foraging deserves to be considered a legitimate and potentially positive practice, connecting humans with nature, other humans and their inner selves.




Gathering Wild Food in the City, by Rebecca J McLain, Patrick T Hurley, Maria R Emery and Melissa R Poe, published in **Local Environment**, the International Journal of Justice and Sustainability. www.tandfonline.com/cloe

