

# CAN URBAN AGRICULTURE SOLVE THE ISSUE OF FOOD SECURITY FOR CITY DWELLERS?

*THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.*

## INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

### PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VIA URBAN FARMING

WBEZ | May 28, 2019 | Audio  
10:56 minutes

The Urban Growers Collective, founded by Erika Allen in 2007, aims to create economic opportunity and food security in Chicago.

- The Urban Growers Collective hires youth and formerly incarcerated individuals to grow fresh fruits and vegetables as part of their mission to increase access to food security in Chicago. The collective farms on roughly 11 acres of plots across the city, planting crops like collard greens, tomatoes, peas, beans, squash, and cucumbers.
- The organization helps youth develop leadership skills that can be used in both urban farming and their larger communities, especially helping young people who are frequently the most affected by structural violence and food insecurity.
- The Fresh moves Mobile Market, a program run by Urban Growers, uses converted CTA buses to bring healthy food grown on their urban farms directly to Chicago residents who live in food deserts.

### THREE MAPS TELL THE STORY OF URBAN FARMING IN PHILLY RIGHT NOW

WHYY | January 15, 2020 | Article  
578 words

In neighborhoods across Philadelphia, roughly 418 edible gardens bloom across 500 parcels of land, but growers in these spaces face potential evictions as developers look to build on this land.

- 67% of active gardens or farms in the city are in areas where more than half of the households are Black, Latinx, or immigrants and have little access to high-quality food.
- Urban farms do not completely fulfill the unmet need for fresh produce in neighborhoods throughout the city. Draft data collected by the City of Philadelphia shows that only 20% of those living in areas without access to high-quality produce live near an active garden or farm.
- Out of 42,100 vacant lots and buildings in the city, about 6,000 properties are publicly owned and available to hand off to an urban agricultural-minded owner.

## HOW HYDROPONIC SCHOOL GARDENS CAN CULTIVATE FOOD JUSTICE, YEAR ROUND

NPR | July 7, 2019 | Article

1528 words

Brownsville Collaborative Middles School built a high-yield, hydroponic farm inside a third-floor classroom in 2019.

- Students provide weekly produce for their cafeteria using plans grown indoors, on floor-to-ceiling shelves that hold seedlings and plants sprouting from fiber plugs in trays, each fed by nutrient-enriched water and lit by LED lamps.
- Students have sold some of their harvest at a discount to community members as part of a weekly “food box” service set up in the school’s foyer.
- A 2015 U.S. Department of Agriculture census found 7,101 school-based gardens out of about 18,000 public, private, and charter school districts. Teachers integrate plant biology, nutrition, cooking, and business marketing into the curriculum.
- 42% of school nutrition directors reported that students ate more fruits and vegetables after the school added a garden.

### KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your learners and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Urban agriculture
- Food security & food insecurity
- Food desert
- Hydroponics

### CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

### DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.

*Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.*