

URBAN HARVEST

WHAT WE HEARD

Background information

Council has teamed up with My Smart Garden and Slow Food Melbourne to launch the Urban Harvest project. This project aims to harvest community connection through growing, cooking and sharing local food.



As a first step, Council commenced a research activity to gain a better understanding of the location and type of productive gardens and spaces in Hobsons Bay and discover how our local growers, cooks, botanists, and anyone interested in local food would like to connect.

The information collated will help Council develop further activities for the community, such as cooking and preserving workshops, community networking events, swap and share events and plant identification fact sheets.

The community engagement process

The Urban Harvest project was one of many initiatives launched as part of World Environment Day celebrations for Hobsons Bay in June 2020.

At the time of this project, face-to-face consultations were unable to proceed due to COVID-19 restrictions. As an alternative, online engagement tools were used including:

- **an online survey** to understand what skills and knowledge exist in our community and how we can support our local growers, growers-to-be, accomplished cooks, budding chefs, food lovers and nature lovers alike
- **a visual mapping tool** to map existing local produce and connect with other growers
- **an image sharing tool** to pose questions about produce (i.e. a fruit or nut tree in their neighbourhood that they've always wondered about) and invite others in the community to share their knowledge.

Who got involved

The project's webpage on Participate Hobsons Bay received 800 site visitors during the engagement period between 5 June and 17 July 2020.

59 online survey submissions were received with the majority of respondents from Newport, followed by Williamstown, Altona, Altona Meadows and Altona North. There was a high level of interest in the project from women and girls, who made up 76% of survey responses. Participants aged 26 to 44 years represented 45% of survey responses, followed by those aged 45 to 54 years (32%).

33 contributions were made on the 'Plot My Produce' mapping tool, and while contributions were made from community members across the municipality, almost a third of those were from Newport. One question was posed using the 'What's that produce?' image sharing tool.



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What we heard

Feedback survey

The top three activities that people would like to see offered as part of the Urban Harvest project related to connecting with others. In priority order, these included:

1. Opportunities to share, sell and swap produce;
2. Opportunities to connect with my neighbours and other local growers; and
3. Nature strip planting activities.

These were followed by activities that focused on learning and growing, such as sharing seasonal fruit and vegetable growing advice, learning how to cook and preserve produce, and how to identify produce.

The community strongly indicated that they would like to 'learn to grow more food at home' and to 'be connected with like-minded individuals' as part of their involvement in the project.

Over a quarter of respondents offered to either share their knowledge or teach a skill to other project participants. When asked what knowledge or skills they could share, 'cooking' ranked highest followed by sharing 'how to grow your own food at home' and helping with 'connecting and relationship building'.

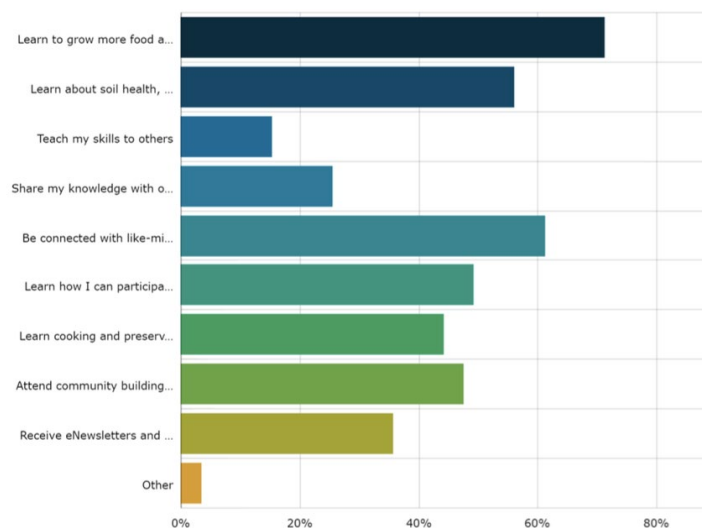
22% of respondents indicated they were already connected to a food-related community. Most other participants indicated that, although they're not connected currently, they are interested in finding out what groups are available locally.

A high percentage of respondents noted they are interested in becoming a member of a local community garden (80%), with 16% of all participants already an existing member.

In addition, respondents expressed interest in a range of additional opportunities such as sharing seeds and produce, community cook ups and wanting to learn more about productive indigenous plants including how to source and grow these.

Suggestions were made to establish a community kitchen to host cooking workshops and include a library of equipment that could be borrowed; to make small plots of land available for urban farming and utilise public places and nature strips for growing food; to plan green areas into new development sites and look at eradication strategies for pests and the reduction in the use of chemical sprays; and to establish a volunteer gardener program to assist the elderly.

How would you like to be involved?

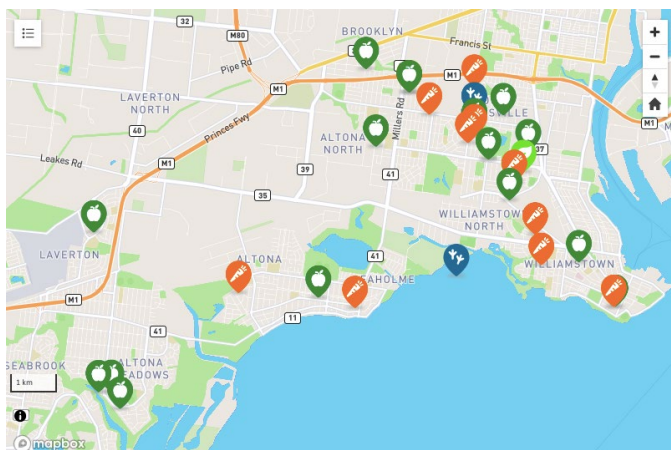






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'Plot My Produce'

33 contributions were made to the 'Plot My Produce' interactive map with each contribution listing multiple produce.



-  Fruit Trees - 14 contributions
-  Vegetables - 13 contributions
-  Herbs - 4 contributions
-  Animal Products - 2 contributions

The range of fruit trees, vegetables and herbs listed was extensive.

The produce included fruit trees (e.g. apples and pears) and citrus varieties (e.g. oranges, mandarins, lemons and limes), berries (e.g. mulberries, gooseberries, raspberries and strawberries) and other collections (e.g. guava and fig).

Vegetables noted included but was not limited to cauliflower, beetroots, celery, snow peas, kale, turnips and jalapenos.

Some herbs listed included fennel, rosemary, thyme and oregano, though the list goes on.

Next steps

We would like to thank everyone for their contribution and interest in the Urban Harvest project.

Council and the project partners will evaluate all contributions made, with this valuable information informing the activities and service offerings of the Urban Harvest project.

To stay connected and keep informed on this project, visit Participate Hobsons Bay via participate.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/urban-harvest.

If you have any questions regarding the project, please contact Jennifer McQueeney, Environmental Engagement Officer, on 1300 179 944 or email sustainability@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au.