



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Small Farmers & Urban Agriculturalists

Fact Sheet - January 2013

Small Farm

So, you have a small or urban farming operation? Maybe we can help you optimize your operation. We are the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Our mission is to help people help the land.

We understand farming isn't just for those with big tractors and hundreds of acres any more. A movement is sweeping across the nation where people from all walks of life are finding that farming can be a very rewarding experience. City and rural folks alike are enjoying cultivating their small parcels of land. From small backyards to 10 acres, and even balconies and rooftops, people can be found growing crops of their choice. Some are seeking healthy ways to feed their family, others enjoy connecting with the land and the stewardship involved. Some grow food; others grow flowers and pollinator plants. Some do it for income and others do it for relaxation.

Whatever your reason, we have experts on staff and educational resources available that may be of help to you. Below are some resources to get you started:

Assessment of Your Land

The NRCS has an office in nearly every county in the nation (locations can be found on our website). We can provide you with information to help assess your land's potential to meet your on-farm goals with regard to existing natural resources – land size, soil types and slope, water availability, etc. In some cases, we also have financial assistance available for capital improvements such as installing a drip irrigation system, a rainwater catchment system or a seasonal high tunnel for year-round productivity.

www.nrcs.usda.gov

Soil Information

Soil is the basis for all things that grow. Understanding your land's soil types and characteristics is a key to the

success of your crops. Check out our Soils web site where you can map your property with our Web Soil Survey, download the SoilWeb app and find important resources and information pertaining to your location and project type.

www.soils.usda.gov/use/urban/

Small Farm Resources

America's small farms are as diverse as the people that manage them. This site provides access to online publications, information resources, conferences, directories of assistance and expertise, USDA's Know your Farmer, Know your Food Initiative, as well as listings for U.S. small farm contacts at the state and territorial level.

<http://afsic.nal.usda.gov/farms-and-community/small-farms>

Alternative Farming Information

Around 15 percent of the world's food is now grown in urban areas. This site features a comprehensive compilation of information about city and suburban agriculture, including handbooks, guides, articles, studies, reports, programs and other information sources pertaining to agricultural production in and around cities.

<http://afsic.nal.usda.gov/farms-and-community/urban-agriculture>

Community Food Systems and Civic Agriculture

Links to USDA resources that promote sustainable local and regional food systems, helps consumers find sources of sustainably grown, local food, links to help growers find marketing outlets in their area, as well as information on the Farm to School efforts, USDA's Community Garden initiative and other resources and tools about local foods, urban and community agriculture can be found here.

<http://afsic.nal.usda.gov/farms-and-community/community-food-systems-and-civic-agriculture>

Helping People Help the Land

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