

## CATEGORY: POPULATIONS/HORTICULTURE PROGRAMS

### Migrant and Refugee Populations & Programs

There has been an increase in programs addressing migrant, refugee and internally displaced people (IDP) reflective of increasing numbers worldwide. As of 2017, over 68.5 million people have been forcibly displaced from their homes, with 25.4 million of this group being classified as refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018; Nadeau, 2019). The UN Refugee Agency defines a refugee as a person who has fled an armed conflict or persecution and who is protected by international law, whereas a migrant chooses to move to a different place mainly to improve their living conditions. According to the UN Refugee Convention, if a migrant seeks asylum in a country and is found to be entitled to a permanent residence permit, they have the status of refugee.

Programs with a horticulture focus include vocational horticulture training, community gardens welcoming migrants and refugees, ecovillage settings for health interventions (Pousen et al., 2020), food action initiatives, and social/horticulture programming. Researcher Palsdottier & colleagues have written extensively on such programs (2014, 2018, 2020, 2021), linking trauma and other health challenges to migrant and refugee experiences, with references to trauma/PTSD experienced by war veterans. An increasing number of studies have investigated nature's role and its restorative power with regard to the mental health of refugees as well as their social interaction (Poulsen et al., 2020; Charles-Rodriguez et al, 2023; Ekstam et al, 2021; Rai et al, 2023).

A variety of horticulture-focused strategies are addressing a complex web of health goals: integration of newcomers to communities, provision of safe community gathering spots, specifically community gardens and community kitchens, personal growth and post-traumatic growth, reduction of cultural and language barriers, and development of sense of self, trusting relationships and respect for human beings. Evidence of numerous community gardens for refugees & migrants suggests a growing interest for this type of programming (refer to program models below). A large number of articles are available through google search, identifying *refugee and gardening* programs that currently exist including information on Lansing MI which has more than 100 community gardens serving a large refugee resettlement; 20% of gardeners in 18 Lansing community gardens managed by the Lansing Food Band Garden Project are refugees and migrants.

The most recently published research addresses topics with horticulture for health impacts like migrant youth programming (Bennouna et al, 2019; Muda, 2017; Trauth et al, 2023); food security in a new land (Gangamma et al, 2024; Gingell, 2022); and horticulture programs for migrant and refugee populations in Italy, Canada, Finland and Denmark (Giare, 2020; Charles-Rodriguez et al, 2023; Uldall et al, 2022).

**For related resources refer to category: Populations/Horticulture Programs in Specific Settings – Mental Health and Trauma Recovery; category: Horticultural Therapy & Health Services – all sections; and category: Landscapes for Health – community gardens.**

#### Key Organizations

[Catholic Relief Services](#)

Local community gardens & refugee services

[The UN High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#)

## Books, journals & publications on migrant & refugee horticulture programs

- Bosch, M., & Bird, W. (Ed.). (2018). *Oxford textbook nature and public health: The role of nature in improving the health of a population*. Oxford University Press
- Cook, E.P. (2015). *Understanding people in context: The ecological perspective in counseling*. John Wiley and Sons.
- Griffin, M. (2017). *Reconstructing identity with urban community agriculture: How refugees confront displacement, food insecurity, and othering through community farming*. Thesis: University of North Texas.
- [Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health](#)
- [Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies](#)
- Raphaely, M., & Orback, M. (2023). Ch 16: Seeds of hope. In [Groupwork with refugees and survivors of human rights abuses](#). Routledge.
- Tsu, C. (2013). *Garden of the world: Asian immigrants and the making of agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley*. Oxford Press.
- United Nations Refugee Agency (2018). [Global trends: Forced displacement in 2017](#).

## Research & articles on migrant & refugee horticulture programs

Recently published selected research & articles:

- Atasoy, Y.Y. (2023). *Beyond the present: Therapy rehabilitation through landscape for those with post-war traumatic syndrome*. Thesis: Politecnico Milano.
- Atiyeh, S., Choudhuri, D.D., & Dari, T. (2020). Considerations for facilitating refugee acculturation through groups. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 45(4), 353-366.
- Bates, D., Burman, E., Ejike-King, L., & Rufyiri, C. (2012). Healthy transitions: A community-based participatory research approach with Burundians with refugee status. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, 16 (3), 153-174.
- Bennouna, C., Khauli, N., Basir, M. et al. (2019). School-based programs for supporting the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of adolescent forced migrants in high-income countries: A scoping review. *Social Science & Medicine*, 239, 112558.
- Biglin, J. (2020). Embodied and sensory experiences of therapeutic space: Refugee place-making within an urban allotment. *Health & Place*, 62, 102309.
- Block, A. M., Aizenman, L., Saad, A. et al. (2018). Peer support groups: Evaluating a culturally grounded, strengths-based approach for work with refugees. *Advances in Social Work*, 18(3), 930-948.
- Brabec, E. (2021). [‘If I have land, I feed my family’ – refugee resettlement through community gardening in Seattle case study](#). *Women & Migration*.
- Chan, J., DuBois, B., & Tidball, K. G. (2015). Refuges of local resilience: Community gardens in post-Sandy New York City. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 14(3), 625-635.
- Charles-Rodriguez, U., Venegas de la Torre, MDLP., Hecker, V. et al. (2023). The relationship between nature and immigrants' integration, wellbeing and physical activity: A scoping review. *J Immigr Minor Health.*, 25(1), 190-218.
- Charles-Rodriguez, U., Aborawi, A., Khatiwada, K. et al. (2023). Hands-on-ground in a new country: A community-based participatory evaluation with immigrant communities in Southern Alberta. *Glob Health Promot.*, 30(4), 25-34.
- Ekstam, E., Pálsdóttir, AM., & Asaba, E. (2021). Migrants' experiences of a nature-based vocational rehabilitation programme in relation to place, occupation, health and everyday life. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 28(1), 144-158.

- Emery, M.R., & Hurley, P.T. (2016). Ethnobiology in the city: Embracing the urban ecological moment. *Journal of Ethnobiology*, 36(4), 807-819.
- Faurest, K. (2015). Stranger in a strange land: Immigrant gardeners in a nation of immigrants. In Community Greening Review. *Journal of the American Community Gardening Association*, 20.
- Gangamma, R., Walia, B., Minkoff-Zern, L.A., & Tor, S. (2024). Role of gardening in mental health, food security, and economic well-being in resettled refugees: A mixed methods study. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 12(1), 3-18.
- Garcia Polanco, V. (2020). Equity and inclusion in the garden: Factors that facilitate immigrants and refugees participation in a community garden network in Lansing, MI. Thesis: Michigan State University.
- Gentin, S., Pitkänen, K., Chondromatidou, A.M. et al. (2019). Nature-based integration of immigrants in Europe: A review. *Urban Forestry Urban Greening*, 43, 126379.
- Gentin, S., Chondromatidou, A.M., Pitkänen, K. et al. (2018). Defining nature-based integration – perspectives and practices from the Nordic countries. *Reports of the Finnish Environment Institute*, 16.
- Gerber, M.M., Callahan, J.L., Moyer, D.N. et al. (2017). Nepali Bhutanese refugees reap support through community gardening. *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation*, 6(1), 17.
- Giacco, D., Laxhman, N., & Priebe, S. (2018). Prevalence of and risk factors for mental disorders in refugees. *Semin Cell Dev Biol.*, 77, 144-152.
- Giare, F., Ricciardi, G., & Borsotto, P. (2020). Migrant workers and processes of social inclusion in Italy: The possibilities offered by social farming. *Sustainability*, 12(10), 3991.
- Gingell, T., Murray, K., Correa-Velez, I., & Gallegos, D. (2022). Determinants of food security among people from refugee backgrounds resettled in high-income countries: A systematic review and thematic synthesis. *PLoS One*, 17(6), e0268830.
- Goralnik, L., Radonic, L., Garcia Polanco, V., & Hammon, A. (2022). Growing community: Factors of inclusion for refugee and immigrant urban gardeners. *Land*, 12(1), 68.
- Heilmayr, D., Reiss, N., & Buskirk, M. (2020). Community gardens cultivate positive experiences for refugees. *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture*, 30(1), 25-35.
- Hou, J. (2017). Urban community gardens as multimodal social spaces. *Greening Cities: Forms and Functions*, 113-130.
- Howarth, M., Brettle, A., Hardman, M., & Maden, M. (2020). What is the evidence for the impact of gardens and gardening on health and well-being: A scoping review and evidence-based logic model to guide healthcare strategy decision making on the use of gardening approaches as a social prescription. *BMJ Open*, 10(7), e036923.
- Jakstis, K., & Fischer, L. K. (2021). Urban nature and public health: How nature exposure and sociocultural background relate to depression risk [with immigrants & others]. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(18), 9689.
- Kartal D., Alkemade N., Eisenbruch M., & Kissane D. (2018). Traumatic exposure, acculturative stress and cultural orientation: The influence on PTSD, depressive and anxiety symptoms among refugees. *Soc. Psychiatry Psychiatr. Epidemiol.*, 53, 931-941.
- Koncikowski, J., & Capozziello, N. (2021, October). Therapeutic gardening: A community-led, community-wide approach. In *XV International People Plant Symposium and II International Symposium on Horticultural Therapies: The Role of Horticulture in 1330*, 31-40.
- Mai, A.T. (2019). Responding to the emotional needs of resettled refugees in the context of community gardens. Thesis: University of Texas.

- Marsh, P., Mallick, S., Kendal, D., & Riviere, R. (2023). Environmental place-making by the 'out of place': Migrants building connections to new landscapes through structured conservation activities. In Marsh & Williams (Eds.), *Cultivated therapeutic landscapes*. Routledge.
- Mejia, A., Bhattacharya, M., & Miraglia, J. (2020). Village Community Garden & Learning Center. Community gardening as a way to build cross-cultural community resilience in intersectionally diverse gardeners: Community-based participatory research and campus-community-partnered proposal. *JMIR Res Protoc.*, 9(10), e21218.
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- Mmako, N.J., Capetola, T., & Henderson-Wilson, C. (2019). Sowing social inclusion for marginalized residents of a social housing development through a community garden. *Health Promotions Journal Australia*, 30(3), 350-358.
- Muda, R. (2017). [Well-being through plants: The project of creating a therapeutic balcony for underaged asylum seekers](#). Thesis: Diaconia University of Applied Sciences.
- Nadeau, M. (2019). [The role of horticultural therapy in the treatment of refugees with post-traumatic stress disorder](#). Thesis. Liberty University.
- Nisbet, C., Lestrat, K.E., & Vatanparast, H. (2022). Food security interventions among refugees around the globe: A scoping review. *Nutrients*, 14(3), 522.
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- Ogolla, E., & John, C. (2020). [Innovative 'keyhole' gardens help refugees improve their nutrition. UNHCR](#).
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- Trauth, J.N., Harris, K., & Jackson, N. (2023). Using trauma-informed care and horticulture therapy with college students: A counseling approach modeled after a refugee resettlement community. In *Practical strategies to reduce childhood trauma and mitigate exposure to the school-to-prison Pipeline*. IGI Global, 66-82.
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### Examples of migrant & refugee horticulture programs

*Azadi Community Garden* in Iraq's Kurdistan region was established in 2016 with its name (Azadi) meaning liberation in Arabic. Focused on small scale food production within a camp environment, women and children learn about recycling greywater, composting, growing plants under plastic and herb growing.

<https://lemontreustrust.org/community-gardens/>

*Bardarash Community Garden, Kurdistan* is located at the SEED Foundation Trauma Center in the refugee camp, with the mission of helping people heal from trauma, cope with displacement, rebuild a future, and use gardening as part of psychosocial and mental health services.

<https://lemontreustrust.org/community-gardens/>

“Community garden allows refugees to grow native produce”. Louisville, with one of the largest refugee populations in the US, and its Common Earth Gardens offers agricultural programs, garden plots, and food donations to food insecure families.

<https://spectrumnews1.com/ky/louisville/news/2022/06/20/refugee-community-garden-common-earth-louisville->

*Denver Urban Gardens Yu Meh Community Farmer Training Program* & Project Worthmore provide sustainable farming education with a focus on community food security for this population.

<https://dug.org/delaney-impact/>

*Folkuniversitetet Vaxjo* garden in Sweden is used as a rehabilitation site, language center, social setting, & safe location for multicultural exchange.

<https://learning.ugain.eu/portfolio/se03/>

*Galilee Lutheran Church Garden* for refugees in Roseville, MN helps people grow food, and be proud of their own work, changing the pattern of always receiving help.

<https://arriveministries.org/gardening-with-refugees/>

*Govan Community Project*, Scotland supports refugee & asylum seekers locally, hosting a woman's group, gardening & other garden-based activities.

<https://www.govancommunityproject.org.uk/>

*Hillside Paradise Parking Plots* led by World Relief Seattle, an immigrant & refugee resettlement organization, created this place to grow food and socialize for people from 18 different countries.

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/washington/stories-in-washington/food-gardens-immigrants-refugees/>

Lansing MI has more than 100 community gardens with a large refugee resettlement; 20% of gardeners in 18 of Lansing community gardens managed by the Lansing Food Band Garden Project are refugees & immigrants.

<https://d.lib.msu.edu/etd/48591>

*Lemon Tree Trust* transforms refugee and internally displaced people (IDP) camps one garden at a time and supports agricultural businesses which create employment, purpose, cultural identity and social/economic change.

<https://lemontreustrust.org/>

*Marion Polk Food Share* uses a youth farm to help refugees grow food for themselves and their new community.

<https://marionpolkfoodshare.org/refugees-grow-food-community/>

*Neighbor's Field* in rural Georgia helps refugees heal from their experiences and plant a garden, grow food using this as a therapeutic activity.

<https://www.loe.org/shows/segments.html?programID=19-P13-00007&segmentID=6>

*New Lands Farm* in New England works with newly resettled refugees, many of whom have significant agricultural experience & who are able to plant crops in this setting, with support from Lutheran Social Services.

<https://www.localharvest.org/new-lands-farm-west-springfield-M57340>

[New Roots](#) training program at Cultivate Kansas City, in conjunction with Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas, empowers refugees, immigrants and English Language Learner farmers to develop sustainable businesses, providing training, access to markets, and garden space.

*Ridgecrest Community Garden*, Vickery Meadow Dallas TX is thriving with new American citizens originally from Bhutan, Burma, South Sudan who, in collaboration with local gardeners, grow native plants from their beloved home countries using 50+ garden production beds.

<https://www.holisticdivineinnovations.org/about-ridgecrest-community-garden>

Socially aware gardens at Jerusalem Botanical Gardens use their public garden as part of social programming, including [Plants Grow People](#), with its rehabilitation focus for holocaust survivors, war veterans and immigrants.

St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Falls Church, VA welcome people to their Sacred Places Garden with peace poles decorated in many languages representative of the diverse immigrant community.

[https://naturesacred.org/sacred\\_place/st-anthonys-of-padua-catholic-church/](https://naturesacred.org/sacred_place/st-anthonys-of-padua-catholic-church/)

Tapestry Farms nonprofit empowers refugees with urban gardening and support services in Iowa.

<https://www.tapestryfarms.org/>

The Syracuse Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program is a 3-year educational farm-based model for growing, selling and producing vegetables, with the intent of promoting farm businesses.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njE8qlkALgw>

THAD (Therapeutic Horticulture Activity Database) offers TH activities across populations including migrant and refugee (activities like Newcomer Plot Gardens on Hospital Grounds, Eating Plant Parts- Migrant & Refugee which include a focus on knowledge transfer, inclusion and ethnobotany).

<https://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/therapeutic-horticulture-activities-database/>

Transplanting Traditions community farm provides agricultural and entrepreneurial education to refugee farmers at this incubator site in Chapel Hill, NC. in support of food security and cultural community space for refugee youth and adults.

<https://www.transplantingtraditions.org/>

### **Videos, websites & webinars on migrant & refugee horticulture programs**

[Catholic Relief Services](#) website offers articles related to gardening with newcomers, immigrants and refugees: demonstration plots, kitchen gardens, nutrition support.

<https://www.crs.org/solr-search?search=gardening+programs+>

Global Garden Reminds Bhutanese Refugees of Home video shows urban farm activity in Chicago, with support from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, and how the community supports plant-based food action.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oDQ1thQWM4I>

New Roots for Refugees is a 4-year farming program in Kansas City, Missouri with intent for participants to earn extra money, purchase land and begin farm based businesses. Video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VfQPXDr-vVw>

Plant it Forward Farms in Houston, Tx has a network of urban farms teaching refugees who were farmers, how to farm in their new climate - training program, financial incentives & more.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tASkCJyYog>

Refugee Garden in Denver Co. through Project Worthmore uses private property to grow food as a model for this population 2009 and still active with a refugee population in CO of 60,000.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhgfJdbV6Tc>

*The Plants that Make Refugee Camps Feel More Like Home* article & photos sheds light on life in these camps, and strategies for surviving including gardening.

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/the-plants-that-make-refugee-camps-feel-more-like-home>

*Urban Gardens for the social integration of migrants* (UGAIN) ebook, cofounded by Erasums & Programme of the European Union partnered with 7 European countries to promote community/urban gardens as an effective strategy for migrants & refugees.

[https://www.ugain.online/fileadmin/docs/UGAIN\\_SummaryReport\\_EN\\_updated\\_.pdf](https://www.ugain.online/fileadmin/docs/UGAIN_SummaryReport_EN_updated_.pdf)

### **Related organizations**

[Catholic Charities USA](#)

[Refugee International](#)

[United Nations List of approved NGOs & CSOs for refugees & migrants](#)

[Urban Roots-Glasgow UK](#)

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