

## **Abstract**

In an increasingly urbanized world, concerns about food supply, the environment and health, and social isolation are on many people's minds. There is growing interest in urban agriculture as a way to improve the sustainability of cities. Urban gardens are a form of urban agriculture which provide shared space and resources for urban dwellers to grow food, and have been present in Canada since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Knowing what helps gardens succeed can help to develop sustainable urban garden programs.

This report uses thematic content analysis of interviews with urban gardeners and organizers to identify factors important to the success of four types of community gardens in the Hamilton area: Teaching gardens, collective group gardens, municipally-organized allotment gardens, and locally-organized allotment gardens. The factors under consideration are organized into five themes: Natural, Physical, Social-Cultural, Institutional, and Economic.

Most people garden because they like to grow food and identify personal, community, and environmental benefits from gardening. Important factors include locating gardens near participants; having access to water, clean and fertile soil, and adequate fencing; effective leadership; and good, long-term relationships with land owners. Limited political support is seen as a barrier to establishing more gardens. These findings support recommendations that the City recognize and develop policies for urban gardens as a land use. The garden network should work with the city to develop a guide to starting gardens which sets out how to start gardens, important factors to consider, and ways of improving garden conditions. Marketing and workshops should be used to increase awareness of urban gardening opportunities and to develop leadership capacity.