

urban _____
| agriculture
month |

Growing edible towns, cities, and suburbs

Urban Agriculture Month:
November 1 – 30, 2023





Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the custodianship of the Wurundjeri, Woi Wurrung and Bunurong elders, recognising that they and their ancestors stewarded these lands and their diverse creatures sustainably for tens of thousands of years.

We respectfully acknowledge that sovereignty over these lands was never ceded, and that the processes of historical truth-telling and a duly negotiated treaty are essential for justice for First Nations peoples. The path to a better food system for all Australians must begin with the acknowledgement and recovery of this history, based on the principles of care, respect, healing, justice and regeneration.



*Smoking Ceremony with Uncle Dave Wandin
Credit: Ninna Mar*

About Urban Agriculture Month 2023

Facilitated by Sustain:

The Australian Food Network, Urban Agriculture Month is an annual celebration of Australia's growing urban agriculture movement.

Throughout November, we bring together hundreds of diverse and exciting events right around Australia, from open gardens, workshops, guided tours, crop swaps, forums, seminars, and communal feasts to other hands-on learning experiences. In 2023 we organised four flagship events: our two-day national Urban Agriculture Forum in Sydney, one-day Forums in Melbourne and Brisbane, and our Roundtable in Ballina.

Sustain is a registered health promotion charity, and a Social Traders certified social enterprise that has been working to advance sustainable and healthy food systems throughout Australia since 2015.

Launched in 2021, Urban Agriculture Month connects passionate people, strengthens networks, and creates healthy food neighbourhoods, whilst celebrating and raising awareness of Australia's growing urban agriculture movement. In the process, we are pushing dignified food security and universal access to good food higher on the agenda of government and policy makers nationwide.



Acknowledgements

Leading event partner

McLeod Family Foundation

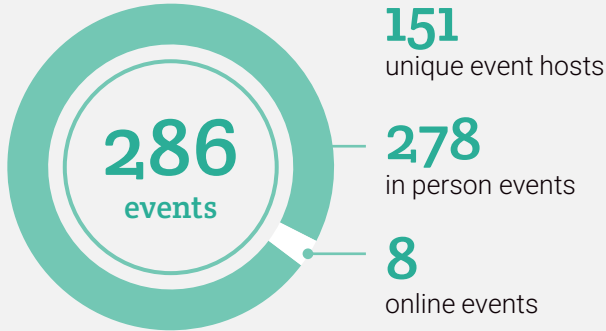
The McLeod Family Foundation was established in 2004 and supports a range of causes. They have a strong interest in supporting a holistic approach to sustainable food and agriculture systems, particularly on the peri-urban fringe.



What is 'Urban Agriculture'?

The growing and producing of food in suburbs and cities, in backyards, in laneways and balconies, on verges and in schools; to empower local action, create healthy suburbs and neighbourhood, invite volunteering opportunities, and foster meaningful community connections.

Events Overview



Growth since...

2021
255%
growth in event numbers

2022
7/8 states/territories saw an increase in events

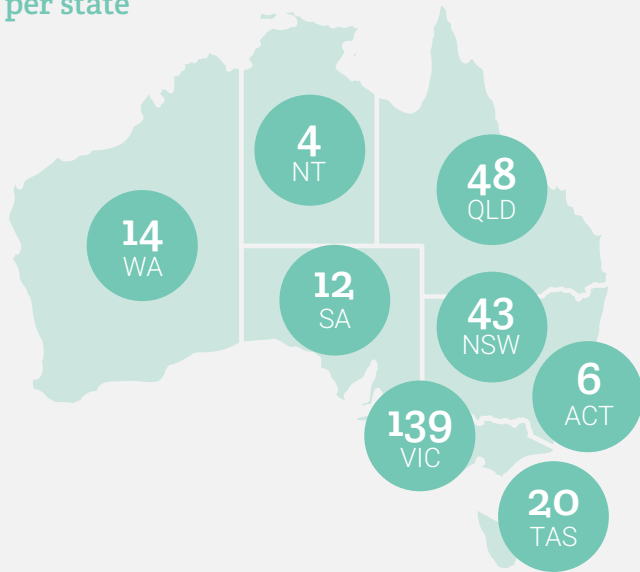
30% growth in event numbers

300% increase in QLD

92% increase in NSW

15% growth in event hosts

Events per state



23 event types including:



Estimated attendance across Urban Agricultural Month:

20,000
attendees (in-person and online)

32%
of events welcomed more than 50 attendees

37%
of hosts organised more than 1 event

52%
of hosts organised special events for Urban Agriculture Month

Highlights



Sustain and **Community Gardens Australia** have been collaborating for many years. In 2023 the two organisations officially partnered to co-host the Sydney Urban Agriculture Forum, and in support of our growing Urban Agriculture Month, Community Gardens Australia officially launched their inaugural National Community Garden Day on Saturday 25th November to coincide with Urban Agriculture Month. It was a fantastic opportunity to share each organisation's work with an entirely new audience and grow the reach of this important movement across Australia.



From Sydney Urban Agriculture Forum attendees



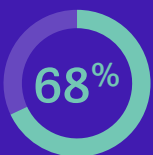
Just fantastic to see so much optimism and action happening all over the world. Great motivation!

There was a diversity of perspectives offered through the presentations which also served to meet people working or interested in various angles of urban agriculture.

The 2023 Urban Agriculture Forum held in the historical Redfern on Gadigal Lands was a most grounding, hopeful and connecting experience! Thank you Sustain and Community Gardens Australia for hosting this event and bringing us all together.

Why choose to take part in Urban Agriculture Month?

Survey question – top 5



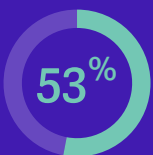
To increase engagement with **local community** and supporters



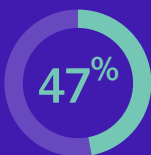
To **educate** others and share skills



To attract **new visitors/** participants



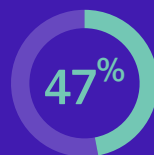
To **celebrate!***



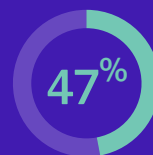
To be part of a **national movement**

How did you benefit from hosting an Urban Agriculture Month event?

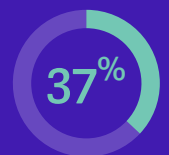
Survey question – top 6



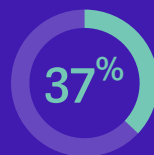
Increased our **profile**



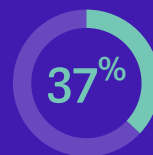
Attracted **new people**



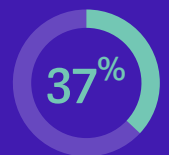
Raised/ made **money**



Made **new friends**



Supported **existing work**



Supported the **local community**

*This is the first time celebrating has been part of the top 5 reasons



SUSTAIN FLAGSHIP EVENTS

Sydney Urban Agriculture Forum

Stats Overview



2 day
Sydney Forum



30
sessions



72
speakers



239
attendees

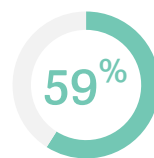


60
Sunday tour attendees



76%
of attendees had never been to a Sustain UAF before

Most enjoyable aspects of the forum: Survey question – top 5



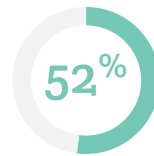
Hearing from **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander speakers**



Being around **like-minded people**



Increasing **knowledge**



Networking opportunities



Hearing from **international speakers**

How would you rate your experience of the event?



The highlight of Urban Agriculture Month, Sustain's two-day Urban Agriculture Forum returned to an in-person event in 2023 after the pandemic restrictions limited our 2021 event to online attendance. Following the enormous success of Sustain's Urban Agriculture Forum at the Sydney City Farm in 2022, we decided to host 2023's signature event in Sydney, at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence in Redfern. We also teamed up with Community Gardens Australia to co-host this event for the first time.

This gave us a great opportunity to develop relationships and connections we first made in 2022, as well as reach an entirely new audience with our work.

We were delighted to receive 239 attendees across the two days, with people from local government, the non-profit sector, business start-ups, researchers and academics, students, funders and emerging farmers all joining us to share in the wisdom of our 72 speakers across 30 sessions.

This showcase national event had a strong focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander food sovereignty, with Brenden Moore from Sydney Botanic Gardens and Sharon Windsor from Indigiearth delivering inspiring keynotes on Friday morning. They were complemented by a panel of local Sydney First Nations elders on Friday afternoon, facilitated by Dr Tarunna Sebastian from the University of Sydney.

With 72 speakers the program was wide-ranging and covered diverse aspects of urban agriculture both in Australia and internationally.

Topics included:

- ✓ Gardens as Nourishing Terrains
- ✓ Gardens and food in schools
- ✓ Food sovereignty in Singapore
- ✓ Planning for urban agriculture – enablers and barriers
- ✓ Learning and connecting in the community garden
- ✓ Agricultural careers and education
- ✓ Cultivating a food growing culture



Special guests Linda Appel Lipsuis, CEO of Denver Urban Gardens and Rabekha Sibert, Urban Agriculture Coordinator, City of Dallas, made the trip to Australia to support this national event and the Forums in Brisbane and Melbourne, sharing their perspectives from the United States.

We enjoyed national and local media coverage via a story syndicated by AAP on the event, mentions on ABC TV's Gardening Australia, ABC Sydney and other ABC stations, Gardening Australia Magazine, Organic Gardening Magazine etc.

We are extremely grateful to our sponsors the City of Sydney, the McLeod Foundation, Water Ups, Hoselink, AV Visual, Pip Magazine for their support with our event, and to Lime Bikes and Pedal Set Go for their support of our cycling tour.





SUSTAIN FLAGSHIP EVENTS

Brisbane Urban Agriculture Forum

Sustain's inaugural Brisbane Urban Agriculture Forum was our first to be held in Queensland. With a fabulous organising committee representing the collaboration of multiple local and national organisations working together for a common goal, the event focused on the themes of harvest insights, honour culture, celebrate diversity, and cultivate connections. We partnered with Baroona Farm, Northey St City Farm, Young Farmers Connect, Mini Farm Project and the Qld chapter of Community Gardens Australia.

The highlight of the day was the keynote presentation by **Dominique Chen**, a Gamilaroi/ Gomerioi woman, and interdisciplinary researcher, living on Jinibara Country, who presented to more than 70 attendees at the sold-out event.



An extract from Dominique's passionate, moving speech can be found at the back of this report.





SUSTAIN FLAGSHIP EVENTS

Melbourne Urban Agriculture Forum

Food as a Public Good: Innovations in Food Systems Policy and Practice

As part of Urban Agriculture Month, Sustain also hosted and facilitated a forum at the Melbourne Multicultural Hub exploring how food can be a tool for ecological and social wellbeing in our communities.

Using participatory methods to facilitate dialogue and reflection, the forum invited participants from a diverse range of sectors to collectively envision pathways to a more flourishing food system.

The Forum was full of lively and passionate discussion, with sessions covering food planning and urbanisation, international urban agriculture, food as a public good, and community practice innovations. Participants delved deeper into these topics through Socratic circle dialogues.

Sustain was delighted that there were so many innovative solutions proposed to drive forward an agenda of healthy, equitable, and sustainable food systems. A big thank you to our sponsors VicHealth, Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation and the City of Melbourne and to all the participants who generously shared their time and experience.





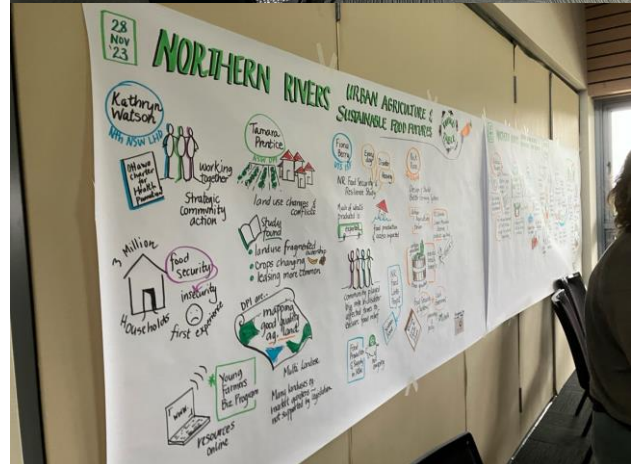
SUSTAIN FLAGSHIP EVENTS

Northern Rivers NSW

Urban Agriculture and Sustainable Food Futures Roundtable

In an event that brought the 4th national Urban Agriculture Month to a close, community leaders and stakeholders gathered in Ballina for an important discussion on the future of sustainable food systems in the Northern Rivers. Sustain and our locals partners invited government, community, and not-for-profit organisations to participate in a “Northern Rivers urban agriculture and food futures Roundtable”.

Co-hosted by Northern NSW Local Health District and the UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures, this half day event drew together key stakeholders in a participatory and capacity-building roundtable that explored the following questions:



- 1. ? What is the current Northern Rivers food and farming system?
- 2. ? What are the key challenges to the Northern Rivers food and farming system from health to climate adaptation, food security and reconstruction?
- 3. ? What roles do key stakeholders play in addressing these challenges?
- 4. ? What does participatory food system governance look like for the Northern Rivers region?

In particular, we explored the intersection of food security and housing, in the context of rising living costs and urban development. Participants emphasised the need to prioritise food production and security alongside housing and infrastructure.

For this event we worked with graphic recorder, Michelle Walker, who was able to capture the entirety of the afternoon’s discussion, using visual storytelling to explain how all the different food system stakeholders intersected in Northern Rivers Region.

Dominique Chen

Walking Story,
speaking at the Brisbane
Urban Agriculture Forum 2023



Because the truth is, despite all of the amazing work that has been done and continues to be done in the space of urban agriculture, regenerative agriculture, community gardens etc, we can't pretend, deny, or forget that all of this work is being undertaken on unceded Aboriginal land. Land that was so violently stolen, only a handful of generations ago, and assumed by others as if such things are distant and inconsequential.

1 in 5 urban-based Aboriginal families go without food each week, and in urban areas we have some of the lowest food insecurity in the country. This, in our own Country, that fed us freely, and which we managed with abundance, since time immemorial.

Truly, this work can feel difficult, and I say these things not with bringing incrimination or shame or blame, but with love, generosity, accountability, and a belief that we can, all together do whole lot better than what we're doing currently. To be the conduits of something different. Something new. Because everything changes when we change.

**Everything heals when we heal.
Country heals when we heal.**

Meet Sustain: The Australian Food Network

Sustain has a mission:

To create an edible Australia that nourishes people and nurtures the planet.

We know that transitioning to a healthier, more sustainable, and equitable food system, (the interconnected systems and processes linking nutrition, food, health, community development and agriculture), requires good policy and practice, underpinned by a strong evidence base and inspiring examples that empower communities and governments to work collectively towards a better food future for all.

As **connectors**, we facilitate events and grow networks for sharing knowledge and encouraging collaboration amongst growers, producers, planners, landowners, and communities.

As **researchers**, we translate and share our food systems knowledge to build an evidence base for effective food policy and action.

As **policy experts**, we understand the critical issues facing local government and their communities. Our holistic approach aims to cut across the institutional and departmental silos that hinder cohesive and integrated food policy implementation. This applies equally to state and federal government where the need for a whole-of-system approach is crystal clear.

As **practitioners**, we design and deliver community food projects, (including our two urban farms), that experiment with new approaches to food system transformation and model the change we want to see. Our projects aim to demonstrate in the here and now that, yes, a better future is within our grasp.

Sustain is led by qualified and experienced practitioner-consultants with an outstanding track record in food system research, governance and practice, and specialist knowledge of the urban agriculture, food security and local government sectors in Australia.

Our dedicated team includes qualified public health and food system professionals, bringing a diverse mix of research and policy expertise in health and nutrition, housing, and food security to every project, along with a deep, practice-based commitment to a rights-to-food approach to food security and social justice.

Find out more about
Sustain's work

www.sustain.org.au

Get in touch!



