



Urban Harvest

Farmers Help Make Houston a More Food Sustainable City

By Ray Sher, Homes Correspondent

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Grocery stores feed Houston, at least that is where we go to purchase our food. It has been that way since I was a boy, and likely way before.

My dad and mom owned a mom-and-pop grocery. My dad would go to the food warehouse farmers market three days a week and select really nice produce for their customers. I marveled at how he chose to buy high-quality produce, telling me everyone deserves produce that is fresh and in good shape.

Today in Houston, we have more options than when I moved here in 1967, and more options than the first ongoing farmers markets started about 14 years ago, where we could purchase freshly harvested produce from the local growers who had just come from the farms with their wares.

That was a big upgrade for Houston. Yes, at that time, many people had gardens in their yards, and some people gardened at community gardens, most of which were helped by Urban Harvest. Those are great sources of fresh produce.

Now, a new locally grown food venue has begun. Plant It Forward farmers, who are recent refugees having been settled in Houston after fleeing their home countries, have begun growing in urban settings, and selling their produce at farm stands. There currently are three farm stands. The produce sold at these stands mostly is harvested the morning the stand is open, while some is harvested the day before and washed to bring it to customers as clean as possible.

These stands are flush with vegetables grown at the site of the stand, without pesticides or chemical fertilizers.

The option to purchase sustainably grown produce in our neighborhoods, from the growers themselves, is exciting and an important major step in making Houston more food sustainable.

Think about a future in 10 years, where there may be food stands in most parts of the city where you can purchase and eat food grown in your neighborhood. Yes, backyard gardens, community gardens, farmers markets and now food stands are not just thoughts of a future, but reality.

Support each of these venues. If you can't grow it yourself, support others who help make Houston a more food sustainable city.

Plant It Forward produce stands

Westbury Community Garden: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday, 12581 Dunlap (near Hillcroft and South Main)

St. Thomas University: 4:30-6:30 p.m. Wednesday; 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, 1318 Sul Ross St. (corner of Yupon)

Willowbend at Fondren: 2:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesday - Friday; 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Saturday; and 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, 10595 Fondren, stand is on Willowbend.

This column is sponsored by [Urban Harvest](http://www.urbanharvest.org). To find out more about community gardens, school gardens, farmers markets and gardening classes, visit www.urbanharvest.org.