

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

Cutting-edge Insight From Industry Insiders

ENVIRONMENT

Urban food and the fight against climate change



Food production is a major contributor – and potential savior – in the fight against climate change. Urban farming consultant [Jon Walsh](#) outlines how urban food could be the hallowed silver bullet



Jon Walsh, Director, [Business Grow](#) > [Bio](#)

10-second briefing

- Growing urban food without chemicals supports personal and environmental health
- Rooftop gardens and growing food indoors are key growth areas
- Urban farming is a ‘silver bullet’ in fight against climate change

About Jon

- Jon has taught over 850 people in Tokyo how to grow healthy food
- Runs urban farming workshops and programs
- Key project: [Grand Hyatt Tokyo garden](#)
- Aiming to help [eliminate city food shortages](#).

Business Dashboard

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Urban farming isn't new, in fact, growing food where we live has been practiced for millennia. But it's ramping up in Tokyo, Japan thanks in no small part to urban farming and sustainability consultant and instructor [Jon Walsh](#) who has spent 8 years putting the art of growing healthy food on the map for almost 1,000 residents.

Read on to learn what's growing in Tokyo and Japan's urban farming sector.

How would you describe Tokyo's urban farming space?

Small, likely due to a large degree to Tokyo's general lack of space and hyper-efficient food delivery. Urban food production isn't widely practiced, except perhaps by wealthy landowners with a gardening bent, and [community gardeners](#). Many residents grow flowers, shrubs and trees at home but not so many grow vegetables. To switch, all they need to do is replace their plants with vegetable and herbs planted in suitable soil.

There's millions of places in cities like Tokyo where people could grow food. To find them, all people need to do is look for virtually any sunlit space.

What are your predictions for the urban farming sector in Tokyo for 2020?

I see more garden installations, in particular by schools and offices, and growth in office and school urban farming training across the board. Office blocks with safe rooftops are ideal places to grow food and should be utilized more.

What key changes are you seeing in the urban farming space?

A gradual but growing awareness of the benefits of growing healthy urban food, which was widely practiced by older generations but has largely been lost on the youngest two generations. Also a growing awareness of how food affects our health in good ways and bad.

Which areas of the market have the most potential?

I strongly believe that with the way climate change is going, it may soon become too hot to grow many kinds of food outdoors. This points in one clear direction – the importance of **growing food indoors**,



Attendees at one of Jon's [urban farming workshops](#) in Tokyo

What are your main focus areas at the moment?

Building up my network of [Food Havens Tokyo](#) members to create a model that combines urban food production and donations that I believe can crush urban hunger issues and that can be implemented in cities worldwide. Also, I'm working with a number of schools to [install gardens](#), [train students](#), and [build rooftop gardens](#).

Top tips for people starting growing food for the first time?

Buy or find a pot, some gardening soil, and a packet of seeds or a seedling and grow something! Then do it again, and again.

➔ [Beginners Food Growing Pack](#)

How are you helping the industry move forward?

Generally by being a spokesperson and outspoken fan of urban farming. I'm always talking about growing food on Facebook and thankfully, people are taking notice and supporting me in many ways. The future is looking fantastic.

a proven concept that I believe is going to take off. One company that is leading the way in this area is Boston, U.S.-based [Freight Farms](#), which grows food hydroponically in converted shipping containers.

There is also huge potential in Tokyo to develop thousands of **rooftop gardens** that could not only provide fresh local food to people inside buildings but also supply local restaurants, supermarkets, hotels, and other businesses.

Office gardens where workers grow food and [donate a portion of it](#) are a great way companies can contribute to the health of staff and the environment, support their community, and accomplish corporate environmental objectives. They are also a smart way to stand out and attract [positive media publicity](#), and if gardens are on city rooftops, they would be a great place to enjoy after work drinks.

How is urban food contributing to the fight against climate change?

Urban farming can make a large difference. Agriculture including forestry and other land use contribute approximately [24% of global annual emissions](#) as well as pollution. The 'urban' in 'urban farming' is about growing food closer to where it is consumed, which reduces [food miles](#), packaging costs and pollution. And if no chemicals are used, there will be less environmental damage that typically poisons us and other species.

What does Business Grow do?

We provide 3 main services: [garden installation](#), [urban farming training](#), and [resources](#). Regarding installing gardens, our biggest project has been setting up an organic garden at the [Grand Hyatt Tokyo](#). In terms of training, we run [urban farming programs](#) for adults and children of all ages teaching up to [20 lessons](#), and 1-off [workshops](#) for [schools](#), [office teams](#), [embassies](#), and [other organizations](#). Our [Urban Farming Quick Start Pack](#) on-site consulting service is also very popular. (➔ [Service Summary](#).)

What makes Business Grow different?

I believe Business Grow is the only urban farming consultancy in Tokyo providing all English products and services. Everything we offer has been developed in-house and tailored for the local market with an eye on global expansion.

Benefits of urban farming?

Growing urban food without chemicals can help improve health, boost disaster preparedness, maximize self-sufficiency, cut costs, help protect the environment and fight climate change – at the same time. It's the silver bullet. Also, home grown tomatoes are the bomb!



More Information

- ➔ [Urban Farming Service Summary](#)
- ➔ [Product & Service Portfolio](#)
- ➔ [Urban Farming Courses, Lectures, Seminars & Workshops](#)

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