

Urban Green – what do we mean?

Learn what the latest gardening term means to you.

THE term “urban green” is popping up in environmental reports, gardening and lifestyle magazines, blogs and, of late, in government and council papers and plans. So, what does urban green mean and why does it matter?

Urban green means so many things to so many different people. Recent European research defined urban greening as “the art, science and technology of managing vegetated areas, and potential vegetated areas in and around cities for the psychological, sociological, economic, and aesthetic benefits green areas provide society”.

But why the focus on urban areas? According to University of Copenhagen research, city beautification is becoming an issue that more and more leaders are following and exploring. The theory being that the more aesthetically pleasing you make a city, the more people will want to live there, and the happier they will be. Who wouldn’t want clean, healthier air to breathe, natural temperature regulation, increased productivity and a greater sense of pride in the area you live and/or work in? All of these benefits create a positive feeling among those who are near green spaces.

However, as Kermit the Frog once famously said “it’s not easy being green”! Putting forward the business case for more urban green can be tough. Often, short-term decision making considers only immediate profits and does not fully capture the long-term financial benefits of green space.

Covering previous green spaces with urban developments is not a new trend. The green movement dates back to medieval times when warriors battled for plots of land to plant crops to sustain their families. As trading increased, so did the need for commercial centres.

It’s long been accepted that green spaces are good for us. Research is now providing evidence in terms of environmental benefits, physical and mental health benefits, social benefits and economic savings. This evidence is being used to push for more urban green in town planning.

Clearly, in some areas, population density prevents buildings from being knocked down to make green spaces, but there are many other ways to increase the amount of green in urban areas. Living walls and vertical gardens, living roofs (see *Weekend Gardener* issue 383), office plants (*Weekend Gardener* issue 381), and more. So, rather than say “there is no space” take up the challenge to make your area greener by growing up, out and over. Do your bit to add a little urban green.

