

# Urban Agriculture

## A New Link between Mental Wellbeing and Land Contamination?

The link between land contamination and mental wellbeing has long been recognised for those living on, or close to, sites affected by historical contamination. In many cases, this relationship has been considered in the context of stress-related health effects (anxiety and depression) experienced by homeowners whose properties have been constructed on, or close to, land affected by historical contamination at a time when environmental legislation was less robust than it is today.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, could we be seeing a permanent shift in human behaviour (in terms of the way we interact with land) driven by our increased awareness of the importance of our mental wellbeing, that is inadvertently encouraging us to increase our exposure to contaminants in soil?

One example of such a behavioural change is the growing trend in urban agriculture and 'guerrilla gardening', which is reported to have increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it is a trend that may continue to flourish against the backdrop of post-pandemic price rises, delivery driver shortages and general consumer fears of future occurrences of panic buying leading to bare shelves in supermarkets.

Whilst a seemingly great idea for improving food security and nutrition, reducing climate change impacts and of course improving the mental wellbeing of those involved in the activity, the land often chosen for this activity may be less than 'suitable for use' from a chemical contamination perspective.

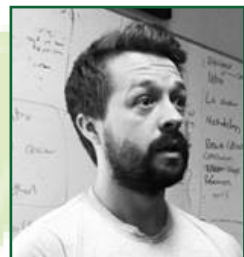


Image of urban farming: taken from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/grow-your-own-urban-farming-flourishes-in-coronavirus-lockdowns/>

This short webinar organised by the YCLF seeks to explore this theme by inviting Dr Michael Hardman (Senior Lecturer in Urban Geography at the University of Salford) to speak about the rise in popularity of urban agriculture in the UK and elsewhere, looking at the spatial distribution of this activity and the types and levels of contaminants that may be present in the soils. This shall be supported Dr Duncan Scott (Technical Director at Vertase FLI Ltd) who shall give consideration to the exposure scenario that may best represent urban agricultural practices for assessing risk to human health.



Dr Duncan Scott



Dr Michael Hardman