



URBAN GREENING

Creating Healthy, Resilient, and Wildlife-Friendly Communities

WHAT IS URBAN GREENING?

As of 2020, over 94% of Californians live in urban areas. Many urban spaces are covered in concrete and asphalt, which can be hot, noisy, and impact both people and wildlife. These surfaces leave little room for plants to grow, change the flow of water, increase temperature, and make it difficult for animals to find food, shelter, and safe travel routes.

Urban greening means bringing more plants, trees, and natural spaces into our neighborhoods, along with all the benefits they provide. This can be as simple as planting trees, creating community gardens, or adding green roofs. It can also be as complex as restoring creek corridors and building new parks. These projects create cooler, healthier, and more welcoming spaces for people and wildlife.

HOW URBAN GREENING WORKS

Urban Greening improves the health and wellbeing of people and nature by:



Planting trees and vegetation (especially native plants) to cool air, reduce pollution, and provide food and shelter for wildlife.



Connecting habitat to link parks and greenways so wildlife can move safely.



Expanding spaces that absorb water to slow runoff, filter stormwater, and reduce flooding.



Shaping healthier spaces to encourage activity, gathering, and connection to nature.

URBAN GREENING IN SAN FRANCISCO



Green roofs and walls (commercial buildings)



Greenways (active transportation corridors)



Community learning gardens (schoolyards)



Restored creeks and wetlands (parks)

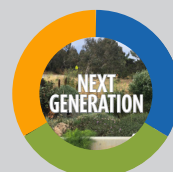


Rain gardens and GSI features (residential)



Street trees and shaded sidewalks (streets)

Photos courtesy of SFPUC and SFEI



BENEFITS OF URBAN GREENING

FLOOD REDUCTION

Urban areas can flood when rainwater runs off hard surfaces, like pavement and rooftops, and exceeds the capacity of the sewer system. Urban greening helps reduce flooding. Rain gardens, vegetated swales, and planted areas allow water to soak into the ground instead of flowing to storm drains. Trees and plants catch rainwater and slow the flow into storm drains. Soil and plant roots trap and filter pollutants before they reach streams and the Bay.

HELPING WILDLIFE THRIVE

Urban greening provides food, water, and shelter for wildlife – especially when planted with native plants. It also connects parks and green spaces so animals can move safely. A mix of plants and habitats makes ecosystems stronger and better able to adapt to change. When wildlife thrives, people benefit too – through pollination, natural pest control, and the joy of seeing wildlife in daily life.

GET INVOLVED!

Rain Guardians is a San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) volunteer program that enables San Francisco residents to “adopt” a rain garden in their neighborhood and guard it from trash and debris.

The SPUC has green infrastructure in all eight of San Francisco’s Urban Watersheds. To learn more about the PUC’s projects and grants please visit SFPUC.gov/programs.



IMPROVING HUMAN HEALTH

Green spaces improve human health and wellbeing. Time in nature can lower stress, boost mood, and support mental health. Parks, trails, and shaded streets encourage walking, biking, and outdoor play to help people stay active and connected. Trees and plants also clean the air by filtering pollutants, and keep streets and buildings cooler during hot weather by reflecting heat and providing shade. These benefits are especially needed in neighborhoods with fewer trees or parks, where health risks from heat, pollution, and limited recreation space are often higher.

A PRODUCT OF
NEXT GENERATION
URBAN GREENING

FUNDED BY
THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY
WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FUND,
EPA REGION IX

SFEI
SAN FRANCISCO
ESTUARY INSTITUTE

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