

# Appendix Q—Food Security: Urban Gardening and NEPP

According to Vancouver Island Food Hubs, “Communities are challenged by a multitude of food issues, which are exacerbated due to the vulnerability inherent for Island communities. A just and sustainable food system in the Island region requires viable, sustainable, and resilient systems to grow, harvest, process, transport, and distribute food while minimizing waste.”

## **They ask these questions:**

Is Vancouver Island food secure? Are we prepared if there is a major transportation disruption, natural disaster, or economic crisis?

## **Some key issues we face on Vancouver Island include:**

- limited access to safe, healthy, culturally acceptable foods;
- increased food insecurity;
- reliance on food traveling over long distances; and
- environmental threats to the food system including climate change and pollution.

Fresh food is typically not something that is considered when creating your preparedness kit, but that is changing. Community and backyard gardens can increase the availability of nutritious foods, strengthen community ties, reduce environmental impacts, and create a more sustainable food system.

Fostering urban gardening has two main benefits for a NEPP community:

1. It can lead to a source of sustainable nutritious food.
2. It builds both social ties and a greater feeling of community. (A sense of community is a major building block within a NEPP neighbourhood.)

The Comox Valley Emergency Program recommends stockpiling enough food and water to keep you and your household fed for at least seven days. Typically these food stores consist of items that will last for months or even years. Quite often they are freeze-dried, canned, or powdered. During a disaster, however, you’d rather have foods that not only fill your belly but also give comfort or a feeling of normalcy.

While some people stockpile army rations, others find great comfort in gardening, preserving, and eating the fruits of their labour. A backyard or community garden can support a substantial amount of your nutritional needs, plus during a disaster, it’s a healthy and tasty supplement to what may otherwise be a tedious diet. And if you work the garden, you have two additional benefits: a much-needed physical and mental outlet for anxiety and the ability to reclaim a little bit of control.

For information on Food Hubs within the Comox Valley, visit [www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/foodhubs](http://www.comoxvalleyrd.ca/foodhubs)