



Light is a requirement for growing flowers or edibles. Growing these in an urban area can be a challenge. Having a garden in a city environment can sometimes mean a balcony, small backyard or courtyard or even just window and fence boxes. The buildings around can start casting shadows as the sun moves through the day. Having a standing garden in one spot means planting according to the amount of light you can expect there.

The location of the garden in an urban area can be critical to its success. You will have to consider the angle of the sun, which can differ as the growing season goes on due to the sun's travel from north to south as fall approaches. Make a chart of the area you want to use and note the number of hours of sun it receives. Shadows cast from buildings, trees, walls, etc. will affect this. Next, determine whether the area receives full sun, partial sun or part shade or full shade.

After you have this figured out, pick plants that will thrive with the light conditions you have available.

Here are a few facts about plants and light:

There are three levels of light when it comes to plant growth:

Full Sun - at least six hours of sun daily (water lilies need this amount of sun to bloom)

Partial Sun/Shade - three to four hours of direct sun

Shade - two hours or less of direct sun or filtered light

In addition to the amount of light there are wavelenghts of light to consider. Light ranges from violet or ultraviolet (shortest wavelength) to red and infrared (longer wavelength). Photosynthesis evolved to interact optimally with blue and red light. The shorter blue light wavelenghts are higher energy than the longer length red light wavelenghts. The placement of plants in the garden affects their growth. Sunlight coming in at an angle closer to the horizon has less high energy blue light than sunlight directly overhead. Far red light can cause long, thin stems.

Growing in containers that can be moved can be a solution to this problem. You can use big pots and buy pot platforms that have wheels on them. This way, the plants (such as tomatoes,

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basil, etc) that love the sunlight can be rolled to parts of the yard or balcony where the sun is. There are self contained growing units like the Grow Box that come with wheels on the bottom. There is also the Garden Tower which is a vertical growing system. Fence boxes can be moved around to parts of the fence that get more light if they are not too heavy. Planting in moveable containers can be a good solution to getting enough light on your plants.



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