SPOTLIGHT on Sustainablility

Fleet Farming

"Pedal-powered urban farming promotes health through local produce."

What is Fleet Farming?

Founded in Orlando in Spring 2014, Fleet Farming is a pedal-powered urban farming program currently comprised of 10 distributed gardens, coined "farmlettes." Fleet Farming allows landowners to donate portions of their underutilized lawns to grow food in exchange for a share of the produce and gardening skills. Moreover, the non-profit program is 100 percent volunteer-run. From August to May, anyone is invited to join the Fleet for a Swarm bike ride. Buzzing from plot to plot, volunteers maintain, harvest and learn the ways of market gardening.

How did Fleet Farming get started?

The idea for a hyper-local farming program sprouted at the monthly think-and-do tank, The Orlando Hive, hosted by IDEAS For Us. The particular topic that evening was on localizing food systems and specifically on how to reduce carbon dioxide emissions related to food production, processing and distribution. In the first year, Fleet produced and sold more than 1,000 pounds of vegetables.

What are the benefits from a sustainability perspective?

The program benefits almost every part of our ecosystem, from the health of our community members right down to the billions of microbes in the soil. With nearly 30 percent of carbon dioxide emissions related to food production, Fleet Farming helps eliminate emissions caused by distribution, as well as traditional lawn-care methods that entail the use of chemical pesticides, fertilizers and herbicides. Research from the Rodale Institute has shown that "If organic methods were applied to all of the world's cropland, it would be equivalent of taking 1.5 billion cars off the road." In addition to increasing soil health, Fleet contributes to a local food economy, increases access to fresh produce and activates a healthy community.

What do you see for the future of Fleet Farming in Central Florida and elsewhere?

Fleet Farming plans to expand to other neighborhoods within Orlando and around the world by releasing a toolkit to train additional program coordinators to replicate the model.

How can others get involved?

To learn more, donate your lawn, volunteer or register your fruit tree (for Fleet Fruits — an urban fruit gleaning program), visit www.FleetFarming.com.

Our HOME for Life

For more information on Orange County's Sustainability Initiative, visit ***www.ochomeforlife.net***