



ment. This approach does not transfer ownership of forests; instead, beneficiaries are organized into village committees and given recognition of rights to collect minor forest products. They are also entitled to a portion of the proceeds from the sale of forest products, including trees. The proportion of the harvest that goes to the community varies from 100 percent in a few states to only 20 percent in others.

In the United States, 56 percent of forests are private, 38 percent are on government lands, and 6 percent are owned by indigenous peoples. Logging in these forests is increasingly embroiled in paralyzing conflict about endangered species, unsustainable timber yields, and industrial restructuring. Community-based collaborative partnerships are increasingly important in U.S. natural resource management, as groups of people work together to define and address common resource management issues that affect specific places but cut across government regulatory agencies. A few U.S. national forests have entered into isolated collaborative efforts with local communities. Stressing the idea that healthy forest ecosystems depend on healthy human communities, regional movements of community forest activists advocate wider legal and political openings for increased local stewardship over forests, despite opposition from some environmental organizations.

Community forestry remains controversial. Some conservationists prefer preservationist approaches, usually with a stronger role for the state in forest management and protection. Others criticize the romantic way in which community forestry policies sometimes overlook social difference, social conflicts, and injustice within communities. Despite these criticisms, it is often successful in improving both rural development and forest conservation outcomes.

**SEE ALSO:** Common property; Institutions

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## Community Gardens

URBAN COMMUNITY GARDENS are cool green oases in city environments that are often overwhelming in their density and complexity. Beyond their role as refuge, however, community gardens have provided the basis for a number of novel sociocultural experiments. Neighborhood residents grow vegetables to supplement their grocery budgets, giving them greater control over their own food and nutrition. Children have an opportunity to learn about gardening, plants and insects, and the ecology of their own neighborhoods. Artists stage music, theater, and other performances in gardens for audiences who otherwise might not have access to cultural resources. With the advent of development and the struggle to defend green space, the community gardens have also become the locus of grassroots political organizing.

### HISTORY OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

Urban agriculture has a lengthy history in the United States. The Work Projects Administration (1935–43) sponsored relief gardens in vacant lots and city parks during the Depression, and many urbanites grew Victory Gardens on city land during World War II. Historical accounts of community gardening, however, usually begin with the 1970s. American cities like New York, Detroit and Boston were experiencing severe fiscal crises, city services were unavailable or very low quality in many neighborhoods, and properties were abandoned or burned down by absentee landlords. The vacant lots, plagued by illegal dumping, vermin, and crime, were a disaster for property values and neighborhoods' quality of life.

The community gardens were born out of citizen direct action in response to this urban devastation. Gardeners cut locks on fences, hauled away tons of trash and rubble, and on occasion drove away drug dealers by force. In place of these unwanted land uses, gardeners created a wide variety of public green spaces. Many of the community gardens reflected the ethnic character of their neighborhoods and gardeners. For example, Puerto Rican gardeners throughout New York recreate the Puerto Rican countryside with *casita* gardens.



Poster for the U.S. Department of Agriculture promoting World War II victory gardens and vegetable growing.

In many cases, land for community gardens was provided as a sort of city service, akin to the Victory Gardens of the World War II era or the allotment gardens in the United Kingdom. For example, New York City's Operation Green Thumb helped gardeners secure free temporary leases to their lots. In such cases, the leasing process was often a bureaucratic challenge, requiring the gardens to establish a board of directors and regular meetings. Many of the garden groups lacked the experience or resources to pursue this route, so many of them persisted in a semi-legal status, facilitated by benign neglect from authorities.

On the other hand, many gardeners were essentially squatters, occupying city-owned or vacant lots without any sort of official sanction. As urban real estate values climbed through the 1980s, gardens increasingly came under pressure from development. Community garden activists responded in a variety of fashions, from fund drives to direct action. The New York garden conflicts became famously bitter; Mayor Giuliani told garden supporters, "This is a free-market system. Welcome to the era after communism." Meanwhile, garden supporters compared the mayor to Hitler. Many of these conflicts over community gardens remain unresolved, even when a number of specific settlements have been reached and the political context of community gardening continues to evolve.

**SEE ALSO:** Urban Ecology; Urban Gardening and Agriculture.

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## Community-Based Conservation

COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION IS commonly seen as having two central objectives: to enhance conservation of wildlife, biodiversity, and/or the environment; and to provide economic, social, cultural, and political benefits to local people. These objectives are connected; when communities benefit from conservation, they will be more likely to support it. Community-based conservation is also a process achieved by a variety of mechanisms, including devolution of control over resources from states to communities, development of community institutions to manage those resources, meaningful participation of communities in decision making about conservation, and legalization of property rights. Central to the community-based conservation concept is the assumption that people living closest to and depending on a resource will be most affected by its depletion, and thus have high stakes in its sustainable management.

The predecessors of community-based conservation include the concept of buffer zones, introduced by UNESCO in 1979, and Integrated Conservation and Development Projects, popularized in the late 1980s and early 90s. Both have been criticized for their failure to adequately involve local people in planning. In theory, community-based conservation is different than its predecessors, because it places the community's involvement at the center of conservation, rather than the mechanism (such as a park or project) for achieving it. Thus, participation is critical to the community-based conserva-