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## **Rooftop Garden Ratatouille: Developing Plaza/Deck Library Greenspace**

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# Rooftop Garden Ratatouille

## Developing Plaza/Deck Library Greenspace

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### NUTRITION INFORMATION

*"If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need."*

—Cicero

Both gardens and libraries provide sustenance and feed the imagination. Libraries benefit communities by supporting public green space as well as secret gardens. As with ratatouille, multiple layers of the right ingredients make all the difference. With rooftop gardens, overlooked library space can blossom into an environment that is ripe with organic opportunities for environmental programming and teachable moments.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

This recipe describes a multifunction, flexible space that grows and contracts and can produce several outcomes including the following:

- Providing natural extensions of indoor library activities for individual and small-group reading, conversation, and reflection.
- Creating environmental, historical, and other educational opportunities regarding plantings, soils, weather, land use. Connecting need for weeding and thinning as part of both garden and library life cycles. Planning for periodic replant-

ing for ongoing sustainability.

- Enabling career day activities highlighting conservation, landscape and turf management, environmental engineering, forestry, agriculture, horticulture, viticulture, aviary, and apiary experts.
- Hosting music, poetry readings, book clubs, story-telling, or plein-air art-making gatherings.
- Constructing and coordinating outdoor makerspace and DIY learning activities.

### NUMBER SERVED

Recipe can be scaled for individuals or groups.

### COOKING TIME

Allow adequate time for planning gestation, developing stakeholder buy-in, and ongoing cultivation of both garden and gardeners.

### DIETARY GUIDELINES

Plaza rooftop gardens have positive HVAC impacts and offer fresh ways of thinking about issues of water remediation. By absorbing rain and snowfall, the rooftop garden can decrease the rate and volume of water runoff, delay runoff, or strategically redirect it. Vegetation shades the roof, filters and cools the air, and sequesters carbon. Opportunities for continuing education can be refreshed seasonally as desired.

### INGREDIENTS AND EQUIPMENT

- Garden space
- Building-specific modifications and zoning considerations if needed
- Plants, seeds, or both
- Soil or other growing medium
- Fertilizer
- Garden tools (shovels, trowels, weeders, rakes, work gloves, trash cans, compost bins)
- Water source if needed (rain barrel, watering can, hose, sprinklers)
- Planters and edging
- Plant identification stakes
- Signage

### PREPARATION

1. Develop garden plan, identify space, and secure funding as part of community conversation. Invite appropriate representatives from nurseries, cooperative extension, and grounds crews to have a seat at the planning table.
2. Share photos and model renderings with the broader community to build interest and a volunteer pool. Invite volunteers from library, college, and community to help. Welcome comments via a contact link on library webpage.

### COOKING METHOD

1. Build the greenspace. Add a raised bed or tabletop garden area to be inclusive. Make local native plants the primary ingredients. Consider low-maintenance sedums to absorb moisture in rooftop gardens.
2. Develop watering and weeding schedule. Explore deterrents to address wildlife and pest issues.
3. Bake in teachable moments. Invite speakers to provide programs related to sustainability. Synchronize displays in the library related to the garden space.
4. Sprinkle with wellness tie-ins. Offer outdoor meditation, stress reduction, yoga, tai chi, and exercise sessions for a change of scenery and to provide a breath of fresh air.

### VARIATIONS

- Emphasize plants with literary themes or those with local or regional identities.
- Start complimentary seed or tool libraries. Coordinate heirloom seed or plant swaps.
- Include aromatherapy gardens. Harvest plants such as lavender for potpourri.
- Enlist campus dining facilities to provide compostable materials such as coffee grounds.
- Encourage dining facilities to plant and harvest herbs and other edibles.
- Donate surplus to food pantries.

### TASTING THE RESULTS

Promotional ideas:

- “Adopt-a-Plant” or “Adopt-a-Plot” programs.
- Photos of seasonal changes on social media to encourage community involvement. During growing season, consider a webcam directed at a yardstick stake to track growth or rain gauge to measure rainfall.



**Figure.** Historical pavers tell a story.

- Acknowledgement plaques for landscaping donations (plants, trees, landscape boulders).
- Naming opportunities for pavers, benches, walkways, sundials, sculptures (see figure).
- Promotional bookmarks and greeting cards with embedded wildflower seeds.
- A Little Free Library variation with a sustainability theme. Make it a sharable repository for information about nurseries, farmers’ markets, recipes, food pantries.
- Groundbreaking and dedication ceremonies.
- Harvest, growing season, and Earth Day celebrations.
- Fun(d)raising ideas—“Literary Feast,” “Botanics and Brews,” “Lilacs and Libraries.”
- Include in LEED, STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System), and other sustainability reporting.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System homepage. Accessed April 8, 2019. <https://stars.aashe.org>.

Bonacci, Asia. “Check Out Sustainable Garden Practices at the LibraryFarm in Cicero.” Sustainability Spotlight, New York Library Association, September 27, 2016. [https://www.nyla.org/max/4DCGI/cms/review.html?Action=CMS\\_Document&DocID=2001&MenuKey=s](https://www.nyla.org/max/4DCGI/cms/review.html?Action=CMS_Document&DocID=2001&MenuKey=s).

E. H. Butler Library, Buffalo State, State University of New York. Rooftop Poetry Club webpage. Accessed July 25, 2018. <http://bsclib01.buffalostate.edu/library/rooftop/>.

Northern Onondaga Public Library. LibraryFarm webpage. Accessed July 25, 2018. <https://www.nopl.org/services/spaces/library-farm/>.

Prior, Tyeisha. "Poetry Uses Parks for Inspiration." *Record*, Buffalo State College, September 26, 2012. [http://www.bscrecord.com/news/view.php/463917/Poetry-uses-parks-for-inspiration#.UVSN\\_RysjTo](http://www.bscrecord.com/news/view.php/463917/Poetry-uses-parks-for-inspiration#.UVSN_RysjTo)