



## Growing What You Eat

May 21, 2010



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### Edible Gardening on the Rise

It's [springtime](#) in the northern hemisphere, and [planting season](#) is in full swing. As much of the western world grapples with an increase in [health issues](#) relating to [obesity](#) and explores ways to save money in midst of a global recession, [grassroots movements](#) encouraging [edible gardening](#) are gaining popularity. From 2002 to 2008 retail spending on vegetable gardening in the United States increased by over 10 percent, and seed sales in 2009 were at an [all-time high](#).

Seeds are being sown on the [White House lawn](#), landscaping is surreptitiously popping up in [neglected urban spaces](#), and [community garden membership](#) is [growing](#). So who is behind these [contemporary victory gardens](#)?

### Key findings & trends

1. Gardening is not just for self-proclaimed 'Gardeners'.
2. Growing edible plants correlates with healthy lifestyle choices.
3. Raising edible plants doesn't only happen in the country.

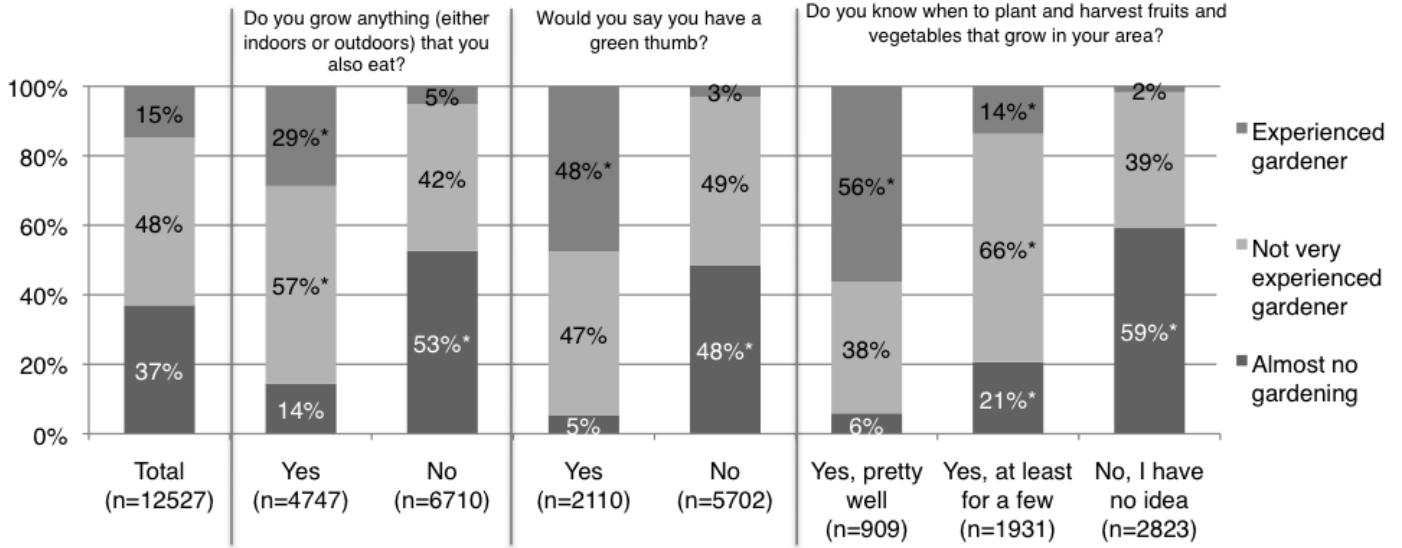
### A Rose by Any Other Name

More than 60% of Hunch users report having at least some gardening experience, and even some of the remaining 40% are green thumbs, whether they admit it or not.

We'll go out on a crazy limb and define [gardening](#) as the practice of growing plants, and we'll define gardeners as any individuals that grow plants. But interestingly, many people who grow plants don't actually think of themselves as gardeners.

What leads us to say this? 14% of 'edible plant growers' claim almost 'no gardening experience'. Conversely, nearly half of those who don't grow edible plants self-identify as having some gardening experience. Although most people who say they have a green thumb identify as a gardener with at least some experience, over half of those who wouldn't say they have a green thumb consider themselves gardeners. Maybe those folks are humble, or maybe it's just that their interest in gardening is truly greater than their skill.

## How experienced a gardener are you?

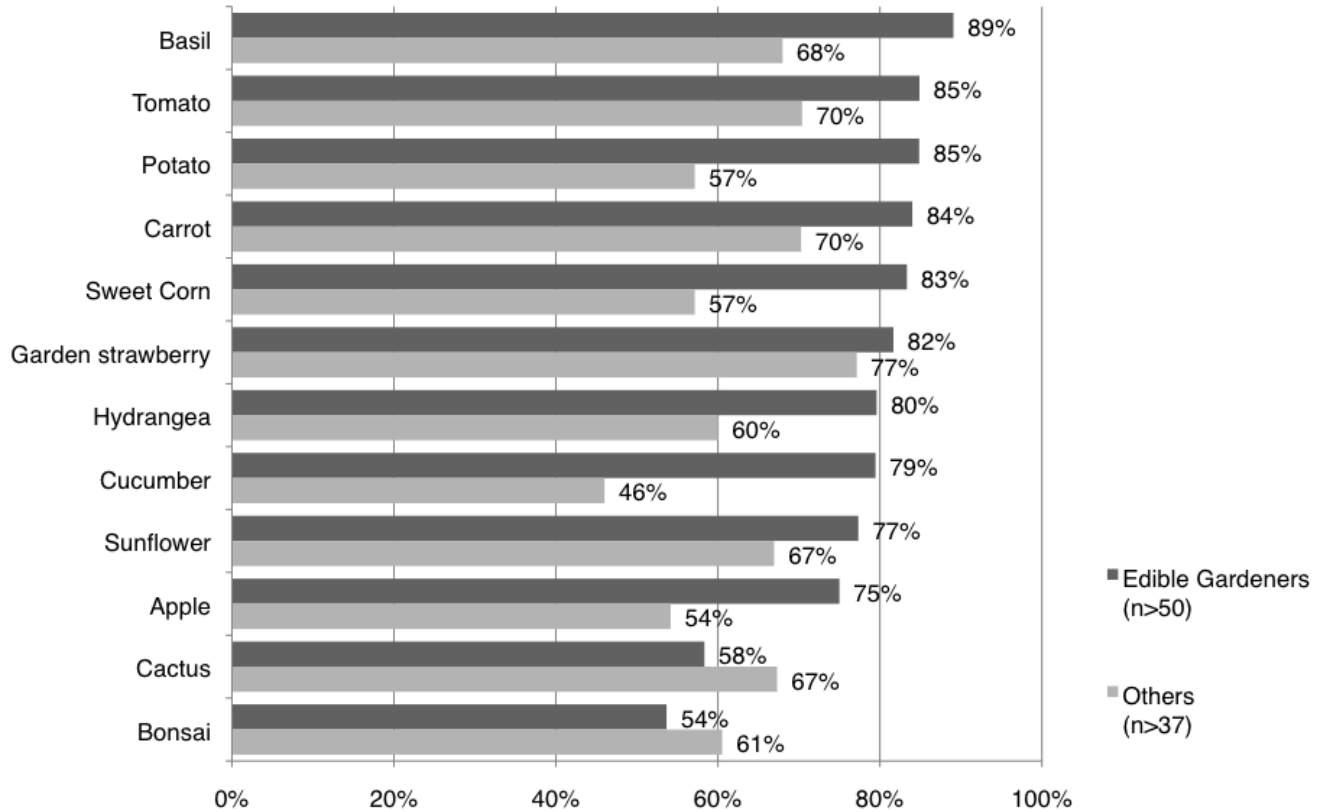


\*Results significantly higher than comparison group at 95% confidence

## The Kitchen Gardener’s Lifestyle

‘Edible gardeners’ account for roughly half of the Hunch users who have played the Garden Plant topic. This could influence the fact that nine of the ten most popular plants in the Hunch [Garden Plants](#) topic are edibles. [Hydrangea](#) is the only ornamental plant to land in the top ten. Hunch users that don’t grow edible plants are less likely to like any of the plants in the garden plants topic, with the notable exception of Bonsai and Cactus plants.

Percentage of Hunch Users who Like Plant Types Presented in Gardening Topics

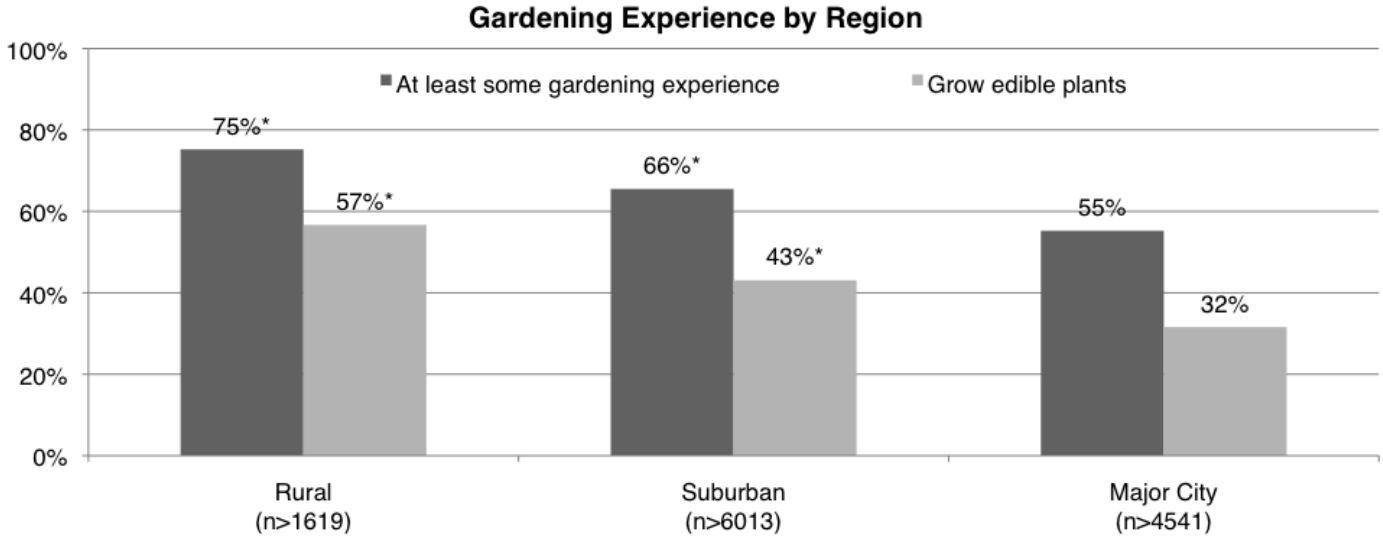


The edible gardener’s hunger for homegrown produce is positively correlated with other dietary preferences. Those who grow plants they eat are much more likely to identify as a ‘[foodie](#)’, and are likelier to be [vegetarian](#) or [vegan](#). Edible gardeners are significantly less likely to frequent [fast food restaurants](#), with over half going less than once a month. Edible gardeners are more likely to prefer [artful presentation](#) versus a larger quantity of food, when given the choice. They are 25% more likely to most often prepare food at [home](#), and significantly more often prefer to indulge in savory foods over [sweets](#).

	Grow Plants for Food Edible Gardeners
<b>Do you consider yourself to be a 'foodie'?</b>	<b>(n=5952)</b>
Yes	47%*
<b>Are you a vegetarian?</b>	<b>(n=6324)</b>
Yes	9%*
<b>How often do you eat at fast food restaurants?</b>	<b>(n=5966)</b>
At least a few times per week	14%
A few times per month	34%
Occasionally, but less than once per month	28%*
Rarely or never	24%*
<b>All other things being equal, would you rather have...?</b>	<b>(n=5966)</b>
A larger than average portion of food, but with the food plainly arranged on the plate	52%
A smaller than average portion of food, but with the food artfully presented and garnished	44%*
<b>Do you eat more meals prepared at home, or in a restaurant?</b>	<b>(n=8126)</b>
Prepared at home	83%*
In a restaurant	15%
<b>Are your favorite foods to indulge in:</b>	<b>(n=3006)</b>
Savory	62%*
Sweet	34%

\*Results significantly higher than comparison group at 95% confidence

## Seeds and the City



\*Results significantly higher than comparison group at 95% confidence

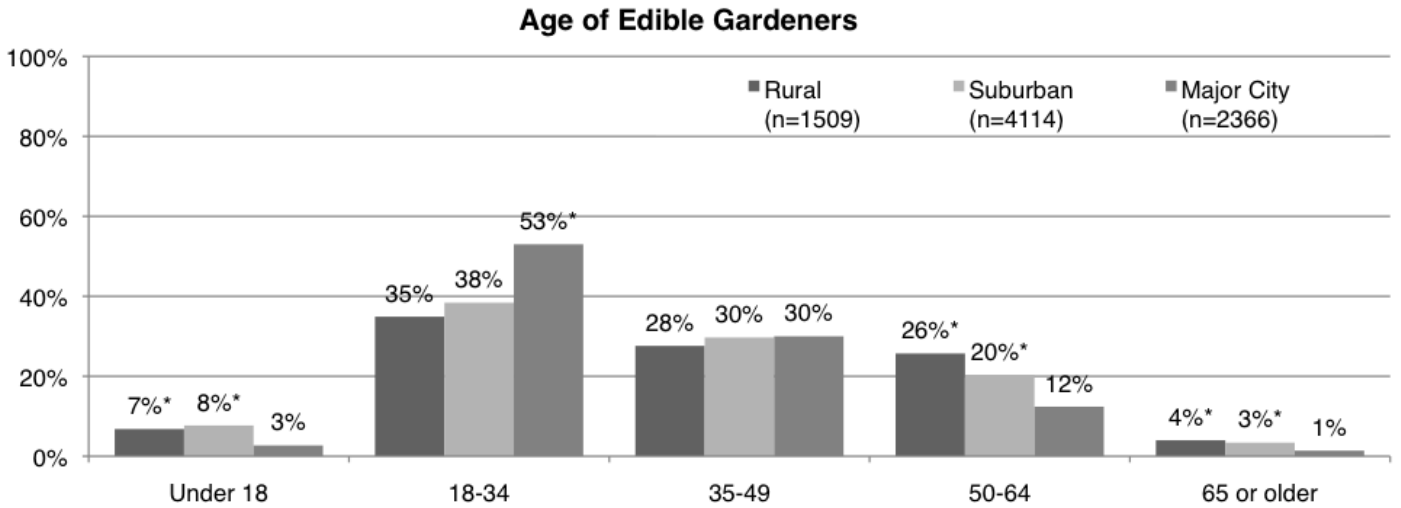
It's easy to assume that growing edible plants would be prohibitive in the [limited space](#) available in an [urban](#) environment, but more than half of city dwellers have at least some gardening experience, and a little under a third grow edible plants. How do these [urban gardeners](#) differ from their suburban and rural counterparts?

Edible gardeners span across all ages, but those hailing from larger cities tend to be younger than their suburban and rural counterparts. 53% of urban edible gardeners pay rent on their home, while 72% of those both in rural areas and in the suburbs own their primary residence. 48% of urban edible gardeners live in apartments, while 85% of suburban kitchen gardeners and 89% of rural kitchen gardeners live in houses.



## Feeling inspired to play in the dirt?

Whether you have acres to spare or just a [pot](#) on a window sill, Hunch has some [topics](#) to help you get started. Interested in learning about different garden techniques? Check out the [Gardening Books](#) topic. Want to choose the right [heirloom tomatoes](#) or [vegetables](#) for your garden? Hunch has topics for that, too. No matter [where](#) you live or the color of your thumb, there's room in everyone's life for a little green.



\*Results significantly higher than comparison group at 95% confidence



## Methodology and disclaimers

Hunch was publicly launched in June 2009 and since then millions of people have used the site. More than 50 million THAY ("Teach Hunch About You") questions have been answered since that time. The motivation for people to answer Hunch questions is simply to receive better and more customized recommendations. For example, for the decision "Which magazine would I like?", Hunch would suggest a different answer to a "suburban working mom" than to a "college student in an urban area."

Hunch's THAY questions are designed to be engaging, innocuous and fun, and they are interspersed throughout the site so that they can be answered at a user's leisure. Questions are not grouped by any sort of theme; a common sequence of 3 might include: "How old are you?", "Can you juggle?", and "What's your opinion of stem cell research?" As a result, the Hunch team has found that users enjoy answering the questions and do so honestly and consistently. There is little reason to answer dishonestly or attempt to "game" the system, since answers are solely designed to help the user get better recommendations. This research data is a by-product of Hunch's core business and mission, which is to provide smart recommendations to users. (a similar analogy might be the way search engines release data on popular searches. That data is a by-product of their core mission to help people find what they are looking for online).

Summary findings in this report are generally noted only when there is a statistically significant difference in the answers of the two subsets being compared. Links are always provided to graph data, which also includes the sample size used for the question and error ranges based on a 95% statistical confidence level. Occasionally, observations include qualifiers like "directionally", which indicate that an outcome is trending towards a direction, but that the absolute number remains within the margin of error range.

It should be noted that Hunch is not a professional research organization and this data was not collected in a perfectly controlled way. For example, Hunch data is based on 1) a group of individuals who are by definition all users of the Hunch website; these users are likely more internet-savvy than the general population, more open to new technologies, and more interested in social media. The group, while large at millions of users, has not been weighted to reflect actual demographic segmentation, and is not necessarily representative of general populations. 2) Questions on Hunch are voluntarily answered by users who choose to answer them, and any question can be selectively skipped. Therefore it's possible that those users who skipped a question might have different views than those who chose to answer a question.

**[Cover photo](#) from courtesy of [EraPhernalia Vintage](#) on flickr**

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