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MAY/JUNE 2018



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Grow Food, Not Grass

Fleet Farming is bringing local food to Orlando's doorsteps—literally

Two Sundays each month, a swarm of people walk, skateboard, cycle and rollerblade through the streets of Orlando. While it may sound like an exercise group, it's not. Led by Lee Perry (left) and Caroline Chomanics (right), they spend their day weeding gardens, watering plants and harvesting vegetables. But the group isn't working for Orlando farmers. They are tending homeowners' yards.

WHAT IT'S ABOUT

Perry and Chomanics lead Fleet Farming, an urban farming organization that transforms underutilized lawns into micro-farms. Homeowners pay \$500 up front to cover supply costs, then Fleet Farming volunteers turn the lawn into a "farmlette." They handle soil preparation, irrigation, planting, weeding and harvesting. Each week they sell about 100 pounds of produce from their network of farmlettes at farmers' markets and local restaurants.

WHY IT'S COOL

Homeowners can harvest 10% of their farmlette's produce during the two-year contract. "My wife and I often come out to the garden and pick what we want to eat for lunch," says Bo Wedsmark, who donated his yard one year ago. With 25 lawns donated in its first two years, Fleet Farming has a waitlist of over 2,000 Orlando-area homes. The program has received so much interest that Perry and Chomanics are creating an online training program so other communities worldwide can start their own version of the organization. "Just like the Victory Garden movement during World Wars I and II, we really want to show people how to participate in the farming process to bring the abundance of local produce into their neighborhoods," Perry says, making them active contributors to the process rather than passive recipients. 🍅

**plant
your
plate**

Inspired to turn your yard into a farmlette? Get gardening advice and recipes for your harvest at eatingwell.com/plantyourplate