

Are You Interested in Urban Farming? Here's an Introduction and an Opportunity

REAL ESTATE TODAY



By **JIM SMITH, Realtor®**

An increasingly popular aspect of living sustainably is to engage in "urban farming." As shown below right, we have an urban farm listing in Lakewood, and in a couple weeks we'll have another one in Arvada.

In light of these two listings, I asked an expert to enlighten you and me on this topic. Her name is Elizabeth Buckingham, and she writes a terrific blog, which is at www.FindingQuietFarm.com.

By **ELIZABETH BUCKINGHAM, Guest Columnist**

When my husband Nicholas and I returned to Colorado, where I was born and raised, we knew we wanted a little space around us. We found a charming 1960s home in midtown Arvada on about one-fifth acre. In addition to built-in bookshelves and a wood-burning stove, the yard had mature, leafy trees and plenty of space for extensive vegetable and herb gardens, a chicken coop with run, and a beehive.

We've spent the past eight years building an exceptionally productive urban farm. Our largest vegetable plot benefits from variable shade; we use it for greens, such as lettuce, kale and spinach, plus garlic and Egyptian walking onions. The northern third, up against the shed, collects quite a bit more sun, so we often plant staked runner beans and eggplant there. The soil in this in-ground plot was in decent shape, but every year we amend it generously with mulch from our leaves and compost that we make ourselves along our southern fence. Whether in a backyard garden or a farm, soil is by far the most important component – it's essential to take good care of it.

The shaded garden plot was useful, but we needed space for heat-loving summer vegetables, like tomatoes and peppers. Nicholas built two large raised beds,

which we filled with a mixture of lush organic soil and worm-rich compost. The beds are light, loamy and easy to grow in. We also constructed five smaller raised beds, ideal for squash, potatoes, peas and flowers, and we've planted raspberry bushes and perennial herb beds, including sage, English thyme, oregano, chives, lovage and mint. Every year, we harvest hundreds of pounds of organic food from our backyard.

Nicholas repurposed some beautiful redwood and built a secure chicken house and run. Thanks to its solid construction, we never lost a bird to predation, which is the major risk to chickens in an urban area. The hen house itself is thoroughly insulated, eliminating any need for dangerous heat lamps which can kill chickens and burn down structures. Backyard chickens are easy to keep; they need protection from the sun and predators, plenty of fresh water and good-quality food and a clean, safe place to nest and sleep. The eggs are unparalleled.



To bring more beneficial pollinators to our garden, we also installed a Langstroth beehive. The bees have over-wintered successfully for three seasons and each fall they provide us with about fifty pounds of our own local honey. They're fascinating to watch, improve pollination in our crops as well as those nearby, and maintaining a beehive doesn't take much work.

We want to encourage everyone to pay attention to where your food comes from and to grow and cook as much of your own food as you can. It's not as hard as

Learn More About Urban Farming

Does urban farming make sense for you? Find out this Saturday by attending a 90-minute class on the subject taught by Elizabeth Buckingham in the living room of our Lakewood urban farm listing below. The fee is \$10. The class starts at **1pm on Sat., Mar. 3rd, at 2665 S. Eaton Place**. You don't have to be interested in buying this home to attend this informative class. Call **303-885-7855** to reserve your seat.

you think, and you'll be amazed at how much food you can grow and how much money you can save. For more about our journey, please visit my website at www.FindingQuietFarm.com.

Here are some additional resources for where people can go to learn more about urban farming, gardening, chickens and bees:

- www.Echters.com
- www.FleischerFamilyFarm.com
- www.TheGrowHaus.org
- www.SlowFoodDenver.org
- www.ColoradoBeekeepers.org

Follow-up Regarding Last Week's Article on Capital Gains Exemption

Last week I wrote about the capital gains exemption of \$250,000 for single taxpayers and \$500,000 for married taxpayers. I failed to mention (because I didn't know) that a widow or widower has 2 years **after** the death of their spouse to sell their primary residence and still take advantage of the higher exemption amount. I thank the readers who brought that to my attention.

Just Listed: An "Urban Farm" Home in South Lakewood

Broker Associate **Chuck Brown** has just listed this solar-powered home at **2665 S. Eaton Place** in Lakewood. If it looks a little overgrown in this photo taken last summer, watch the two video tours at www.LakewoodUrbanFarm.info. At that website you'll find two separate video tours, because the tour of the gardens alone, led by the seller herself, took 24 minutes! The video tour of the interior is much shorter. The house has four bedrooms and 3½ baths spanning 3,175 above-grade square feet, plus an unfinished 1,703-sq.ft.



garden-level basement. Built in 1996, it is in the Thraemoor subdivision, but, unlike other homes in that subdivision, the front, south and rear yards are devoted to providing year-round food for the owners. As mentioned in the box above right, this home will be the venue for a class on urban farming this Saturday, which will include a seller-led tour of the gardens themselves. The house itself will be open for touring the following day, **Sunday, March 4th, 1 to 3 pm**. Call Chuck at **303-885-7855** to reserve a seat at the urban farming class or for more info.

Class on 'Getting to Net Zero Energy'

You may recall we recently listed a "net zero" home at **1960 S. Gilpin Street**, near Denver University. This coming **Sunday, March 4th**, we are hosting a class on "Getting to Net Zero & Beyond" in that house, where you'll not only learn the concepts that go into building a net zero home or retrofitting a current home to net zero, but you'll be able to see many of those concepts and products in place and working to make that particular home have a total energy bill of under \$6 per month. The house is for sale, but you don't need to be a potential buyer to attend. (Learn more at www.DenverPassiveHouse.com.)

Teaching this 90-minute PowerPoint presentation are two of Colorado's leading experts on this topic: **Lance Wright**, "the green energy man," who built 1960 S. Gilpin Street and two other net zero homes, and **John Avenson**, who keeps improving his net zero home in Westminster. The class is this **Sunday, March 4th, 1:00 to 2:30 pm**.



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