

The multiple meanings and cultural aspects of the own-home garden in the early 20th century Sweden

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Gardening has multiple meanings depending on where and how it is performed as well as what purpose it is attributed. This paper will discuss the meanings and cultural aspects of own-home gardens in the early 20th century Swedish urban context. Stately loans were paid out in order for people to be able to build houses with gardens, so called own-homes, in the countryside or in the outskirts of cities in the early 1900s. A home of one's own, with a garden, had a positive effect on health and social well-being according to the Swedish Own-Home Committee. Other aims were to establish self-sufficiency and economic independence. A common strive for independence, sharing the joys and difficulties of home ownership and cultivating the plots of land established identity. Gardening also withheld and strengthened identity after the houses were built. Sharing both knowledge and crops are examples of that. The garden also enabled the authorities' visions of health, social wellbeing and the strengthening of family values. Another aspect of meaning of the own-home garden was making sense of the rural in copying the food production of the farm in smaller scale. It was also a way to maintain a contact with the past and the older generation's way of life in the countryside. Engagement in the landscape physically, mentally and socially via cultivating the gardens created a strong sense of place, purpose and meaning. Therefore it is important to add, not only the material heritage and value of the own-home gardens, but also the immaterial values of those gardens when discussing sustainable urban development. Apart from that the old gardens already are a part of the ecological values and green structure, their pedagogical and social values described above are valuable resources to take into consideration when discussing strategies for urban development, densification or conservation.

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