

Do UCL Staff Grow? : What enables and inhibits the growing of plants amongst staff?

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Aims and Objectives

- **Research question:** What experience do UCL staff have of growing their own food/plants?
- **Aims:** To understand what **enables** and **inhibits** UCL staff from growing plants, to inform the creation of a sustainable "edible" campus.



Methods

- Conducted 4 semi-structured interviews with members of staff from the UCL Anthropology department.
- 4 key themes researched: sustainability, physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing and the social aspect of growing plants.
- Written informed consent obtained from participants prior to interviews.
- Qualitative data analysis: coded our interview transcripts, identified main categories and themes, either enablers or inhibitors.
- Ranked themes - scale from 1-4 (1 being the strongest enablers and inhibitors, 4 being the ones with the weakest impact on behaviour).
- Created a 'word cloud' diagram made up of key words and themes from our interviewees.

Results

- The size of words in our word cloud (Figure 1) represents the relative strength of themes.
- We found the greatest variation in the role of responsibility, exemplified by the contrasting quotes in figure 3a and 3b. Whilst it was discussed as a key teaching point for one interlocuter when gardening with his children, other interlocuters did not believe in the possibility to share responsibility, and so felt the workload was overwhelming.
- Across the interviews, we found that social relations came up frequently, often as an enabler of growing habits, but occasionally as an inhibitor when local plant communities were gatekept by distinct groups.
- Our results revealed there are a range of factors integrated into experiences of plant growing amongst UCL staff, as highlighted in Figure 1 and 2.



Figure 1 – Word Cloud diagram to show key themes from interviewees.

Key:
Purple = enablers
Red = inhibitors
Blue = enabler & inhibitor

"It is hard to share responsibility for plants" Figure 3a



Figure 2 – Scale drawing of inhibitors (red) and enablers (purple). The middle category (blue) represents both enablers and inhibitors.

"Did you water the plants today?" Figure 3b

Future Directions for Research:

1. Further research on contradictory information suggesting simultaneous inhibitors and enablers.
2. Research amongst other departments and members of UCL e.g students and cleaning staff.
3. Integration of participant observation to provide further insight into practices.

Implications: Guiding a Sustainability Initiative

1. Implementations towards sustainability at UCL should consider time constraints, as well as costs.
2. Options should be included for participants to vary the extent of social relations and responsibility required.
3. Strong advertising of the aesthetic and educational possibilities of projects should be advertised on campus.

