

Backyard chickens, bees cutting edge of growing local food movement

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By John Daley

SALT LAKE CITY -- Increasing numbers of people in Utah and around the nation are adding beehives, chicken coops and gardens to their yards. The rise of urban agriculture is part of a national -- really, global -- sustainability movement.

Many cities are changing their rules, including Salt Lake City, which recently changed city ordinances to relax restrictions and allow residential chicken coops and beekeeping.

Jonathan Krausert has created an extraordinary oasis on his average-sized home lot. He's a semi-retired carpenter, but his full-time passion is his farm-like garden.

"We're going back to what it used to be," he said.

Virtually every space in his yard is productive: Varieties of vegetables, fruit trees and beehives, which make honey he sells at the farmers market where he also sells fresh eggs from his chickens.

"More and more people are doing it. People are realizing it's better for you," Krausert said. "It's coming from the fact that for one thing, when you're producing your own food there's a sense of security in that. And right now with the economy the way it is, even though it's not your whole entire food source, it gives you that freedom of mind where it makes you feel better."

With more people wanting bees and chickens in their backyards and fruit trees and vegetables in their front yards, local governments are having to accommodate by writing new ordinances.

Outreach Coordinator of the Salt Lake City Division of Sustainability Bridget Stuchly said, "I think that this is a movement that is going to continue to grow, and the more that we can support it the longer it will sustain and just become part of the way we live here in Salt Lake City."

In Draper, Jared Turner and his family started a backyard chicken company called Chickoopy.



"We feel like it's taking off like crazy," Turner said. "It's a hobby. I'm an attorney. I do international business law."

For \$400, the company sells a coop, feeders and two or three chickens, which helps teach kids about animals and food.

"You've got the sustainability aspect, the self-sufficiency," Turner said. "People that want to know where their food comes from, you know the quality of that food."

Back at Krausert's place, he's got a 150-year-old well head from the old family farm. He sees a future in connecting with a forgotten agricultural past.

"We are the Beehive State. Yes, we are, indeed," he said.

Salt Lake's new ordinances allow five hives per yard and 15 chickens in a secure, enclosed area.

Rules about urban agriculture vary from city to city, and in many cities the rules are changing. If you have questions about the laws in your town, contact your city hall.