

Jonathan Rosen

A Place To Grow



As I enjoy the sights and sounds of the city, an elderly couple holding cups of coffee walks up the outdoor staircase and onto the roof where I am sitting. The sun is glittering through dappled dew drops left behind from the cool night before. I can hear birds chirping as they bathe in the bird bath that flows slowly and babbles across the roof. The bees buzz, pollinating, and working within their hives. The cool breeze of autumn blows, rustling the leaves and flowers of the native plants spread across the roof. The wind carries the scents of fresh mint and basil to my nose. Another couple joins the elderly folks at a table, basking in the warm sun of the brisk, mid-October morning. The sound of conversation and laughter fills the air...

This particular roof resides on top of the Carrot Common, a bustling community shopping mall located just east of the Don Valley, on Danforth Avenue. At 8,000 square feet, this roof gave the Carrot Common an incredible blank canvas to create something beautiful. Here, a green roof was brought to life.

A green roof is a layer of foliage maintained on top of a water-resistant structure that is situated on a pre-existing roof (2). Green roofs create new homes for native plants and animals, and in doing so, increase the biodiversity of the surrounding area (1). The vegetation that resides on green roofs absorbs the sun's heat, reducing the temperature of the air around it in the summer (1). In the winter, the same vegetation creates a layer of insulation, which leads to less energy consumption for heat (1). When storms erupt into deluges, the permeable exterior absorbs rainwater and produces clean runoff, mitigating floods and groundwater pollution (2). Green roofs also act as carbon sinks, reducing the amount of carbon in the atmosphere and cleaning the air that we breathe (1).

Just as my mind starts to drift, I notice an older gentleman strolling toward me. His name is Thomas Walsh, and he is the property manager at the Carrot Common. We shake hands and he invites me to sit with him at a little wooden table situated between the towering Jerusalem Artichokes and the wonderfully dark-green kale. He explains to me that this roof is not just important for environmental conservancy, but it is also a space where community thrives. It is a sacred place in the city where people come to learn, exercise, meditate, socialize, celebrate, and belong.



I encourage you to reach out to your local politicians and ask for subsidies and policy changes to promote green infrastructure around the city of Toronto. Go and spend time on a green roof near you. Volunteer to maintain beautiful rooftop gardens. Talk about green roofs, as many people do not know what they are or where you can find them. This can help create more beautiful and sustainable community spaces like the green roof on the carrot common.

A place where nature flourishes.

A place where communities thrive.

Green roofs are a place to grow.

Learn more about green roofs [here](#).

Citation

- (1) Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition. (2021, January 29). *Green roofs*. Green Infrastructure Ontario. Retrieved November 21, 2021, from <https://greeninfrastructureontario.org/green-roof/>.
- (2) Green Roofs for Healthy Cities. (n.d.). *About green roofs*. Green Roofs for Healthy Cities. Retrieved November 21, 2021, from <https://greenroofs.org/about-green-roofs>.