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# Integrating Agriculture into Metropolitan Parks and Recreation Areas

## Primary Principles

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# Summary

The current research sets the primary principles for integrating agriculture into metropolitan parks and recreation areas, adjacent to the major urban centers. According to the regional master plans, in which the concept of metropolitan parks was developed, more than 15 metropolitan parks and metropolitan vacation areas exist today, in Haifa, the center, Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem, within the total area of a few tens of thousands dunams. The area of a metropolitan park may range between 2000-10000 dunams, and mostly incorporates agricultural land, including orchards, greenhouses, crops and grazing pastures. Although the recent regional plans accept the value and potential of agricultural areas in enriching the park, they lack the means to organically integrate them into the metropolitan park.

As part of the research a survey was conducted. This survey covered western metropolitan parks, in which different forms of agriculture had been incorporated as an integral part, both physically, and from the aspect of the park's activities.

At the conclusion, a model of a metropolitan park which is being planned at the moment (the Yarkon Park -Pethah Tikva) was presented. This model displays the tools and methods for integrating cultivation plots as a background for the intensive parts of the park, and sometimes as themes for activities in themselves. The cultivation of agriculture as part of the *Genius Loci* (spirit of the place), should be a central motive in the park's activity. The proposed plan should act as a model for metropolitan parks all over the country.

The alternatives offered for integrating these agricultural areas into the parks are:

- As a scenic landscape accompanying recreational activities.
- As an economic form of gardening and maintaining of the large metropolitan parks. The park's administration will not be able to handle the costs for maintenance by itself. Self-supporting agriculture can reduce these costs while providing its scenic qualities.
- As an environment-friendly buffer-zone between the urban area and its surrounding.
- As a source of agricultural products with affinity to the local population, i.e. farmers that sell their crops in the close-by markets, or by direct distribution to households.
- As part of the Curriculum in different educational institutions, exhibiting vernacular and modern techniques of cultivation, and presenting the agricultural work as an attraction.