

Food Forest – 1 Pager

- **What is a Food Forest?**

- A food producing system that mimics a forest ecosystem with mainly edible species to increase fresh, healthy food, and provide other ecological benefits in a sustainable way to the local area.
- Food forests help reduce the negative effects of food deserts (areas where healthy food options are over 20 minutes away by public transport)

- **Existing Examples**

- Originally a Native American food-production concept widely used
- 25+ in USA; 36+ countries globally
- Studies – up to 108% of necessary fruit intake with 50% of open space planted
- Avg. yearly yield of 0.2-acre food forest is 713 kg

- **Nature's Design**

- Mimicking a forest structure gives multiple layers for production
- Layers are not clearly separated, all species have a role
- Layers start in the soil with root plants, then up into groundcovers, herbaceous plants, shrubs and bushes, understory trees, overstory/canopy trees, and vines, moss, lichens, and mushrooms can occur throughout various layers
- Caution! Be sure of what species you are interacting with, due to toxic species; especially mushrooms, moss, and lichen - If in any doubt; contact an expert!
- The best design depends on site characteristics, food and ecosystem goals, and available resources – patchwork and small sites (2x4 ft) also work

- **Planning a Food Forest**

- Consider the Location - Caution – Recent Construction; soil tests needed
- Site Support - Consider time, labor, resources, long-term maintenance
 - Certifications for ecological/local benefits
- Right Place, Right Plant, Right Food - Look for Species Selection Training
- Increasing Diversity – more species filling more roles indicates a healthier food forest.
 - EX. Fruit Tree Guilds, Companion Planting – The Three Sisters, Nitrogen Fixers & Nutrient Accumulators
- Over 26 Edible Species Native to Illinois - Many recipes, don't have to be eaten as is

- **Cultivation Considerations**

- Basic, general care – Watering, planting, mulching, pruning, harvesting, and more - Trainings currently available and upcoming
- Water consumption – rain barrels can help with water consumption
- Signage to reduce misidentification and help volunteers and visitors connect with the Food Forest
- Tree Damage, Harvest Damage and Pest Control questions – Call the Plant Clinic or an Expert
- Seasonal Illness/Pest trackers online

- o See other trainings for more information on prevention and control





