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.
- o 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

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

Nature's Design

- o Mimicking a forest structure gives multiple layers for production
- o Layers are not clearly separated, all species have a role
- o 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
- o 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!
- o 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
- o 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
- o Over 26 Edible Species Native to Illinois Many recipes, don't have to be eaten as is

Cultivation Considerations

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

o See other trainings for more information on prevention and control









