Shadow Board Meeting 19th May

Here you'll find a number of key topics that we've progressed since our first Board meeting and require your comment as nascent members of NFGS. If you can please comment before 19/05. And use the comment function (under 'insert' on the toolbar) rather than altering the text below. It's easier for all to read that way.

1. A draft purpose statement which is part of the governing document and in the form required by the Charity Commission.
2. A proposed membership structure
3. The principles that helpfully define forest gardens
4. A message from Sagara, the man behind the East Devon Forest Garden who's offering his garden as a possible site for our AGM. Please comment on location and if you can, suggest feasible alternatives which you are willing to investigate. Future AGM's will be held each time in a different part of the UK.

1. NFGS Purpose Statement (DRAFT)

To advance the planting of forest gardens across the UK in order to

- protect and enhance public green space
- bring communities together to grow their health and well-being
- provide opportunities to expand the ways in which food is produced
- broaden the diversity of the food we eat
- challenge how food growing is widely thought about
- enhance food sovereignty

The NFGS will do this in particular, but not exclusively by

- working with local agencies, including local government as intermediaries as well as collaborating directly with community groups
- providing forest gardening expertise to communities
- growing this expertise through creating and providing forest garden training pathways
- supporting communities to explore a forest garden 'option' through facilitated events, and signposting communities to funding support
- providing land to local communities if the NFGS is donated such land, and doing so under the covenant agreed for the use of such land
- organising skills sharing events between public forest gardens and sharing learnings from europe and worldwide

- Expanding access to all forest gardens, public and private

· promoting the educational benefits of forest gardens across a range of educational and learning settings

· presenting opportunities for research that may support the benefits of forest gardens

· lobbying local and central government and its agencies on the benefits of forest gardens, and contributing to national policy consultations

2. NFGS proposal for membership categories

First draft prepared by Richard Luff 22/2/18 – Ben please take a look and see what you think

Key points to consider;

- Type of organisation we want – which is to be decided and so this determines whether members have voting rights. However, for the time being I have assumed they do.
- What do we want the benefits of membership to be?
- How one becomes a member and forfeits rights to be a member?

Here are some suggestions to get the ball rolling

Category	**Voting rights**	**Benefits**	**Fee**	**How to join**	**Notes**
Individual Membership (18+)	Yes	To be decided	Free initially to give time to set up org then £10/year once organisation is established	By nomination, seconding and then agreeing to NFGS principles	Members are expected to vote as we want and need active participation. No vote, no membership?
Forest gardens and other organisational membership	No	To be decided	Twice the individual fee?	By nomination, seconding and then agreeing to NFGS principles	It was felt that voting rights for organisations could result in conflict between organisation objectives

Friends/ associates	No	To be decided	0 but contributions invited	By invitation	We want to be able to invite people to support us in other ways and so we should not necessarily expect a fee from them

Notes

- Members could be invited using an existing Ap e.g. Eventbrite for collecting money and
- Staff (in future) will be expected to join as individual members and have the same rights.
- Members retain their voting rights and other benefits while their fee remains valid
- If there is a felt need to remove members this will be done on basis of considering whether members have breached NFGS principles in their behaviour. This will be considered by a group of 2, or ideally 3 other members.

Extract from first shadow board meeting Feb 2018

C. Who is a member?
do we have conditions?
Who or what? People or organisations? Professionals?

HG asked can we have a member class that don't make decisions – friends of, associates?
The group agreed that we could.
HG pointed out if we have other organisations rather than individuals as members with their own vision and values this could muddy the picture
RL felt that membership should be based on community gardens. Basing it on gardens 'seems more rooted'. We could then offer an option to invite others so we can target the people we want on board.
JM said if we based membership on community gardens it would be like 'herding cats'.
JM said it's onerous representing a project which is owned by the group of gardeners, also the city council, the community forest. There are levels of accountability that feel like a tangled web.
RL said we should seek to add value
PP said could we invite everyone who is inspired and enthusiastic?
PP asked BL would newsletters, accessing resources, skills sharing events and networking be worth a membership fee of £10 to his project?
BL said, definitely, yes.
After a discussion the group agreed that membership could be of different kinds, and we should be asking for a nominal fee like £10.

Different kinds of membership to be explored.
IS pointed out that Shiva (lawyer) is a good bet for addressing these questions.
RL Do we get members to retrospectively sign up to principles, and definition what is a forest garden?
RL Proposal:
continue inviting interested people as members as now until end of shadow board
then once organisation is formally launched people need to have signed up to principles in terms of behaviour and what is a forest garden
Finalised with AGM, following which new Loomio where people re-join
People currently signed up will input.
AGREED

Notes from SVCO[1]
Despite appearances it is the members who have ultimate control rather than the board, so it is important to carefully consider who can be eligible for membership. Here are some of the things you need to think about:
who are you going to invite as members? Residents of the local area? Or defined categories of people with similar interests such as older people, children, disabled people, etc?
are you going to charge people to be a member, and if so, how much?
what does membership entitle them to do?
how will you appoint new members, and how long membership will last, e.g. a financial year?
how will you remove members from your organisation if you need to?
can employees of the organisation also be members, and can they serve on the management committee? If they can, what voting rights will they have? How will you address any potential conflicts of interest?
should bodies, as distinct from individuals, be entitled to membership?
should the board have power to veto any application for membership?
should someone who no longer fulfils the qualifications automatically cease to be a member?
would you allow young people under 16 to become members?
Membership types[2]

3. Forest Garden Principles

A note for context from Anni Kelsey who's drafted these:
"When I began forest gardening it was the ecological understandings of Dave Jacke and Eric Toensmeier in their two volumes of 'Edible Forest Gardens' and Masanobu Fukuoka's 'method' of natural farming that enabled me to interact with my garden in a sensitive and appropriate way. But for their invaluable guidance I would have been floundering I am

[1] https://scvo.org.uk/setting-up-a-charity/decide-on-membership
[2] https://knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/operations/membership#

sure. After a number of years I realised that I was acting in a sort of intuitive way in the garden, but that below that apparent intuition was (probably) a set of guiding principles. I set out to uncover these and sought to get beneath the surface of how I interact with my garden and how I have learned to do what I do. Eventually I arrived at a set of interconnected principles that all also relate directly back to the ecology of forest gardens.

The first four principles below are the fundamental principles undergirding why and how a forest garden is (and remains) a fertile, low maintenance, productive and resilient edible landscape. They are described in one form or another in forest gardening literature. The other eight principles are my own derivations from my experience of forest gardening and represent a summary of my findings. They are but a small fraction of my thinking and writing to date, the bulk of which is focussed on writing a book about the subject.

This particular version does not include a description of what comprises a forest garden as in this forum I am taking that as read!

Principles of Forest Gardens and Forest Gardening

The structure and function of a forest garden

A forest garden is a fertile, low maintenance, productive and resilient edible landscape. It is designed, planned and planted with a structure and composition that enables the forest garden to function like an ecosystem. Three principles explain some of the interactions and functions that enable / support this.

1. Each tree, shrub, bush, plant etc is occupying a specific 'niche' in the forest garden, for example a food producing niche, a nitrogen fixing niche or a nectar plant niche. [Its purpose / function / job in the system.] The forest garden is therefore by definition biodiverse – it has lots of different plants within it and it will attract lots of different insects and larger animals. Interactions between elements of the ecosystem are the natural processes which regulate, sustain and enhance the system. *The greater the biodiversity in the forest garden the more resilient and healthy it is*.
2. Organic / *plant material (biomass) accumulating in the soil* from plants that die back or are cut back (and placed on the soil) *increases soil fertility*. The generation of fertility is particularly driven by the herbaceous layer in a forest garden.
3. What happens below ground, out of sight, is at least as important as what happens above ground. Bare soil is detrimental to soil health and to fertility

and *permanent plantings of perennials ensure a healthy underground soil system*.

4. Biodiversity, biomass and perennial planting are the foundations of *health and fertility in the forest garden* ecosystem which in turn *are the foundation of abundance*.

The role of the forest gardener

Forest gardening both challenges and enables us to re-integrate ourselves into the processes and cycles of the natural world and thereby to become nature's support in returning the land to health and vitality. To do this the forest gardener is focussed (as above) on supporting ever increasing biodiversity, biomass and ensuring permanent plantings. In support of this:

5. *The forest gardener and their own needs is an integral part of the forest garden ecosystem* and their original and evolving vision for the forest garden is an important element that guides their choices in caring for and supporting the garden.
6. By convention our culture and experience has been to manage, control or subdue nature to meet our own needs, breaking the links in the ecosystem with harmful consequences all round. *Forest gardeners need to challenge their assumptions and the conventions and 'rules' they have learned in other contexts and instead to trust nature* and the natural principles underlying the structure and function of the garden.
7. In order to adjust to different ways of interacting with the forest garden (compared to conventional horticulture) *it is vital that forest gardeners STOP before undertaking any action in the garden; and having stopped that they both watch and wait a while.* This pause gives the forest gardener the opportunity to relax and begin to see what nature is already doing and how best s/he can support or perhaps even enhance this.
8. When the forest gardener does make *an intervention it should be the minimum required to achieve the purpose* and s/he will learn to judge this by experience.
9. When the forest gardener does make an intervention *there is no 'right' and no 'wrong*'. As an integral part of the ecosystem and holding the intention of loving and supporting the forest garden s/he makes the appropriate action by definition in the same way that the blackbird cannot eat the 'wrong' worm.
10. From all of this (and everything else that experience brings along) *the forest gardener is continually learning and increasing their understanding* of the garden which in turn helps them learn more.

Implementing these principles

In applying these principles to the forest gardener's actual engagement with the forest garden there are three types of activity:

- Introducing additional trees or plants
- Reducing or removing trees or plants
- Harvesting produce

New introductions

Plans to introduce new trees or plants will be in support of one or more of the following and relate to the ecology of the garden:

- Implementing the forest gardener's vision for the garden
- Filling additional niches or functions
- Increasing biodiversity
- Increasing biomass
- Keeping the soil planted /covered
- Increasing harvests

If nature brings new plants into the garden (that may in other contexts be called 'weeds') the forest gardener will not remove them by reflex action. S/he will *watch and wait* to see how (or if) they fit into the garden's ecosystem. In general the presumption is that because they have grown there in the first place that they probably are filling a niche, even if the gardener cannot as yet identify it.

However they arrive in the garden once they are established *most trees and plants will live out their entire life cycles concluding with a natural ending* thereby maintaining the maximum number of productive and useful plants (increased biomass and harvests) and allowing the next generation of plants to establish naturally without the forest gardener's assistance.

Reducing or removing plants

When a plant or tree dies naturally they fall to the ground where they grew. When the forest gardener needs to remove some or all of a plant or a tree s/he emulates this by placing the plant on the soil where it grew or as close by as practically possible (out of sight beneath a bigger plant if need be). This is also part of *doing the minimum.*

Harvesting

When harvesting produce from the forest garden the forest gardener always remembers the needs of other members of the ecosystem and does not take everything that is there; instead *s/he harvests 'only enough'*. This may mean leaving some fruit for the birds or, as above, allowing some plants to remain in order to flower and produce seed for the future.

4. AGM

From Sagara, East Devon Forest Garden

https://www.facebook.com/Eastdevonforestgarden/:

Accomodation: - Firstly I have two yurts (one is 16ft the other is 12 ft) both could sleep 3 people. I should also have a Dutch barn (12 by 8 ft ready by then), which could sleep two. The rest would either be camping or off site accommodation. obviously a great deal of food can be provided from the garden. But a certain amount would need to be bought . I could offer to provide for this (I maybe able to get some volunteers) though a bit of help through the NFGS would be welcome. If you wanted to use the garden as a venue - I would do it on a suggested donation basis of £100 for two days - .

I would provide the area by the stables as a dining space - (for which the new 22ft by 50 ft cover is now installed)
the rocket mass heating bench will be built on the 28th/29th: (details below)
my fire pit area Near the stables is also currently taking shape
The swimming pond would be available
a solar powered hot tub could be put on for Saturday evening.
Solar hot showers are available

One of my main concerns would be to minimize the number of cars- I can take between 15 /18 cars comfortably but could squeeze ina few more - so having some means of encouraging car sharing (I think if we ran it as an eventbrite event it would be possible to use a car sharing app that can be installed on the event page) and public transport would be a good idea -
(transport links: Tiverton Parkway railway 8 miles, Feniton railway 4 miles
Cullompton has a falcon Bus service - 4 miles)