



photo courtesy Fair Amount Food Forest

Farming Food Forests

Imagine growing forests full of free food right in the middle of cities. Nutritious, tasty food would be available for the picking. Forest areas would help clean and cool the city air. Wildlife would find a safe habitat. **Urban**, or city, dwellers could enjoy the beauties of nature.

The Mini Page explored food forests to learn more about this growing idea.

What is a food forest?

A food forest imitates the ecosystem of a natural forest. The difference is that people choose each type of plant in a food forest. Each plant produces something that helps people or helps keep the forest going.

Putting foods to work

Food forest designers look for plants that do a variety of jobs. Besides providing food or medicine, the plants might attract helpful insects, return nutrients to the soil or supply **mulch** (decaying plant matter that protects and enriches soil and plants). Filling every part of the forest with food-producing plants helps keep down weeds.



photos courtesy Beacon Food Forest

Workers plant the first fruit tree in a Seattle food forest. Fruit trees may take from two to five years before they begin producing fruit.

Backup plan

Local food forests give us a backup for our food supplies. This is especially important with climate change causing an increase of storms, drought, fires and other dangers that may harm crops.

Food forests might survive these events better than field crops. Trees are hardier during droughts. They have much longer roots and have more energy stored to get them through a crisis. Trees will often survive disasters such as floods, whereas annual food crops would have to be completely replanted.

Supplying many needs

Experts say that growing our own food helps us feel more connected to our surroundings.

When food is transported over long distances, it can lose some of its nutritional value. It isn't picked at its top ripeness, so it doesn't taste as good as locally grown produce.

It takes a lot of energy to transport food. Experts say the average plate of food in the United States travels 1,500 miles from field to table. It takes 10 calories of energy to grow and transport every one calorie we eat, experts say.



Volunteers in Seattle learn beekeeping. Bees are important in a sustainable food forest. They help plants reproduce.

Mini Fact:

Food forests also supply **fodder**, or food for animals.

Layers of a food forest

A forest ecosystem is built of layers of trees, shrubs and other plants. Experts say that in a food forest, these layers are:

1. The **canopy** (KAN-uh-pea), or the tops of branches and trees. Only the tallest trees, such as mature nut and fruit trees, create the canopy.
2. Shorter trees, such as younger nut and fruit trees, or fruit trees that don't grow as high.
3. Shrubs such as berry bushes.
4. Vegetables and herbs.
5. Low-growing ground cover.
6. A layer of edible growth closer to the ground, such as mushrooms or strawberries, along with root vegetables such as carrots or potatoes.
7. Vines such as grapes or beans that climb trees or other structures.



Illustration by Corey Jameson Design for Fair Amount Food Forest

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPfoodforest
- bit.ly/MPfoodforest2

At the library:

- "Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt" by Kate Messner
- "Garden to Table: A Kid's Guide to Planting, Growing and Preparing Food" by Katherine Hengel

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of food forests are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

CANOPY, DROUGHT, ECOSYSTEM, ENERGY, FARM, FIRES, FODDER, FOOD, FOREST, MULCH, NUTRITIOUS, PLANTS, SHRUBS, STORMS, SUPPLY, TRANSPORT, URBAN, VEGETABLES, VINES.

K T T R A N S P O R T Y A U T
D O O F V I N E S N A B R U E
I Z F S E L B A T E G E V N V
S B U R H S Y K S U P P L Y D
E C O S Y S T E M S T N A L P
V F O D D E R T W Y G R E N E
S U O I T I R T U N I M T J N
Y P O N A C H T H G U O R D Z
T S E R O F I F I R E S C A Q
M H C L U M S M R O T S D C F



Mini Jokes



George: How is a garden like a great story?
Grace: It has a good plot!

Eco Note



Snow in the once-pristine peaks of the Rocky Mountains, a critical source of fresh water for much of the American West, is being contaminated with mercury and other metals from nearby mining operations. As this snow melts each spring, it feeds waterways used by millions during the region's long dry season. A new study found elevated levels of metal pollution in snow from the northern Rockies, likely carried in by storms from mining areas in Montana, Idaho and the Pacific Northwest. The pollutants may speed up snowmelt by darkening the snow's surface.

adapted with permission from Earthweek.com

Cook's Corner

Sweet Lemon Carrots

You'll need:

- 1 (16-ounce) package baby carrots
- 2 teaspoons butter
- 3 slices lemon
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar

What to do:

1. Bring 3 cups of water to boil in a large nonstick saucepan. Add carrots and return to boil.
2. Reduce heat to medium and cook uncovered for 8 to 9 minutes until carrots are tender.
3. Drain carrots well and set aside. Melt butter in same pan.
4. Return carrots to pan; add lemon slices and sprinkle with brown sugar. Stir to coat carrots.
5. Cover, reduce heat to low, and cook for 3 more minutes. Serves 4.



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

1. drop (4) _____
2. candy package (7) _____
3. what you chew with (5) _____
4. house designer (9) _____
5. keep balls up in the air (6) _____
6. farm machine (7) _____
7. moving like a snail (8) _____

GLE	TRAC	LL	HIT
ECT	WRA	CRA	TE
ETH	FA	ING	TOR
WL	JUG	ARC	PPER

Answers: fall, wrapper, teeth, architect, juggle, tractor, crawling.




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KidSpot

By Dan Thompson

6-15

Double words
Many words have more than one meaning. The word fly, for example, can mean an insect or what an airplane does. Write the word that fits both definitions in the blanks below.



1. A baseball hat or a bottle covering _____
2. To fall on something or a journey _____
3. Fish skin covering or a weight-measuring device _____
4. The sound a bell makes or finger jewelry _____
5. A citrus fruit or a reddish-yellow color _____

ANS: 1. CAP, 2. TRIP, 3. SCALE, 4. RING, 5. ORANGE

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