



# BOSTON FOOD FOREST COALITION





# MISSION

**The Boston Food Forest Coalition is a citywide network of edible gardens, orchards, and food forests managed by a group of dedicated stewards. We create community fellowship and empowerment through growing food together.**

# ABOUT



**THE BOSTON FOOD FOREST COALITION** is a network of neighborhood-based, publicly accessible food gardens located throughout Boston. The gardens include newly planted sites, as well as established legacy orchards. Newly planted sites will use permaculture, a decision-making system based on the patterns found in nature, to maximize yields while reducing maintenance. Focus will be on fruit and nut trees, berry bushes, and perennial vegetables. Food forests include plants that attract beneficial insects and replenish soil nutrients, as well as providing food.

Currently the Boston Food Forest Coalition is seeking a focal site to be a city-wide demonstration project for permaculture design. The ideal site would be large enough to accommodate companion plantings, a tool shed, a greenhouse, and on-site composting, with extra space to host workshops.

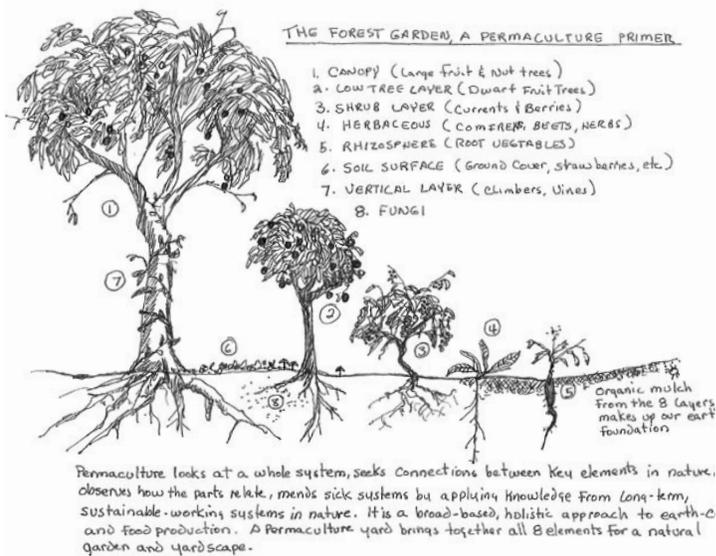
# GOALS



## **The Boston Food Forest Coalition seeks to:**

**Connect urban dwellers to gardening practices that create space for outdoor recreation, provide opportunities to grow and share food, and enable reflection about the importance of urban biodiversity and healthy eating habits.**

- **INCREASE ACCESS** to healthy, fresh food for all
- **PROVIDE OUR CHILDREN** with the knowledge of where food comes from and the experience of growing food
- **CONNECT OUR COMMUNITIES** through the growing and sharing of food
- **CREATE** a resilient local economy
- **SHARE HEIRLOOM SKILLS** and demonstrate useful gardening practices to the community
- **EDUCATE THE PUBLIC** about the health benefits (for both humans and the planet) of increasing biodiversity in planting zones
- **RECLAIM** and restore pre-existing, uncared for orchards
- **SERVE** as a model of urban agricultural stewardship for others



## WHAT IS A FOOD FOREST?

A food forest is a sustainable land management system that mimics a woodland ecosystem, focusing on food-producing trees and shrubs. In a food forest system, edible plants occupy a succession of layers—including upper level fruit and nut trees, middle level berry shrubs and vines, and lower level herbs, edible perennials, and annuals—to create an interconnected and productive whole. Intermixed with these edibles are beneficial plants that attract helpful, pest-controlling insects and that build healthy soil by providing nitrogen and mulch. Working together, this diverse collection of plants form functional relationships that maximize food yields while reducing the need for maintenance. This regenerative forest garden ecosystem offers a beautiful, ecologically healthy, and useful way to meet our most urgent human needs for food, shelter, water harvesting, and medicine.

# WHY CREATE A FOOD FOREST?

Food Forests are an innovative new approach to growing food in an urban environment. Food Forests are springing up in cities across the US: Seattle, Philadelphia, Providence, and Los Angeles. With Boston's interest in urban agriculture, it is time to consider planting one here!

Based on permaculture design principals and communal gardening, Food Forests offer many advantages that benefit people and the planet:

## **1. AN OPPORTUNITY FOR NOVICE GARDENERS TO LEARN FROM EXPERTS.**

When gardeners work together instead of on individual plots, less experienced gardeners can learn skills and techniques by working side by side with experts.

## **2. HIGHER YIELDS WITH LOWER MAINTENANCE OVER TIME.**

With a focus on perennials instead of annuals, and techniques for building healthy soils and sustainable ecosystems, food forests provide higher yields with less effort.

## **3. OVERALL GARDEN PLANS INCLUDE FRUIT TREES AND BUSHES.**

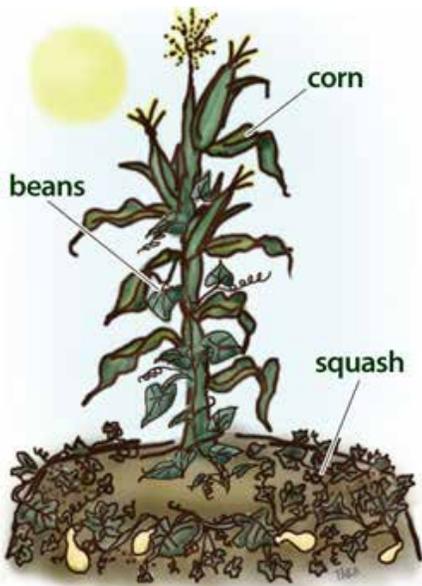
In a well-planned Food Forest, fruit trees and bushes become the centerpiece of the overall design, producing fruit year after year. A mature tree will yield more food and require less intensive care than annual vegetables planted in the same area.

#### 4. MORE GARDENING AND FOOD FOR MORE PEOPLE.

Community gardens have long wait lists. Each provides a set number of plots for a limited number of participants. Communal Food Forest gardens provide more gardening opportunities for a greater number of people.

#### 5. A COHESIVE, EFFICIENT OVERALL GARDEN DESIGN.

Instead of using more traditional garden plots, which are subdivided into an area for tomatoes, beans, and so on, a well-designed Food Forest places food crops in “guilds”—or plant partnerships that mimic natural ecosystems—which increase yields and reduce overall effort and amount of space needed. These partner plants often end up doing much of the work that people would usually do and can decrease need for toxic chemicals to control pests and weeds.



#### EXAMPLE OF THE “THREE SISTERS” GUILD:

Beans, squash, and corn are grown together in a guild, to support and benefit each other, which yields more healthy food.

1. **BEANS** – Bring nitrogen to all three plants, boosting growth.
2. **CORNSTALKS** – Provide trellis for bean vines to grow on
3. **SQUASH** – Form a living parasol with its broad leaves that densely cover the ground, deterring weeds and keeping soil cool and moist.

# **SIMILAR PROJECTS IN THE US**

Food Forests and orchard-based community garden projects are becoming a very popular way to grow food and engage the public across the US. Here are a few highlighted examples:

## **SEATTLE, WA • BEACON FOOD FOREST**

This 7-acre food forest in development adjacent to Jefferson Park has received a lot of recent media attention.

## **PROVIDENCE, RI • ROGER WILLIAMS PARK**

This edible forestry project, located in a USDA-declared food desert, is a partnership between the University of Rhode Island Master Gardeners and city officials, with the goal of increasing access to fresh produce.

## **WELLESLEY, MA • WELLESLEY COLLEGE EDIBLE ECOSYSTEM TEACHING GARDEN**

This teaching garden is a designed plant community that mimics the properties of a natural ecosystem but produces food and other products useful to humans with a minimum of maintenance.

## **BLOOMINGTON, IN • THE BLOOMINGTON COMMUNITY ORCHARD**

This orchard project began in 2010 to inspire communities to cultivate thriving systems of sharing and growing fruit. Their publicly owned Orchard operates in partnership with the Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department.

## **LOS ANGELES, WA • L.A. GREEN GROUNDS**

Founded by Ron Finley, who gave a very popular TED talk about urban gardening, L.A. Green Grounds build gardens with a focus on serving low-income residents and others with scarce access to fresh, affordable food.

# GET INVOLVED!

## 1. OUTREACH

Help us find and reach out to like-minded urban agriculture and permaculture organizations in the Boston area so that we can expand our network and include everyone that is energized by this work.

## 2. SUGGEST A SITE

We are still looking to identify an appropriate demonstration site for a model permaculture food forest where workshops can be held.

## 3. IDENTIFY TREES

Assist in identifying fruit and nut trees and shrubs. Help us find stewards to take care of existing trees and shrubs and make harvest accessible to all by adding edible trees and shrubs to [www.fallingfruit.org](http://www.fallingfruit.org)

## 4. FIND FUNDING

Any assistance with filling out grant forms and fundraising will help the food forest become a reality.

## 5. ATTEND EVENTS

Join us for potlucks, forums, and other food forest-related events—and spread the word to others about the project!

**STAY IN THE LOOP BY SIGNING UP ON OUR EMAIL LIST!**