

## **Forest Gardening**

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***Plants in a natural setting create niches in which other plants can thrive, or draw nutrients from the air and from the deep subsoil, thus 'nursing' and enriching their neighbors.***

Like the forest, forest gardens are arranged in 7 stories:

1. Canopy: standard or semi-dwarf fruit trees
2. Low-tree layer: fruit and nut trees on dwarfing root stock, bamboo
3. Shrub layer: currant and gooseberry bushes, rosa rosgosa
4. Herbaceous layer: herbs and perennial veggies
5. Vertical layer: climbing berries, nasturtiums, runner beans, vines
6. Ground cover layer: creeping plants and strawberries
7. Rhizosphere: shade tolerant plants and root crops

The System is:

1. Self-perpetuating: perennials or self-seeding annuals
2. Self-fertilizing: deep rooting trees, bushes, and herbs draw up minerals in the subsoil and make them available to other plants
3. Self-watering: deep rooting
4. Self-mulching and weed-suppressing: ground covers and intensive plantings
5. Self-pollinating: carefully selected plants that attract insects
6. Self-healing: aromatic herbs deter pests and diseases
7. Resistant to pests and diseases: varieties and beneficial attracting plants

Once established:

1. The maintenance needed shifts from weeding to pruning
2. Less pest problems due to large numbers of fragrant herbs
3. Ordered diversity is created by plant symbiosis and guild compatibility
4. Perennial herbs with their deep roots tap the minerals in the subsoil

***The forest garden diet comprises the widest possible variety of fresh fruit, nuts, greens, and herbs.***

## **Resources**

*Forest Gardening: Cultivating an Edible Landscape.* Hart, Robert. Chelsea Green, 1996. A personal account of forest garden design by one of the originators of the field.

*Forest Farming.* Douglas, J. Sholto, and Robert Hart. Rodale, 1985. A strong argument for growing trees for food and fodder, with descriptions of many species; a basic permaculture book.

*How to Make a Forest Garden.* Whitefield, Patrick. Permanent Publications, 1997. Distributed in the US by Chelsea Green. Instructions and ideas for forest gardens, with a British focus but usable here.

*Gaia's Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture.* Toby Hemenway. Chelsea Green, 2001. An easy to use and understand tour through the permaculture garden, Pacific Northwest focused.

*The Beautiful Food Garden Encyclopedia of Attractive Food Plants.* Gessert, Kate Rogers. Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1983. How to landscape with good-looking vegetables.

*The Complete Book of Edible Landscaping.* Creasy, Rosalind. Sierra Club, 1982. The foundation book that brought vegetables into the front yard.

*Designing and Maintaining Your Edible Landscape Naturally.* Kourik, Robert. Metamorphic Press. Zone 1 design and implementation. Wonderful!

*Plants For a Future: Edible and Useful Plants for a Healthier World.* Fern, Ken. Permanent Publications, 1997. Dist. in US by Chelsea Green. A British book covering a wide range of multifunctional plants.