

Stepney City Farm

London

Site Age / Initial Planting: 2010

(established trees present prior to this)

Size and aspect: 0.03ha of flat ground within a 1.2ha urban farm

Soil: Sandy Loam with 18% organic matter, pH 7.2



Setting: Community Social Enterprise

The forest garden is part of a larger city farm community project. It has to ensure economic viability and meet funding by increasing food production and by generating income through sales of produce and cooked food and courses. The Farm includes a pond, nursery, market-garden/veg-box scheme with polytunnels & raised beds, paddocks with various animals, a farm shop, farm café and support for microbusinesses, courses and events. Open 6 days a week, and with free entry for any individual or group, this site is able to promote the use of forest gardening to a wide audience.

"We have a compost system that works really well. We've had black soldier fly and people that are harvesting the maggots to feed to chickens this byproduct."

Key Features

The site has all layers in the forest garden system and the forest gardener feels all layers are complete. A total of 72 species across all layers were identified, whilst 37 individual trees, shrubs and saplings were recorded.

Upper Canopy (1 individual): sambucus nigra

Lower Canopy (24 individuals) including: apple, ash, blackthorn, chinese cedar (toona sinensis), fig, hazel, medlar, mulberry, plum, rowan, willow

Shrubs (4 individuals) including: saltbush, rose, gooseberry

Herbaecous layer including: bluebell, borage, fat hen, salsify, tansy, three cornered leek

Ground cover including: wild garlic, mint, wild strawberry, clover, chickweed

Saplings (7 individuals) including: maple, blueberry, tayberry, goji

Successes

- Reshaping trees (pruning)
- Using trees and bushes as a structure for crops & fruits (layer integration/utilising interactions)
- Taking cuttings & selling them (propagating & yield & sales)
- Teaching plant uses e.g. mugwort (education/social)

Difficulties

- Plant overcrowding
- Competition e.g. strawberries outcompeted by three-cornered leek
- Figwort invasive

Uses

Fig: Fig leaves sold to restaurants - infused ice cream; Cuttings for sale

Calendula: Used in salads; Sold in pots and bouquets

Elder: Flowers cut and given/sold to start ups for wine making

Horseradish: Very easy to propagate and sell; root grow back very well; Roots to make wasabi

Evaluations

Virtual Tour >>>



The forest gardener feels that irrigation would help the most in maintaining the site, whilst engagement literature/media would help the most in educating and encouraging more sustainable dietary behaviour.

They felt that the biggest weakness was the design, and that yields are very small. While the harvest goes to the community cafe, it is not a lot. It would be good to have planned the garden based on the produce that we would realistically use in the cafe. The forest garden is a very good learning tool when they have permaculture courses running, especially for school kids (to show them unusual crops, the way they grow and the layers and how different amounts of light comes through the trees). About 2,000 children per year join the gardening based classes.



Steward Community

Woodland Devon

Site Age / Initial Planting: 2011

Size & aspect: 0.12ha of S-facing slope within a 32 acre mixed broadleaf and conifer woodland

Soil: Loamy sand with 11% organic matter, pH 4.4



Setting: Private

A south facing private site on a hill surrounded by mature mixed broadleaf and conifer woodland owned by a workers cooperative. The forest gardeners used to live on site until 2017, when the local council evicted the residents. The FG sits within a 32 woodland, and the FGer keeps chickens. It feels like there are two halves to the FG - the more curated garden side, and the wilder zone further from the entrance; as the FGer mentioned they naturally spend more time on the side closest to the entrance.

The FG is partially integrated with the rest of the site. For example, woodland inputs include harvesting of branches used to protect the FG saplings and leaf mold as a compost/growing medium. Forest garden outputs include crop yield used as animal feed.

"I never had an intention to pull up all the other layers and replace them with edibles. I've just replaced the top layer trees and that's it. Never planted a groundcover, it was allowed to develop with a bit of management."

Key Features

The forest garden has all layers in the system except an aquatic layer. They feel all layers are complete, except for the aquatic and vertical layers, where they think there is scope for increasing both of these. A total of 59 species across all layers were identified, whilst 140 trees, shrubs and saplings were recorded.

The most dominant tree species are apple, followed by ash, maple, currants, hazel and oak.

Upper Canopy (12 individuals) including and dominated by: betula pendula

Lower Canopy (71 individuals) including and dominated by: apple, hazel, oak, Elaeagnus spp.

Shrubs (32 individuals) including and dominated by: currants, gooseberries, raspberries

Herbaceous layer including: creeping buttercup, dead nettle, herb robert, purslane, thistle

Ground cover including: hemp weed, moss, ground ivy, grasses, ground cover raspberry

Saplings (25 individuals) including and dominated by: ash and sycamore

Successes

- It's too early to tell
- Buying a strimmer. The woods are very bad for bracken, and in July & August it's horrendous. The community rules were that I had to pull by hand. I bought one a few years ago and haven't looked back

Difficulties

- Anything experimental didn't work
- Not living on site
- Maintenance
- Nettles and Creeping buttercup are a nuisance; a result of human disturbance
- Pulling up natural regen
- Small rootstocks unsuitable for site

Uses

Dog rose and *Eleagnus* spp.: chickens like the fruit

Hazel: used for bean poles

Bracken: used as mulch around trees

Blue honeysuckle *Lonicera caerulea*: Berries palatable but not very nice; Birds like them

Plum: Doing well in acid soil; used for jam

Evaluations

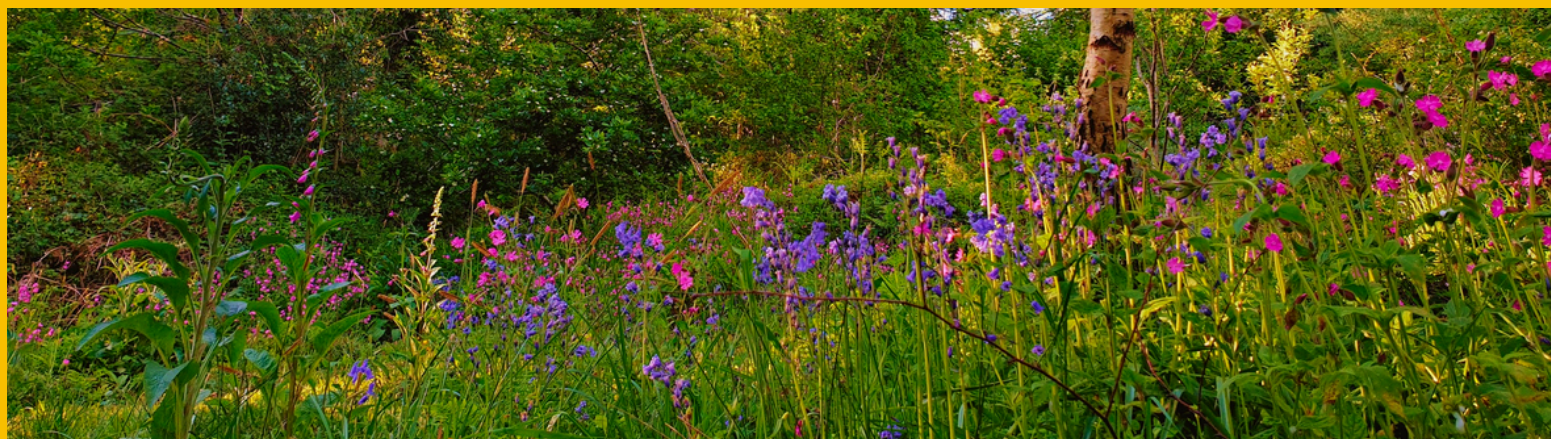
Virtual Tour >>>



Many of the fruit trees have been heavily pruned to increase fruit yield or to prevent growth that is out of the forest gardener's reach, thus increasing ease of harvest.

It's clear that the highly acidic soil was a limiting factor here, and we should all be away of this during our species selection.

"The buartnut died. And the small apple trees on dwarf rootstock. One of the pear trees hasn't done well, but another did well. I'm sure if it's just microclimate, or whether that's the variety of pear that just happened to go in that spot. I mean, it's not very scientific. The Mulberry trees didn't work out very well either. Anything experimental didn't work." It might have been better i.e. more productive to stick to apples, as all the experimental trees seem to not have done very well - this could be a result of acid soil "doesn't matter how much you lime it, it will still be acidic."



The Quadrangle Kent

Site Age / Initial Planting: 2011

Size & Aspect: 0.66ha of flat pasture on 1.2ha

Soil: Sandy Loam with 9% organic matter, pH 7.6



Setting: Private Social Enterprise

This is a relatively large forest garden owned by a trust that promotes permaculture, rewilding and conservation, particularly with young school groups. The forest garden is seen as being fully integrated with the rest of the site, and integral to the functioning of the trust. Other parts of the site include a river, wide hedgerow, annual vegetable garden, large buildings (previously the family home) for what is now a diversified business including events, workshop units, wellbeing retreats and more. The vision is to allow the forest garden to become more wooded in time, and increase the educational use.

"We noticed a huge change in biodiversity where we let the grass grow. Interesting plants are coming back dormant for many years, like orchids. It was a overgrazed pasture field since the 70s. Great insect life and certainly the butterflies are very abundant."

Key Features

The FG has all layers in the system, and some of these will be extended in time, although much of the space will remain open for visitors and natural ground cover. The site is surrounded by a dense and inaccessible hawthorn hedge on two sides, and a mature wooded strip on the other two sides - making up the upper canopy. The hedges and woodland were not included in the survey.

129 species were recorded in total, whilst 266 individual trees, shrubs and saplings were recorded.

Lower Canopy (74 individuals) including and dominated by: apple, hawthorn, plum (& other prunus spp.) and sea buckthorn

Shrubs (99 individuals) including and dominated by: currants, gooseberries, elaeagnus spp., bramble/thornless blackberry and Siberian pea

Herbaceous layer including: black horehound, black knapweed, ragwort, pyramid orchid

Ground cover including: hairy sedge, perennial rye-grass, red fescue, soft brome, clover

Saplings including and dominated by: *Prunus* spp., hawthorn, hazel and oak.

Successes

- Something always does well, this changes every year
- Wild grass / natural regeneration is highly biodiverse;
- Picks and chooses what to leave
- Seeing how things grow, observing the variability in the field, to plant where and when it's needed

Difficulties

- Frost
- Free-draining soil



Uses

Raspberry "Autumn bliss": Does really well and people really enjoy picking it

Quince *Cydonia oblonga*: Jelly, Quince paste

Elder: Flowers for cordial

Siberian pea shrub: nitrogen fixer

Evaluations

Watch an inspiring short film on the journey of this field >>>

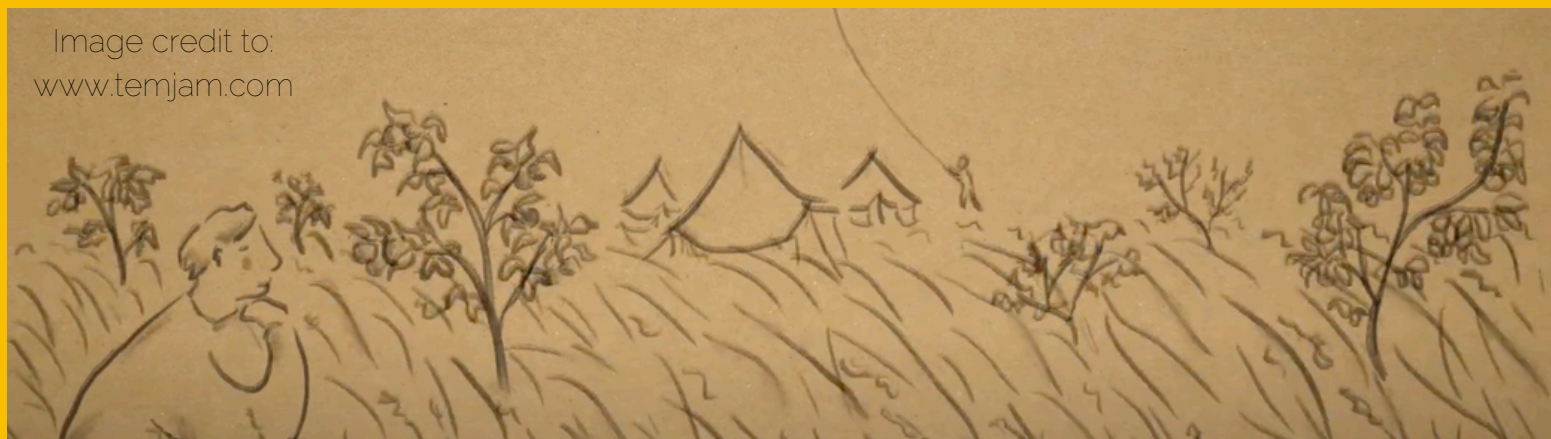


Here, the land is tended in a beautiful way, interweaving rewilding with forest gardening, and a strong focus on providing social and educational yields. They don't have any wishes or desires, they allow the site to grow organically, and observe development over time, "some trees were lost due to frost - for everything else, we just accept it and go along with it. We're not fighting against anything, we are watching and allowing the site to develop organically."

They also recognise the importance of maintenance, "we could have more mulching - we don't do enough of it and know it's important; when volunteers ask if then can help we ask them to mulch or weed the fruit bushes."

Early site plans for school visits have developed and continue to occur, they have built a geodome for this purpose.

Image credit to:
www.temjam.com



Illford Forest Garden

London

Site Age / Initial Planting: 2012

Size & aspect: 0.01ha of flat ground; two adjoining private gardens

Soil: Sandy loam with 11% organic matter, 6.7pH



Setting: Private Garden

One reason Rootsman Rak decided to create a forest garden in his family's garden was that his elderly mother struggled with garden tasks, and he often had to spend large amounts of time away from the UK and wasn't able to help. Now, only half a day per month is spent on site - a huge testament to the forest garden's ability to sustain itself. The plants yield a decent level of produce which is then used in the home's kitchen. The huge variety of plants in the garden in turn provide a huge variety of flavours that are used in cooking. The design makes use of zoning the most used plants nearest to the kitchen door. The design also ensures the site is very easy to manage for all those who use it.

"It was the intention to show that a forest garden does not need lots of money. Because so many community projects I see chasing after money. That's is because they think they need money for everything. It cost me £12 for the grey water treatment system. The trees and plants came from different places, from making exchanges with different people."

Key Features

For such a small site, it includes a very complex herbaceous layer, with over 54 plant species or varieties. The most dominant woody species were blackthorn, dog rose, hazel, elaeagnus and elder. A total of 110 species across all layers were identified, whilst 52 individual trees, shrubs and saplings were recorded.

Upper Canopy (1 individuals) including: a very large mature cherry tree

Lower Canopy (25 individuals) including: blackthorn, cherry, elaeagnus, elder, hazel, nepalese pepper, mulberry,

Shrubs (39 individuals) including: goji, currents, jasmine, mahonia, rose, bramble, dog rose

Herbaceous layer including: alkanet, burdock, calendula, kale, mugwort, plantain (plantago),

Ground cover including: cinquefoil, cleavers, pine berry, mint, lovage, wild garlic

Saplings (5 individuals) including: blackthorn, bay laurel dog rose, elder

Vertical layer including kiwi, grape

Successes

- Harvesting, fermentation, preserves, experimenting
- The forest gardener received up to 80% of their nutrition from the site
- Youtube videos on lacto-ferments and other knowledge on perennial growing and processing

Difficulties

- An Om shaped hugelkultur was inappropriate for site
- Not keeping on top of bindweed;
- Personal health
- Sourcing for free/barter/exchange - lessened over time

Uses

Nepalese pepper *Zanthoxylum planispinum*: edible seeds used as a spice

Wild cherry: uses them for chutney ripe and unripe, both as lacto-ferments and dried

Ribwort plantain: 'If I could travel the world with one plant, this would be it.' Both for food and medicine

Salad burnet: leaves taste like cucumber, consume before if flowers

Hawthorn: fruit is dried, and is fairly sweet, makes a great snack

Evaluations

[Virtual Tour >>>](#)



It's all in the design. One should understand the land and micro-climates of the site and plan accordingly - work from patterns and designs. If possible, allow for an area for growing living mulch, especially at first.

"I haven't done any work in the last two years except for some shearing and putting some woodchip down on the path. No work, no weeding, no compost moving, no watering. Every weed has been used. The rainwater goes to the grey water system which waters the part of the forest garden that really needs water. The rest looks after itself. I don't plant any new things, it just is being taking over by perennials and weeds. Since my parents passed away there is nobody to pick and eat the produce. Things are just overgrowing. Now I need three days a year to manage the overgrowing. There are still plenty of things I can do to make it zero maintenance."



Oak Tree Farm

Suffolk

Site Age / Initial Planting: 2009

Size & aspect: 2.65ha of flat ground

Soil: Loamy sand with 3% organic matter, pH 7.6



Setting: Private Site

The site initially had community involvement with different groups and local residents involved. It was planted as a large commercial scale forest garden, with plans to integrate it into a wider CSA scheme on-site. The site was sold in 2018, with the new owners kindly agreeing to take part in the study. They plan to create an arboretum and grassland. For them, it is a personal journey, so there is no clear plan and they want the development to be organic.

There is a fierce crosswind that blows across the site and as the windbreak was planted at a similar time to the main trees, it hasn't provided adequate cover. East Anglia often faces harsh winters, low temperatures and high snowfall; the site has struggled under these conditions.

"The best day was seeing the barn owl fly in."

Key Features

The site has all layers in the system except an aquatic layer. They feel there is much more planting to do across all layers, including creating an aquatic layer. A total of 59 species across all layers were identified, whilst 291 trees, shrubs and saplings were recorded.

Upper Canopy (64 individuals) and dominated by: italian alder

Lower Canopy (176 individuals) including: ash, sweet chestnuts, apple, plum, blackthorn, pear, lime (tilia), cherry, italian alder

Shrubs (18 individuals) dominated by: raspberries & currants

Herbaceous layer including: bristly oxtongue, cats ear, comfrey, vetch, nettle, holy hay, st john's wort, spear thistle, tansy, white dead nettle, yarrow

Ground cover including: grasses

Saplings (33 individuals) and dominated by: hawthorn, elm, ash, sweet chestnuts, elder, oak

Successes

- The new owners haven't been on site long enough to know what plants have done really well
- The trees are mostly alive despite difficulties with soils and exposure

Difficulties

- The new owners reiterated that they haven't been there long enough to have encountered many difficulties
- Some saplings struggling in drought
- Deer arriving and need to be aware of possible impact on regeneration
- The initial vision wasn't fulfilled, but trees are still there

Uses

Small leaved lime: spring leaves for salads

Thistles: cut away leaves and touch outer skin of stem and eat the stalk like celery

Yellow vetch: nitrogen fixation

Italian alder: windbreak and nitrogen fixation

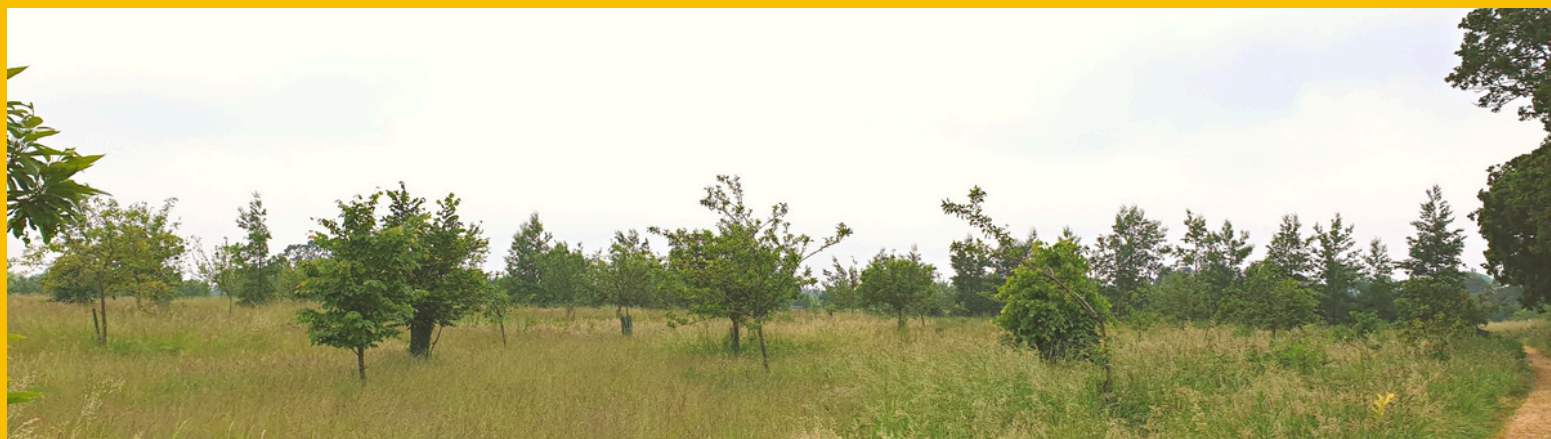
Evaluations

The previous site owner regrets not making better ground preparations before planting took place.

Don't be too ambitious in the size of your site. Smaller projects are easier to manage. Make sure your site has an adequate means of irrigation, decent ground preparations and windbreaks.

Spend 1-2 years improving the soil (if you want to be planting) – and make a design plan during this time; then plant – think about the type of habitat you want to create – one that's naturally occurring on light soils.

Was probably low nutrient and probably best thing is to let it rest.



Edibles Forest Garden

West Yorkshire

Site Age / Initial Planting: 2008

Size & aspect: 0.12ha of SE facing marginal slope within 2.8 hectare no-dig market garden

Soil: Sandy clay loam with 13% organic matter, pH 6.2



Setting: Private Social Enterprise

This is a good example of a forest garden that integrates different activities and aims. The social benefits are already well embedded, including interactions with school children and others with a keen interest in FG's. A demonstration plot at the front of the site is a nice small scale example that would be manageable by most gardeners. The forest gardener's also value the benefits to wildlife and soil whilst make sales from the produce. The Forest garden area was initially ploughed and sown with grass. The first trees were planted in 2008, with under-planting in 2009. They used carpet mulching originally – which is still in place - but they are now less keen with potential dye contamination and its unattractive degraded form, preferring to use cardboard.

"The native hedge, now where it is mature, really has noticeably increased the biodiversity, certainly birds. Before we planted any hedges or any of the forest garden, there were no small garden birds at all, because it was just a big open site, a big field. The amount of birds is just incredible."

Key Features

The forest garden has all layers in the system although the root layer, vertical layer and groundcover are naturally occurring. The forest gardener feels more planting is to be done on the vertical layer. A total of 63 species across layers were identified, whilst 230 trees, shrubs and saplings were recorded.

Upper Canopy (1 individuals) including: italian alder

Lower Canopy (101 individuals) including and dominated by: hawthorn, maple, hazel, apple, cherry, sea buckthorn, elaeagnus, pear

Shrubs (89 individuals) including: blackcurrant, redcurrant, blueberry, jostaberry, raspberry, tayberry, cranberry, rose (hips, petals), gooseberry, sea buckthorn, worcester berry

Herbaceous layer including: herb robert, horseradish, juncus, thistle, willowherb

Ground cover including: comfrey, rhubarb, strawberry, Nepalese raspberry, mint

Saplings (39 individuals) including: hawthorn, maple, cherry, blackthorn, ash, sycamore

Successes

- Community development
- Volunteers
- Biodiversity
- Commercial output
- Sea buckthorn
- Initially only planted trees because they like trees & fruit, but to now have a commercial outlet

Difficulties

- Couch grass has outcompeted most of the ground cover
- Not being able to plant ground cover
- Not recognising the ground in the forest garden would be too wet for too many months of the year, causing waterlogging, poor tree health low fruit productivity for many of the fruit trees

Uses

Creeping comfrey (*Symphitum ibericum*): good ground cover; competes well with grass and nettle

Horseradish: pickling the roots for sales

Oca (*Oxalis tuberosa*): leaves are similar to nasturtium and good for salads; the root is like potato

Jostaberry: cross between black current and gooseberry making it easier to pick

Evaluations

Virtual Tour >>>



If the forest gardeners had to do it again, they would plant a field of creeping comfrey or sort the ground preparation more thoroughly. For maintenance, they recommend using a flail mower - a two wheel tractor with a flail mower attachment, that keeps down the couch grass and mulches around the paths. They continue to use a scythe where possible.

Despite difficulties, the forest gardener has planted two subsequent forest gardens on site, indicating the success of such a system. Through their learnings, they have made changes to the design to aid commercial viability. For example, the second forest garden has been planted more openly, with more space between the trees and shrubs. This increases ease and speed of picking.



East Devon Forest Garden

Site Age / Initial Planting: 2012

Size & aspect: 1 ha of flat ground

Soil: Sandy loam with 5.4% organic matter, pH 6.2



Setting: Private Site

Extensive earth works and landscaping has created a system of micro-climates. Earth banks protect from prevailing westerly and northerly winds, whilst increasing thermal mass - protecting plants from extreme temperatures. The earth banks are arranged in a series of circles and semi-circles creating different 'rooms' to the site. As you walk around the site the 'rooms' provide different levels of protection from the elements, with physically noticeable changes in temperature. There are also many unique features, including a natural swimming pool and a fantastic social and recreational area. A three tiered amphitheatre-style seating area incorporates a rocket stove for use in colder months - 'keep those bums warm' we say!

"The main thing was, we didn't do any irrevocable decisions for two years, so the first two years was literally devoted to the planning and the dreaming. I think it allowed for much deeper and more multilayered design to sort of emerge."

Key Features

The site is surrounded by a dense and diverse hedge, although most of this was not included in the survey. All layers are present in the system although the forest gardener feels many of the layers are yet to be completed, including the herbaceous layer, vertical layer and ground cover. A total of 160 species across all layers were identified, although many more were present, whilst 1069 individual trees, shrubs and saplings were recorded.

Upper Canopy (366 individuals) including: leylandii, italian alder, heartnut, cabbage palm

Lower Canopy (340 individuals) including: cherry plum,, apple, staghorn sumac, bamboo, mulberry, sea buckthorn, pawpaw, elaeagnus, peach olive, fig, loquat, quince, dogwood, judas, cherry laurel, portuguese laurel, lime (tilia), walnut, ginkgo biloba, rum cherry, wild service,

Shrubs (230 individuals) including: rose, saltbush, thornless blackberry, japanese wineberry, loganberry, gooseberry & currants, blue honeysuckle, NZ flax, nanking cherry, feijoa, aronia,

Herbaceous layer including: artichoke, banana, babington's leek, fuki, peony, saffron crocus

Ground cover including: marjoram, nepalese raspberry, wild garlic, wild strawberry, grasses

Saplings (133 individuals) including: magnolia, mulberry, akebia, persimmon, oak, chilean guava, pawpaw, hazel, banana, chinese date, amelanchier, apple, silver birch, lime (tilia), plum yew, willow, blue bean plant

Successes

- Two years planning & observation
- Major planting of Alder around the perimeter (windbreak & nitrogen fixing)
- edible plants rare to the UK are coping due to creating warmer micro-climates
- Asimina triloba, pakistan mulberry that fruited for first time last year; shipova pear started producing at year seven

Difficulties

- Rabbits broke through the fencing
- Badgers & wood pigeons
- Predators not arriving in sufficient numbers as the area may not be big enough to support apex predators;
- Having to over plant to ensure enough for everybody i.e. the animals too;
- planning

Uses

Thornless blackberry: produced 30l blackberry wine in 2020

Scorzonera: good root crop

Yacon: root crop to cook, roast, etc; stores well through winter

Toona sinensis: tree with delicious leaves; Fruit doesn't ripen

Juneberry Amelanchier spp.: Seven varieties - the first fruiter of the year; cherry sized fruits; superfood with antioxidant, minerals and vitamins

Perennial Egyptian walking onion >>>



Evaluations

"The best thing we ever did was to plant the green manures, which just gave us two years to dream. And out of that came the design. That's the thing I keep recommending to other people. I know no one ever does it... The first green manure mix was Italian ryegrass and winter tares, it's a winter green manure that got sowed in the autumn and grew through the winter and then got reincorporated for next year. And then we planted a nutrient cycling mix following that. These are separate processes: ones just incorporating huge amounts of organic matter and the other's mining for minerals deep in the soil. That was through Dave Jacke, who said if you do that by the 5th year you'll have overtaken someone who planted on the first day, so by delaying it two years, you actually speed up the rate, so it's kind of like magic. I'm so grateful to have come across that. One bit of information has so influenced what we did here. And probably that is why we've got no regrets."

Virtual Tour >>>



Bridewell Forest Garden

Devon

Site Age / Initial Planting: 2010

Size & aspect: 0.43ha of steep slope & terrace within a 4.5ha mixed smallholding

Soil: Silty loam with 8% organic matter, pH 5.6



Setting: Private Site

The forest gardener has observed positive increases in biodiversity. Major earth works has created terracing, increasing access and preventing soil erosion. The terraces have broken the site up into manageable sections, with polycultures created along rows. It has led to many 'nooks and crannies' in the walls of the banks, hospitable to slow-worms, grass snakes and lizards. Some trees have been planted on raised mounds of soil, providing small spaces for reptiles and insects. The ponds provide a new dimension of biodiversity, attracting dragonflies to the area. Due to several difficulties, the design has been simplified overtime and the forest gardener is optimistic about this.

"The sweet chestnut has done well on other parts of the site. In the forest garden, only two produce fruits, which might be due to lack of pollination (...) I've tried top working scions into the tops of the trees, but I've tried it a few times and I can't get them to take, so you know, here's hoping those would then be able to pollinate what's below it, or next to it."

Key Features

The site has all layers in the forest garden system. Some layers are incomplete (groundcover, aquatic and fungal layers) or kept as the natural system (root and vertical layers). A total of 44 species across all layers were identified, whilst 359 individual trees, shrubs and saplings were recorded.

Upper Canopy (26 individuals) including: sweet chestnut, italian alder, mimosa, pear, willow

Lower Canopy (127 individuals) including: nepalese pepper, apple, plum, willow, elaeagnus, autumn olive, ash, hazel, medlar, devon whitebeam, chinese dogwood, hawthorn, tonna sinensis

Shrubs (39 individuals) including: elder, guelder rose, gorse, elaeagnus, jostaberry

Herbaceous layer including: foxglove, hogweed, hart's tongue fern, nettle, oxeye daisy, yarrow

Ground cover including: bracken, comfrey, grasses, wild strawberry

Saplings (167 individuals) including: willow, ash, alder, apple, oak, hazel

Successes

- Pears and Italian alders have been very successful, with good yield
- The forest gardener is optimistic about the redesign
- Apple espalier
- Managing the bramble

Difficulties

- Wind is a major issue for the site, although planting has improved this
- Getting ill and losing control of the initial design
- Trying to get others involved
- Maintenance
- Tree failures, especially experimental ones

Uses

Italian alder: Used as a mulch; use of deadwood to remove/prevent grass growth

Autumn olive *Eleagnus umbellata*: Berries used in ice cream; named varieties will be grown in the hedges

Willow spp.: Used for animal feed

***Eleagnus x ebbingei*:** Shelter for pears and Nitrogen fixer

Evaluations

"Start with your windbreaks. Careful observations and work on windbreaks at the start of the project will provide a better growing environment and help to save effort later on in the project."

"Have a good balance between complexity and simplicity. Ecosystems can be very complex but management of ecosystems is easier the simpler they are."

"There hasn't really been a yield such yet. Because of the wind, the birds and the drought on the mountain, the trees struggle."

"Plum species also don't do well in this climate (site/regional specific); so the redesign a few years ago was to cut down the plums and repurpose that area."

We are greatly indebted to the participants who took part in this review. We now have greater insight into how forest gardens are created, including some of the difficulties incurred and how such difficulties are either overcome or accepted as part of the natural process in working with the land.

See more virtual
forest garden tours
here! >>>



Garden Cottage

Coldstream, Scottish Borders

Site Age / Initial Planting: 32 /1990

Size and aspect: 0.08ha of flat ground including intermixing of annual flowers and vegetables

Soil: Loamy Sand with 8.7% organic matter, pH 6.88



Setting: Private Garden and Enterprise

The forest garden is part of a larger city farm community project. It has to ensure economic viability and meet funding by increasing food production and by generating income through sales of produce and cooked food and courses. The Farm includes a pond, nursery, market-garden/veg-box scheme with polytunnels & raised beds, paddocks with various animals, a farm shop, farm café and support for microbusinesses, courses and events. Open 6 days a week, and with free entry for any individual or group, this site is able to promote the use of forest gardening to a wide audience.

"If you're gonna try to do this - make sure that 80 to 90% of what you're planting is truly reliable, and experiment 5 or 10% at either end of the scale."

Key Features

The site has all layers in the forest garden system and the forest gardener feels all layers are complete. A total of 72 species across all layers were identified, whilst 37 individual trees, shrubs and saplings were recorded.

Upper Canopy (1 individual):

Lower Canopy (24 individuals) including:

Shrubs (4 individuals) including:

Herbaecous layer including:

Ground cover including:

Saplings (7 individuals) including:

Successes

- The totality - the entity is the garden
- Record maintenance (e.g. all the visitors, including humans)
- Set up of Abundant Borders and trying to alleviate food poverty
- Training other teachers
- Apples, pears and grapes
- In May - making a 65 species salad!

Difficulties

- People and trying to set up an intentional community
-

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was supposed
community
Plants are mu

Uses

Fig: Fig leaves sold to restaurants - infused ice cream; Cuttings for sale

Calendula: Used in salads; Sold in pots and bouquets

Elder: Flowers cut and given/sold to start ups for wine making

Horseradish: Very easy to propagate and sell; root grow back very well; Roots to make wasabi

Evaluations

Virtual Tour >>>



If everybody did what we do here, in their garden, there are at least a million hectares of garden in Britain, this yields at the rate of 16 tonnes a hectare and only half of its food. If we did the whole thing, we could probably double that. There isn't a farmer on grade one land here for all their John Deere tractors and all their Agri chemicals, who gets more than 8 tonnes a hectare unless they grow potatoes. So if everybody in Britain, did in there garden what we're doing here, there will be 16 million metric tonnes of food - that'll be about half the amount of food we need in Britain and the farmers could carry on growing the field scale crops, wheat, barley, you know, celery in East Anglia and things like that which they can do really well and they could stop using chemicals and they could put more of their land down to woodland or wilderness. And we could all work a bit less hard and reduce the suicide rate of farmers.



Esthwaite Forest Garden

Lancaster

Site Age / Initial Planting: 15 / 2007

Size and aspect: 0.02ha of terraced w-facing garden and additional front garden

Soil: Loamy Sand with 8.3% organic matter, pH 7.36



Setting: Community Social Enterprise

The forest garden is part of a larger city farm community project. It has to ensure economic viability and meet funding by increasing food production and by generating income through sales of produce and cooked food and courses. The Farm includes a pond, nursery, market-garden/veg-box scheme with polytunnels & raised beds, paddocks with various animals, a farm shop, farm café and support for microbusinesses, courses and events. Open 6 days a week, and with free entry for any individual or group, this site is able to promote the use of forest gardening to a wide audience.

"...my vision is really one of the cycle of nature of the abundance. And you know, sharing the abundance, which is one of the third permaculture principles."

Key Features

The site has all layers in the forest garden system and the forest gardener feels all layers are complete. A total of 72 species across all layers were identified, whilst 37 individual trees, shrubs and saplings were recorded.

Upper Canopy (1 individual):

Lower Canopy (24 individuals) including:

Shrubs (4 individuals) including:

Herbaecous layer including:

Ground cover including:

Saplings (7 individuals) including:

Successes

- seed saving and sharing
- several thousand LinkedIn connections and sharing natures patterns with them
- Creating a wildlife refuge and place of spiritual renewal
- Dismantling barriers around wild food
- Guerilla gardening
- Plums, apples, pears and roses

Difficulties

- To not take into account the size or potential size of the trees / overplanting
- Restraining ambition

Uses

Fig: Fig leaves sold to restaurants - infused ice cream; Cuttings for sale

Calendula: Used in salads; Sold in pots and bouquets

Elder: Flowers cut and given/sold to start ups for wine making

Horseradish: Very easy to propagate and sell; root grow back very well; Roots to make wasabi

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"Let me just say one fun thing, which is the older I get, the more I realise that I need to ask questions of our indigenous elders. And in every place I create gardens. My questions are always what did the first people of this place do? How did they grow their food? How did they interact with nature? What medicines did they find?"

"I'm a keeper of the site. It's not like a sculpture that I created and it's inert..."

"So I think if I had a huge site and I created a woodland and I was allowing the woodland to go wild, then there are parts of it that I could just let do their thing. But you know, I mean this is a tiny suburban site so I can't do that."



Agroforestry Research Trust

Dartington, Devon

Site Age / Initial Planting: 32 / 1990

Size and aspect: 0.85 ha of flat ground within Dartington Estate

Soil: 13.5% organic matter



Setting: Community Social Enterprise

The forest garden is part of a larger city farm community project. It has to ensure economic viability and meet funding by increasing food production and by generating income through sales of produce and cooked food and courses. The Farm includes a pond, nursery, market-garden/veg-box scheme with polytunnels & raised beds, paddocks with various animals, a farm shop, farm café and support for microbusinesses, courses and events. Open 6 days a week, and with free entry for any individual or group, this site is able to promote the use of forest gardening to a wide audience.

"people who (...) come on tours like (...) the management of (...) the National Trust (...) chatting to them, they realise what they're doing is not sustainable, so I think I'd call that a big success..."

Key Features

The site has all layers in the forest garden system and the forest gardener feels all layers are complete. A total of 72 species across all layers were identified, whilst 37 individual trees, shrubs and saplings were recorded.

Upper Canopy (1 individual):

Lower Canopy (24 individuals) including:

Shrubs (4 individuals) including:

Herbaecous layer including:

Ground cover including:

Saplings (7 individuals) including:

Successes

- Sichuan pepper
- Visitors and tours
- Changing people's and organisation's perspectives
- Minimal maintenance (30 hours per month)
-

Difficulties

- Apricots and almonds due to geography / humid climate
-

Uses

Fig: Fig leaves sold to restaurants - infused ice cream; Cuttings for sale

Calendula: Used in salads; Sold in pots and bouquets

Elder: Flowers cut and given/sold to start ups for wine making

Horseradish: Very easy to propagate and sell; root grow back very well; Roots to make wasabi

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"I spend 30 hours a month in total in the forest garden. 20 years ago it would have been more than that, it was probably double, at 60 hours a month and and so between years 10 abd years 20. I would say that went steadily down from 60 to 30 or less, and it's remained there since."

"It would be nice to be able to measure yields which haven't really ever had time or capacity to do or the money to pay somebody else to do so, so enabling that in one way or another would be quite nice."



AFG4

Devon

Site Age / Initial Planting: 19 / 2003

Size and aspect: 0.1ha of S-facing slope within a 32 acre mixed broadleaf and conifer woodland

Soil: Sandy Loam with 7.7% organic matter, pH 5.46



Setting: Community Social Enterprise

The forest garden is part of a larger city farm community project. It has to ensure economic viability and meet funding by increasing food production and by generating income through sales of produce and cooked food and courses. The Farm includes a pond, nursery, market-garden/veg-box scheme with polytunnels & raised beds, paddocks with various animals, a farm shop, farm café and support for microbusinesses, courses and events. Open 6 days a week, and with free entry for any individual or group, this site is able to promote the use of forest gardening to a wide audience.

"(While) we, the humans, have been dormant, the forest garden's growing crazy. That's a testament to forest garden, 'cause the vegetable gardens are empty.."

Key Features

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Lower Canopy (24 individuals) including:

Shrubs (4 individuals) including:

Herbaecous layer including:

Ground cover including:

Saplings (7 individuals) including:

Successes

- Reshaping trees (pruning)
- Using trees and bushes as a structure for crops & fruits (layer integration/utilising interactions)
- Taking cuttings & selling them (propagating & yield & sales)
- Teaching plant uses e.g. mugwort (education/social)

Difficulties

- Plant overcrowding
- Competition e.g. strawberries outcompeted by three-cornered leek
- Figwort invasive

Uses

Fig: Fig leaves sold to restaurants - infused ice cream; Cuttings for sale

Calendula: Used in salads; Sold in pots and bouquets

Elder: Flowers cut and given/sold to start ups for wine making

Horseradish: Very easy to propagate and sell; root grow back very well; Roots to make wasabi

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It (Steward Community Woodland) was based on like being a sustainable living project. That was the kind of the main core aim of it was to be humans integrated into Woodland and living there and managing it and growing food. And we're not there now. So as we predicted without living there loads of the economies of scale and things don't work."



Old Sleningford Farm

Ripon, North Yorkshire

Site Age / Initial Planting: 20

Size and aspect: 0.03ha of flat ground within a 1.2ha urban farm

Soil: Loamy Sand with 5.8% organic matter, pH 6.6



Setting: Community Social Enterprise

The forest garden is part of a larger city farm community project. It has to ensure economic viability and meet funding by increasing food production and by generating income through sales of produce and cooked food and courses. The Farm includes a pond, nursery, market-garden/veg-box scheme with polytunnels & raised beds, paddocks with various animals, a farm shop, farm café and support for microbusinesses, courses and events. Open 6 days a week, and with free entry for any individual or group, this site is able to promote the use of forest gardening to a wide audience.

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The one thing I would like to add is to encourage everybody who's got a garden to grow their own food. If they don't have a garden, find a community garden allotment. Grow your own food. Persuade all local authorities to turn golf courses, cemeteries, bus stops, parklands into places where food is grown.

Doesn't have to stop being a golf course. But you could fill it with fruit trees, walks for the public and so on. We have a very good project with Sterling Golf Club about this who are totally on board. And in relieving the burden on farmers, we relieve the burden on wildlife. And we allow biodiversity to explode again. And we get healthy food closer to home, reduce food miles. 20% of carbon on Planet Earth is generated by humans from shipping stuff around the world.

