



The Community Food Forest Handbook

How to Plan, Organize, and Nurture Edible Gathering Places

Catherine Bukowski and John Munsell
foreword by LaManda Joy

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Community food forests are rapidly emerging across the United States as part of local food movements promoting food literacy and community building

Community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs were a rarity in the 1980s, but today nearly 13,000 farms sell their produce through thousands of CSAs. Farmers markets have grown by over 400 percent since the mid-1990s. And now, community food forests are showing similar exponential growth with more than 70 projects launching in just the past five years in communities of all sizes, spanning from the Pacific Northwest to the Deep South.

Fueled by the popularity of permaculture and agroecology, community food forests are capturing the imaginations of people in neighborhoods, towns, and cities across the country. They not only help create access to nutritious fresh food, but provide educational opportunities to learn about our food system, ecology, and regenerative practices. While interest in installing them in public spaces is mounting, the best ways to organize and lead groups of people to successfully create a food forest has received little attention—until now.

The Community Food Forest Handbook by Catherine Bukowski and John Munsell is the first book to dive into the civic aspects of developing a food forest—from gathering community input to dealing with government regulations, finding funding, and more. The authors share practical advice gleaned from interviews with leadership teams at more than 20 project sites, plus their own experience creating and managing a food forest.

Drawing on systems thinking and social change theory, this book focuses on how to work inclusively with people and build on their strengths when conceiving of, designing, and implementing a community food forest. Its concepts and examples showcase the complexities of community food forests, highlighting the human resilience of those who learn and experience what is possible when they collaborate on a shared vision for their community.



Catherine Bukowski is a PhD candidate in the College of Natural Resources and the Environment at Virginia Tech, where she co-taught an agroforestry and whole-farm-planning course that incorporated permaculture principles. Catherine previously co-coordinated a forest farming virtual community for the online Cooperative Extension network. She is on the Board of Directors for the Association of Temperate Agroforestry.



John Munsell is an associate professor and forest management extension specialist at Virginia Tech, where he teaches agroforestry and permaculture. His background is in sociology and natural resource management. John has worked with communities from Appalachia to Cameroon to study agroforestry implementation and associated environmental, social, and economic impacts. He has helped design whole-farm plans incorporating permaculture and agroforestry for properties across the United States.

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