



Fruitful Labor

The Ecology, Economy, and Practice
of a Family Farm

Mike Madison

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The ecology, economy, and practice of truly sustainable, small-scale agriculture

As the average age of America's farmers continues to rise, we face serious questions about what farming will look like in the near future and who will be growing our food. Many younger people are interested in going into agriculture, especially organic farming, but cannot find affordable land, or lack the conceptual framework and practical information they need to succeed in a job that can be both difficult and deeply fulfilling.

For over three decades, Mike Madison and his family have operated Yolo Press, a small organic farm located in the Sacramento Valley. In *Fruitful Labor*, Madison combines very practical information about his small farm operation with a gentle philosophy that attempts to place his farm in an economic, environmental, and social context, giving readers an engaging and unfiltered look at thirty years on a successful small farm.

Mike readily points out that his experiences are local and some details are unique to his operation—but the basic variables are universal. He offers a thorough description of a successful small farm, including:

- A complete breakdown of tools and machines, including cost
- A rough estimate of the biomass of larger herbivores on the cultivated portion of the farm (1,165 lbs!)
- Decades of evolving and insightful agricultural observations
- A breakdown of all crops grown on the farm (fruit and vegetable along with flower and foliage)
- A thorough evaluation of soil, water, farm infrastructure, energy, productivity, and the economics of farming
- An abbreviated almanac

With a welcome mix of philosophy and pragmatism, *Fruitful Labor* is sure to inspire a new generation of farmers and provide an in-depth look at sustainable agriculture and farming practices.



Mike Madison lives with his wife, Dianne, in Winters, California, where they operate a diverse organic farm, growing olives, apricots, citrus, melons, and a variety of cut flowers.

He is the author of several books, including *Blithe Tomato* and *Walking the Flatlands*.

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