



In Defense of Food Forests:

Some Lessons Being Learned...



Presented by

Charlie Brennan PhD & Bridget O'Brien

For the

International Forest Garden / Food Forest Symposium

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Food forests are a necessary component of a regenerated future Earth.

The need and demand for perennial food systems and food forests is undeniable and currently growing.

We are reminded that annuals-based food production systems, whilst generally being incredibly productive, are also unstable systems requiring constant inputs of seed, fertiliser, energy, labor and so on.

Designing food forests is fun. The ground preparation, eco-landscaping and planting out is usually hard work!

This long-term investment into regenerated future Food Forests involves mimicking and unleashing the wildness and fecundity of nature!

The following pages offer you some of our Tips & Tricks for Food Forest Success.

Image: Schumacher College Food Forest Darlington Hall, England



Tips & Tricks for Food Forest Success



1. DESIGN FOR THE Social System

Designing for the people in the system. Reasoned-out organisation and structure above all. The who and how? Who provides resources, who does the work? How will this living system be maintained into the future - through all the challenges?

2. Be Bold! EXPERIMENT, RESPECTFULLY, EXPLORE, CREATE AND EVALUATE!

Build big berms, dig ponds, use machines and technology as needed, try new plant combinations, add ornamental plants. Stay close, observe, care for and enjoy...

3. THE NEED FOR Cross-Disciplinary Literacy - REGENERATIVE REFLEXIVITY

Bring in well-studied and practiced fields of landscape architecture, horticulture, regenerative farming, eco-landscaping, social sciences, ecopsychology and more. These all have tools to help us succeed.

Tips & Tricks for Food Forest Success



4. LEARN **Wild-Gardening & Foraging**
APPROACHES, SKILLS & PRACTICES.

Working, not so much with rows of cabbage, but with cultivating shifting mosaics and edges. This is physical, horticultural maintenance but also involves a radical new/old social and ecopsychological worldview shift. Get into 'wild-gardening!'.

5. FOOD FORESTS USUALLY TAKE **More than a few hours a month** TO MANAGE

For food forests to be successful they do really require committed investments of time, energy and imagination. Phases and rounds of cultivation, maintenance, harvest, processing - of all the abundance on offer. 'Farmers footsteps are best fertiliser...'

6. DESIGN INTO FOOD FORESTS **Aesthetics, Access & Perception**

Ensure that they are aesthetically accessible, attractive, beautiful, productive, engaging, enjoyable and therapeutic. Think of the audience!

Tips & Tricks for Food Forest Success



"What's needed in the Food Forest movement right now is -

1. Being bold & experimental,
2. Honing wild-gardening skills,
3. Critical reflective practice, and
4. As many successes as possible!"

7. Keep making 'Edge tension'

Working with, and in tension with, cycles and seasons, mosaics and succession. Keeping an edge between growth and light and space. Cultivating the sweet spot between productive returns for gardeners' efforts.

8. LOVE YOUR GARDEN.. Have Fun!

Yes, do it for sustainability, regeneration and survival for self, community and planet. But also, and ultimately, for joy and pleasure. Invite yourself back to the 'more-than-human' party going on all around us!

[Download these tips as an A4 poster](#)

From fantasy towards decolonialised practice – for success!

Perennial food growing is a necessary component of any regenerated, healed future. Our presentation weaves practical solutions for perennial food growing and an appraisal of ideas and assumptions that tend to hinder successful perennial food system implementation. .

Our ideas, notions and theories about the world we inhabit feed into our practices and the actions we take. In turn, our actions and practices shape the ideas and theories we have. Ideally - but actually but rarely does it work like this in reality. There is an 'obliteration of practice'. This is particularly true for unseen, disempowered people, communities and species. **This is a time of surviving emergency. Now.**

We used to start workshops with feeling into the problematic state of the world. Now we sit, calm down, expressing gratitude. People are so fragile. (Re-)creating perennial food systems, as a surging trend, comes when the failures of the global colonial experiment have made unavoidable the litany of emergencies and disasters... accumulating and rolling into each other.

FOOD FORESTS IN ENGLAND



Temperate Food Forest, Darlington
Understory Polyculture planting



42 Acres Forest, Frome
Tree stump mushroom inoculation



East Devon Forest Garden
Chillaen Guava Berry - Ugni molinae

FOOD FORESTS IN PORTUGAL



Temperate Food Forest Serra da Estrela,
Sweet Cherry - Prunus avium



Temperate Food Forest Serra da Estrela,
Sweet Chestnut - Castanea sativa



Serra da Estrela - Cherries, Goat Cheese &
Lettuce from a local farmer

FOOD FORESTS AND PERENNIAL FOOD SYSTEMS: URBAN AGRICULTURE FORUM, MELBOURNE

From fantasy towards decolonialised practice – for success!

Preparing to present at this International Food Forest Symposium we searched for our over-arching message - through our years of experience designing, installing, participating and visiting perennial food systems - and the theme becomes clear. Food forests and perennial food systems must be a necessary component of any kind of sustainable, regenerated, healed future - **but unfortunately, most projects, even some of ours, are often not particularly successful.**

There is generally a vast difference between the idealised Edenic visions and fantasies and what is actually occurring in real-life projects.

Our role as designers is to clarify imagined dreams, and practices and the tensions between these - separating mythology from observations of, and inter-actions with, embodied life.

Pre-ecological, romantic, mythic notions of what productive human co-made food systems should look like, and be, are un-useful in achieving actual Food Forests. Until we co-design with all inter-woven, enfolded, embodied beings' all design/action is inclined to be a continuous re-imposition of colonisation.

FOOD FORESTS IN COLORADO



Sandy Cruz's Food Forest in Buena Vista
Winter protection - 7 year old straw bales!!!!



Sandy Cruz's Food Forest in Buena Vista
Goji Berries - Lycium barbarum



Colorado Rocky Mountain Permaculture
Institute, Basalt - Geothermal greenhouse
Food Forest

FOOD FORESTS IN MICHIGAN



Buhr Park Food Forest, Ann Arbor
Wintertime in the Food Forest



Gateway Farm, Plymouth
Newly planted Food Forest on berms



Tantre Farm, Chelsea
Mushroom production in forest

FOOD FORESTS AND PERENNIAL FOOD SYSTEMS: URBAN AGRICULTURE FORUM, MELBOURNE

From fantasy towards decolonialised practice – for success!

Our approach is part practical, part ideas, and part ways of interrupting unconscious epistemic framing. Recent projects that reflect our approach include supporting Elder-centred 'Walkabout Permaculture' workshops, designing with communities in crisis, including in Detroit and here in rural Australia.

Spending a few vigorous hours pulling tropical grass and weeds with collaborators in a community food garden reveals chillies, asparagus, sorrel, berries and more - uncovering vitality and building trust. This is embodied practice to learn from - from the bodies, efforts and ideas of people, species and place.

From these kinds of experiences and years of doing the work we glean and offer 'Tips & Tricks' for more successful food forests. Redesigning our (inherently colonial) relationships with the more-than-human, places and history is central to (re-)creating thriving perennial food systems and food forests. This can be seen as decolonising and/or uncolonising. **It is urgently important that these projects be successful - simply, so that we can share the abundance of living systems.**

FOOD FORESTS IN INDIA



Aryana Agriculture Alternatives, Telangana
Polyculture planting and nursery production



Permaculture Convergence Host Farm,
Telangana - Rosella, Hibiscus sabdariffa



Permaculture Convergence Host Farm,
Telangana - Banana (Musa) polyculture and
annual production

FOOD FORESTS IN AUSTRALIA



Uncle Michael Jarrett showing us bush tucker
in the forest of Nambuca, NSW



Food Forest Berms, Thora NSW
One year old polyculture planting



Yonke harvesting Plums (Prunus) at Con's 40
year old farm Clunes, Victoria

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- Overview & links to further reading on the intersections of decolonization & Permaculture: <https://norcalresilience.org/decolonizing-permaculture-2/>

Tag words & phrases

Food forests, Forest gardens, Perennial food, Edible landscapes, Design, Permaculture, Edenic narratives, Obliteration of practice, Practice-based education, Food forest case studies, Foraging, Wild-gardening, Ecopsychology, Decolonising, Uncolonising, Tips & Tricks for success.

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Bridget O'Brien
Charlie Brennan
Hilary Nichols
Maddie Stephenson
Nicole Wateler

About the Authors

Dr. Charlie Brennan & Bridget O'Brien



*We're so passionate
about the power and
possibility of design!*

Dr Charlie Brennan and Bridget O'Brien are co-founders of Garden Juju Collective offering design, consultation, mentoring, a range of innovative workshops and project implementation. These are available online and they both travel widely. They are also co-creators of the design process game and permaculture teaching tool, "Adapt" (see page 11 or playadapt.com/)

These times ask us to find, and act upon, what is **most important to us!** Then to make significant life changes towards resilience, sustainability, regeneration and healing of community, places and ourselves. Through a range of workshops and speaking topics, Charlie and Bridget offer insights into approaches to design – how people can use design to make decisions, to plan, and make choices that will bring about the life of their dreams. They work wholeheartedly and holistically to design and cultivate for life. To learn more about us visit gardenjujucollective.com/about



Workshops & Presentation Offerings

Garden Juju Collective offers a range of workshops, presentations and interviews. Based upon their own projects and gleaned from visiting and learning from many practical successful projects. These presentations weave together design, self-care, permaculture, gardening, ecopsychology, horticultural therapy and more. Charlie and Bridget's workshops are intimate, intensive & innovative - to support radical change and to empower!



Ecopsychology, Place & Self

Falling in love with the world all over again



Design for Life!

How to design and adapt towards our life dreams.



Walkabout Permaculture

Traditional and new skills when on the move



Healing Self, Healing Land

Cultivating healthy people, communities & places



Food Forests: Design for success

Making your Garden of Eden dreams come true

Our Services

Garden Juju Collective is a design consultancy, led by Charlie and Bridget. Our team has a combined 60+ years of experience in consulting, research, education, facilitation and event and project management. Weaving together eco-landscaping, social ecology, Permaculture, regenerative agriculture, traditional ecological knowledge and conservation. We work mainly in the US, UK, Europe & Australia - both on site and online.



Design
Research
Mentoring
Facilitation
Installation
Training

Household and large-scale regeneration packages available

[Contact us for an initial free consult.](#)

cwsbrennan@gmail.com & bridget@gardenjujucollective.com

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In 2020, we launched the design process game...

Adapt

Create the world of your dreams!



"A mentor
in a box"



"This game will give you the
power and possibility to
change your life!"

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Adapt is an exciting new game that guides you to creatively engage with life's dreams, challenges, and opportunities. Adaptation is the healthy response to changing circumstances. Adapt game play stimulates, challenges and guides creative adaptation in our lifestyles, our communities and in the ways we live in the world.

Adapt is the tool that mentors us to apply an holistic design process to create the world of our dreams!

Through play we ask productive, imaginative questions that lead towards practical and implementable solutions.

Adapt can be used in almost any context to design our dreams into reality. It can be used by :

- INDIVIDUALS
- FAMILIES
- TEACHERS
- DESIGNERS
- PERMACULTURISTS



"A joyful tool"

"Imaginative,
practical, innovative"

"You end up in a place -
or with possibilities you
didn't know existed"



SHIPPING WORLDWIDE

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Through our newsletter we share information, skills, 'tips & tricks' on people, projects, places, books and more.

The tone is deliberately upbeat, positive and playful. We're not for a moment in denial about the critically sad state of many aspects of our world. We do know, however, that we are a part of the most networked, motivated, educated, idealistic and dedicated movement that has ever existed. There are literally 100's of millions of people around the world doing all they can do to create the sustainable, regenerated, just and healed world of our dreams.

Acknowledge & celebrate this !



[Gardenjujucollective.com](https://www.gardenjujucollective.com)



*You're invited to sign up to stay in touch with us!
For the latest on Garden Juju Collective workshops,
projects and our creative process game 'Adapt'.*