

FOOD

• PUZZLES • CLASSIFIEDS

A different way of growing food

By MARY MCCLINTOCK

Hearing Ricky Baruc and Deb Habib's Seeds of Solidarity motto — Grow Food Everywhere — has changed how I look at the world. Suburban lawns, my yard, and downtown Greenfield's rooftops all make me think: "What food could grow here?"

My worldview shifted again after hearing Dave Jacke speak about "Edible Forest Gardens." An edible forest garden isn't necessarily a forest, it just acts like one. Forests have different types of plants at different heights, doing different things in relation to each other — some build the soil, some produce fruit and nuts, some have flowers that attract bugs, etc. People can create "gardens" that work together like a forest, in Dave's words, to "grow food, fuel, fiber, fodder, fertilizers, pharmaceuticals and fun."

Savoring the Seasons:
Enjoying local food year-round

From my home windows, I see many plants that produce food and herbal medicine. Some were planted by me or other people, some by birds, animals and the wind — wild grapes, blueberries, blackberries, black raspberries, violets, daylilies, apples, pears, rosehips, sumac berries, milkweed buds, dandelions and wild strawberries.

That's a lot, but what if EVERYTHING I could see from my windows was edible or otherwise useful? That could look like a traditional farm with rows of fruit and vegetables.

Or, it could look remarkably like it does now — some deep woods, some open sunny places and plants of varying heights, sizes and types providing an edge where woods open into the neighboring hayfield.

This fall, I'm looking at my 2-plus acres of land, noticing what already grows there, and what more could. Although I've done some reading and talked with Meredith Wecker of Woodsong Farm in Colrain, I wanted help figuring out how my land could grow more food without turning it into a "traditional" farm. I'm in the early stages of working with Kate Ochsner, a graduate student at the Conway School of Landscape Design, on a design process. Increased food production is one of many possibilities for the "eco-makeover" of my garden.

I'll tell you what I learn as we go. For now, I'll make applesauce out of the apples and dry rosehips for tea, and try out sunchokes and hardy kiwis grown by others to see if they'd be a tasty addition to my landscape.

Look around. What food could you grow?

Learn More About Edible Forest Gardens:

Gardening Like the Forest I: Home-Scale Ecological Food Production, Fri., Oct. 17, from 7 to 9 p.m., Second Congregational Church, Court Square, Greenfield. Join longtime permaculture designer Dave Jacke for a presentation on backyard edible ecosystems. We can meet our own needs and regenerate healthy ecosystems at the same time! Benefit for Valley Community Land Trust. Suggested donation: \$10. All welcome, no one turned away for lack of funds.

Gardening Like the Forest II: Case Studies in Home Garden Design, Sat., Oct. 18, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Colrain. Dave Jacke will provide an in-depth look at how to create ecosystem agriculture in our own backyards. This "walk and talk" workshop will use Valley Community Land Trust home sites as examples. Sliding scale fee for Saturday workshop — register online at www.vclt.org or call (413) 624-5128. Preregistration required. For more information, see:

www.edibleforestgardens.com

Souper Saturday Food Drive: Franklin County Community Meals Program will have a Food Drive at Stop and Shop (French King Hwy., Greenfield) from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sat., Oct. 11. Most needed items are tuna, soup, beef stew and peanut butter.

The Recorder Wednesday, October 8, 2008

This Week I'm Eating ... Sacred Root Hash Browns

By Meredith Wecker, Woodsong Farm, Colrain

I like sunchokes (Jerusalem artichokes) on their own or mixed with other root vegetables, grated and fried in a little oil like hash brown potatoes. You can mix them with celeriac and burdock root or carrots, parsnips and rutabagas. Sunchokes taste great on their own, but you can also add a little finely chopped garlic or onions and salt or tamari. Another way I cook sunchokes is to cut them into thin slices and then fry them.

Mary McClintock lives in Conway and has been a member of two CSA farms. She's a long-time vegetable gardener and member of a Franklin County local foods group. She has presented workshops on eating locally grown foods and is an organizer of the Free Harvest Supper. Send suggestions and recipes to mmclinto@yahoo.com



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