

GROW SLOWER

Perennials &
Forest gardens
in Agroforestry

Perennial Benefits

- Plants require less intensive and frequent maintenance
- Provide habitat and resources for wildlife
- High productivity in a small space
- Improve your soil structure and lock in carbon
- Established root systems and ground cover access and retain soil water
- Provide shelter and pollinator supply for more vulnerable crops
- Explore local and unusual varieties of fruit and nuts
- The more diverse your planting – the more resilient your garden will be

Forest Garden Principles

- Consider woodland ecology: A complex structure develops with different species finding their niche at different levels in the canopy, depending on size, shade tolerance, flowering period and growth pattern.
- A forest garden mimics this structure with multiple productive layers in one area, benefitting each other through shelter, nutrient capture and shared mycorrhizal networks, even frameworks to grow up for climbers.
- In the UK to allow sufficient sunlight to reach crops the layout is more like a woodland edge than high forest, with more space between trees and thicker groundflora.
- Species selection depends on your site size, soil, climate and aspect, but will likely include more unusual perennial vegetables alongside familiar herbs and fruit varieties.
- Plants are able to complete their full lifecycle; Flowering and seeding, providing benefits for wildlife as well as food and other resources for people.
- A well designed forest garden is a calm, delightful place to spend time all year, supporting wellbeing.

The Seven Layers Of The Forest Garden

1. Canopy (large fruit and nut trees)
2. Low tree level (dwarf fruit trees)
3. Shrub layer (currants and berries)
4. Herbaceous layer
5. Soil surface (ground cover crops)
6. Rhizosphere (roots)
7. Vertical layer (climbers and vines)

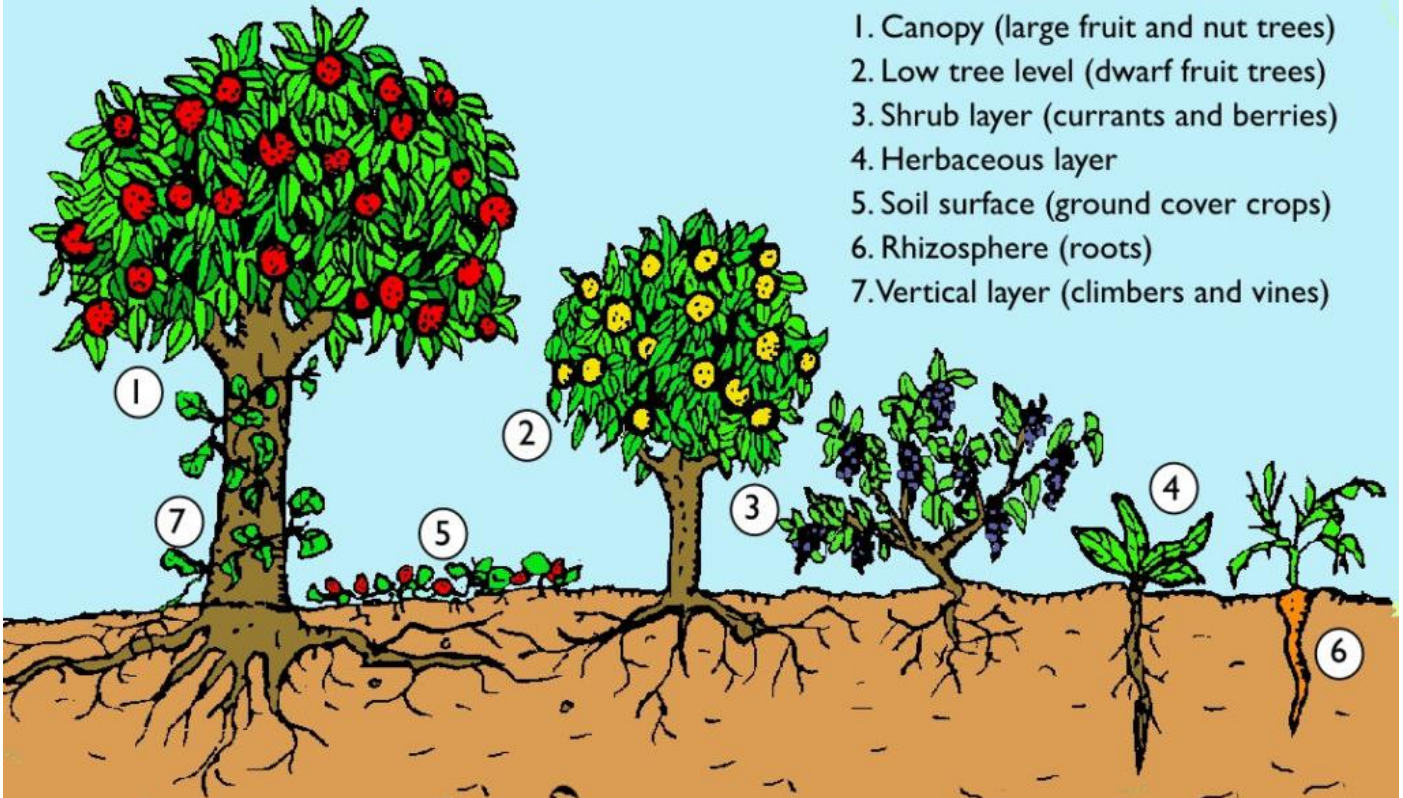


Image from Spiralseed.co.uk

Plants for the Forest Garden

- Start by planting the canopy trees, these set the framework for everything else and will take the longest to establish. Planting the garden is the most intensive work, and can be done over several years.
- Where possible choose pest and disease resistant varieties to avoid disappointment.
- Include nitrogen fixers such as Alder, Broom or Eleagnus to help feed the garden.
- Include deep rooting species such as Comfrey and Sorrel to tap mineral nutrients.
- Edible fungi can be part of your rhizosphere, including growing on part buried logs.
- Include plants that attract insect pest predators and pollinators such as Tansy.
- Think about other products you might grow and use such as medicinal plants, poles, fibres, mulches, fuelwood and sap.
- Choose plants you actually want to eat!

Useful resources: <https://www.agroforestry.co.uk/>

<https://incrediblevegetables.co.uk/> <https://www.korewildfruitnursery.co.uk/>