

Food Forests and Why they Matter

Food Forests provide an excellent opportunity to introduce green spaces and biodiversity into areas that need them most. Using permaculture practices food forests aim to mimic ecosystems that have existed for centuries.

Introduction

Around the world biodiversity loss is a major issue. Some major contributors to biodiversity loss are agriculture and urban development. Food forests present an excellent opportunity to help address these issues and mitigate their effects. In order to understand how food forests could be used to bring biodiversity to cities and farms I conducted an independent research project on the benefits of food forests,

Objective

My objective for my research project is to provide a clear outline of what a food forest is and what a food forest does.

Methodology

In order to understand what services food forests can provide I conducted independent analysis of scientific research. I also worked alongside Eli Wheat on SkyRoot farm to gain hands on experience in permaculture farming practices and food forests.

While working on the farm with Eli we also read "The Holistic Orchard" by Michael Phillips. Phillips' writing provided valuable insight into natural orchard management.

Results/Findings

The results of my research yielded some very interesting findings. Food forests can provide all kinds of services to local communities.

- Food forests are excellent green spaces
 - especially in urban environments
- Biodiversity is abundant in food forests and actively promoted
 - Increased biodiversity helps food forests thrive
- Food forests can capture carbon from the atmosphere

Analysis

Food forests take ecosystems that already exist and focus them on food production.

This means food forests can be introduced in most environments. With a focus on local plants food forests provide excellent biodiversity in any setting. Green spaces can also be created in urban settings using food forests. These green spaces then also provide food and gathering spaces to the community. Funding for food forests can even be sourced from investing in carbon capturing because food forests sequester carbon from the atmosphere.



An example of what a food forest can look like. Image from google.

Food forests are comprised of several different layers. In the early stages of the food forest the lower layers will capture more carbon. As the forest gets older the trees begin to take over the carbon capturing.

FOOD FOREST

1. **Canopy**
Large Fruit & Nut Trees
2. **Low Tree Layer**
Dwarf Fruit Trees
3. **Shrub Layer**
Berry Bushes & useful Shrubs
4. **Herbaceous**
Flowers, Herbs & Vegetables
5. **Soil Surface**
Low-Growing Ground Covers
6. **Root Layer**
Fungi and Root Vegetables
7. **Vertical Layer**

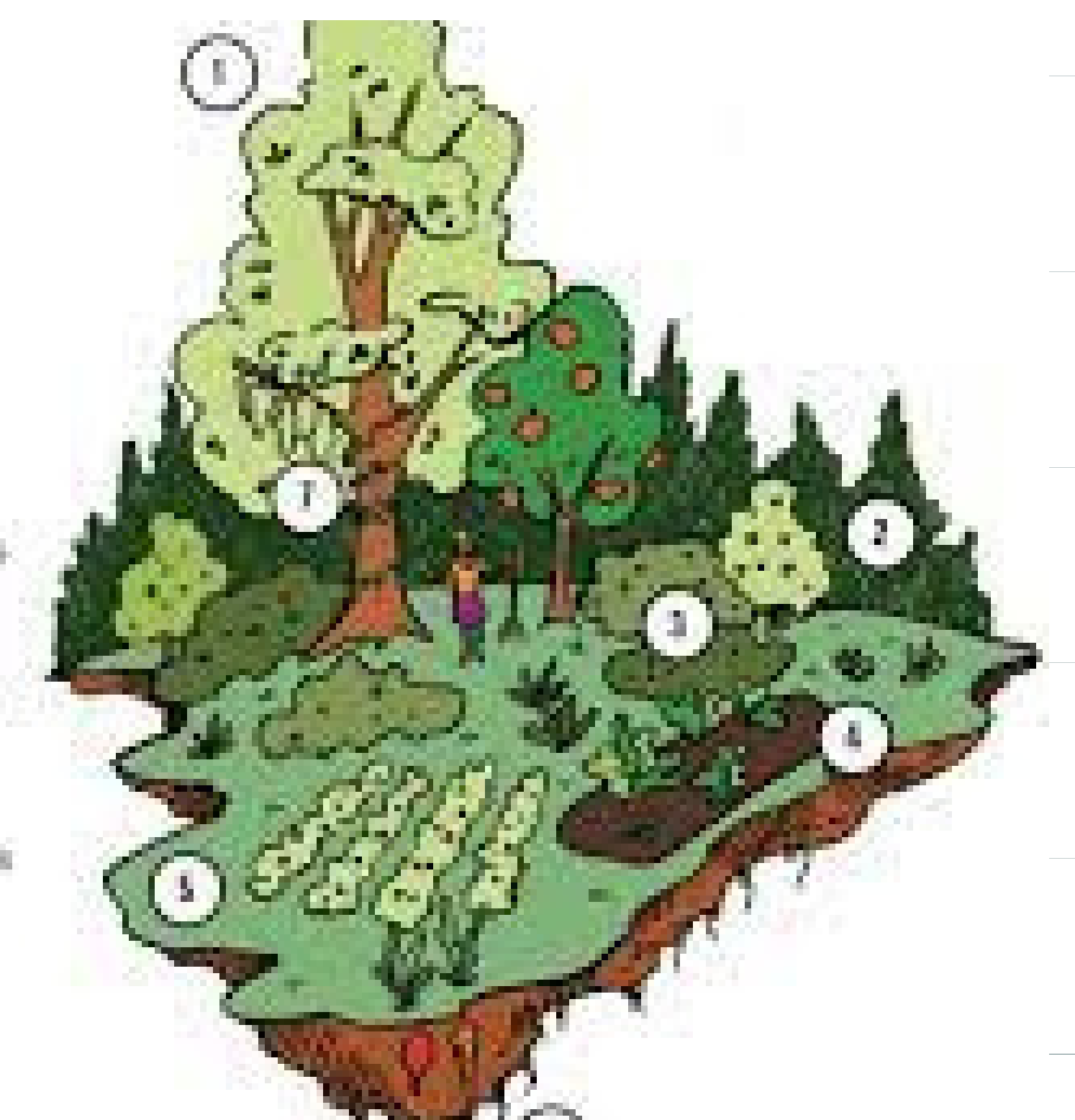


Image from fairamountfoodforest.org. This image shows the different layers of a food forest.

Conclusion

Food forests are an incredible example of permaculture farming practices. Having the ability to create a green space that can produce food, promote biodiversity, and help in the fight against climate change is incredible. There has to be increased funding and research directed towards food forests so their benefits can be fully realized.

Related literature

Phillips, M. (2012). The holistic orchard: Tree fruits and berries the biological way. Chelsea Green.

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Also shout out my cat Kashi