When we think about agroforestry, the production side of agroforestry – the trees, crops, and livestock that make up agroforestry systems – is often what we think of first, not the economics or products.

Many publications address the ecology and management of agroforestry systems or their ecological benefits. Others focus on the ecological benefits of these agroforestry practices, such as improved water, soils, and wildlife habitat. Food sometimes gets overlooked, even though its production is often a primary driver for landowners.

This newsletter seeks to highlight the foods that agroforestry producers grow. It also addresses how agroforestry producers fit into food systems at different scales. In addition to being a component of the physical landscape, these producers are important components of economic and social landscapes as well. Explaining what these landscapes look like and what happens to products once they get off the farm is important to understanding agroforestry.

The articles in this newsletter aren’t meant to be comprehensive. There are many agroforestry systems not mentioned here that produce important food products, like meat from silvopasture systems and grain from fields protected by windbreaks. Instead, this newsletter tries to get us thinking about emerging agroforestry markets and systems. It addresses agroforestry in places where we don’t traditionally think of them, like backyards, and discusses new species that can be grown in more traditional agroforestry systems, like hazelnuts in windbreaks.

For the general public, food products produced in agroforestry systems can be an important route to understanding agroforestry. Highlighting some of these foods can help gain more attention for the other benefits of agroforestry systems.
NAC Updates

As time marches on it is good to reexamine what has been done as a way of strengthening how to move forward. The most recent Agroforestry Notes have come about in this way. The first AF Note was an introduction to agroforestry in the U.S. Quite a bit has changed since 1995. For starters, this revision of AF Note 1 has photographs of each agroforestry practice instead of diagrams, because landowners are applying agroforestry and we can share their systems instead of dreaming of concepts. People and organizations are also looking at agroforestry as a means to addressing new issues in new ways. This revised AF Note captures many of these changes.

The other new AF Note also has a dimension of looking back. This Note is the first one that looks at Traditional Ecological Knowledge, TEK, as it relates to agroforestry. TEK is indigenous cultural resource management information that has been developed over time. Although agroforestry is a relatively new term in land management, some of the production of food and goods done with TEK are very similar to agroforestry. Many Tribal communities are currently managing lands using TEK with excellent results. These systems are described in this Agroforestry Note. NAC plans on developing additional AF Notes and other publications on this theme of using TEK in agroforestry applications.

Have YOU ever eaten from a windbreak?

Richard Straight
National Agroforestry Center
Lincoln, NE

The people in the Lake Superior Counties of Wisconsin face numerous challenges. These counties have few economic opportunities and limited abilities to compete in commodity crop production. The citizens in the region and in tribal communities in particular struggle with high rates of obesity and diabetes due to limited healthy food options.

To help people learn about new opportunities to create income, protect water quality, and improve options for healthy food, a project to create an agroforestry demonstration site was developed in 2012 by Jason Fischbach with the University of Wisconsin-Extension in Bayfield and Ashland Counties. Jason Maloney with the US Forest Service Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center, and the USDA National Agroforestry Center. The purpose of this project is to design, plant, and maintain an agroforestry system on the property of the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center (NGLVC) near Ashland, WI. When completed, this site will provide an example of a functional conservation practice that can produce food, culturally important plants, and other income generating products.

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Many of the fruit and nut species found in great diversity on public and private lands in the region. About four times per year the Tribal Elders have met at the Visitor Center to sample meals that were prepared from traditional recipes using native plants. Some of the plants used in the recipes will be included in the agroforestry demonstration, including hazelnut, juniper, highbush cranberry, plums, red and black currants, and aronia.

The demonstration planting is unique in that it incorporates aspects of three different local initiatives into a single demonstration planting. The planting includes a hazelnut research (Upper Midwest Hazelnut Development Initiative), woody biomass crop species (Lake Superior Woody Biomass Trials), and will likely include a viburnum trial planting in 2014 (Lake Superior Viburnum Project).

Less than a mile from the Visitor Center is the Agriculture and Energy Resource Center, AERC. Along with the Bayfield and Ashland Counties and UW-Extension, the AERC established the ten acre Lake Superior Woody Biomass Trial in 2010 to research and demonstrate woody biomass cropping in support of wood-to-energy projects in the region. This project site is another great opportunity to demonstrate the use of income-generating plant species in agroforestry plantings. Together with the demonstration site at NGLVC, this location will demonstrate to farmers that money can be made with windbreak. This may lead to more windbreaks being planted.

The last of the trees and shrubs will be planted at the Visitor Center demonstration site in the spring of 2014. But there is a new twist on the horizon. Jason Fischbach is talking with ethnobotanists at the University of Wisconsin – Superior about additional native plant food species that may be incorporated between the tree and shrub rows to help control the competing grass and weed vegetation. Some educational materials have been created and were distributed to visitors this last winter. The next step will be to create educational signs for the site.

The demonstration site is positioned well for future training sessions. In addition, it is an example of blending traditional knowledge with agroforestry to address conservation challenges.
Food Forests

Creating opportunities for agroforestry practices in communities
Kate MacFarland
National Agroforestry Center Lincoln, NE

In cities across the country, people are planning and planting food forests. Often food forests are community efforts to grow not just vegetable gardens but a broader mix of annual, perennial, and tree crops. They frequently combine fruit trees with edible shrubs and vegetables. These food forests have many different designs. Some add trees to community gardens, others resemble orchards, and still others use multi-story cropping techniques. Their organizational structures of food forests vary as well, with many having communal ownership and governance. Some are located on municipally-owned vacant land or in parks, while others are at property owned by non-profits. The food produced by food forests is often distributed to participants, nearby residents, or the general public. In towns and cities across the US, this community-based model is being tested and often faces challenges such as uncertain land tenure, questions about how food will be shared, and how to communally manage land.

It is exciting to see new forms of green space develop in American cities, often with the concurrent goals of educating the public, enhancing food security, and increasing local food production. Some of these food forests leverage agroforestry practices while others are using other ecological and horticultural principles. Many practices used in food forests are coming out of principles used in home gardens over hundreds of years. In food forests that seek to use agroforestry principles, there are opportunities for agroforestry research to be used and shared. People developing food forests can borrow methods from forest farming, alley cropping, and other agroforestry practices and apply them in these new spaces. As with any typical rural use of agroforestry practices, growers can realize greater diversity of products, productivity, and crop quality all on the same sized parcel of land. These enhancements are possible when producers take advantage of the interactions between the annual, perennial, and tree crops. When crops are incorporated into food forests they will grow in a modified microclimate with reduced wind and direct sunlight and greater humidity. Obviously some plants will not benefit from the partial shade of the trees. These crops may need to be grown at the edges of the food forest or adjacent to it. Even in those situations there can be some favorable plant interactions and agroforestry principles can be applied.

Today, Hawaii is one of the most food insecure states in the nation, importing about 85% of its food. Breadfruit is a key component of traditional agroforestry systems in the Pacific Islands which provide a realistic model for revitalizing food production in Hawaii. By anchoring food forests in urban and community landscapes, this attractive, long-lived perennial tree can once again play an important role in food sustainability.

Breadfruit (artocarpus altilis), known as ‘Ulu in Hawaii, is one of the food plants brought from eastern Polynesia centuries ago and was widely grown throughout the archipelago.

‘Ulu made significant contributions to food security by providing an easy to grow, productive, nutritious, starchy staple crop. Over the past century, however, breadfruit use declined and many trees were cut down, especially in urban areas.

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Breadfruit can easily be grown as a backyard tree and its public spaces, alone or inter-planted with a wide range of plants such as bananas, taro, citrus and other fruit trees, vegetables, ornamentals, let plants, etc. Its versatile gluten-free fruit can be roasted, baked, boiled, pounded into poi, or fried, and is used in a wide array of recipes from around the globe.

The Breadfruit Institute launched the Plant a Tree of Life – Grow ‘Ulu project in Hawaii in October 2012 to distribute trees of an exceptional breadfruit variety, Ma‘afala, for residents and organizations to plant in their yards and communities. Funding for this project was provided by The Ceres Trust. The Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources Kauai Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program provided additional support.

Ma‘afala was selected for distribution as this popular variety, which originated in Samoa and Tonga, has been grown in Hawaii for decades. It has a compact shape that is especially suited to urban and community landscapes. The tree can be easily pruned and shaped to fit its location and make it easier to reach and harvest the fruit. Trees can begin bearing fruit in 2 1/2 to 3 years.

The institute partnered with numerous communities, organizations, and individuals to distribute 4,800 trees. Recipients received a Ma‘afala variety fact sheet and an illustrated planting guide that was available in English, Hawaiian, Samoan, Chuukese, Tongan, and Tagalog versions. There is great interest in providing trees to Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders such as Micronesians, Samoans, and Tongans, and to low-income residents. These groups are especially vulnerable to food insecurity and health issues, such as obesity and diabetes, associated with a Western diet. Helping them plant breadfruit trees at their homes and in their communities is a sustainable and achievable step to addressing these problems. Breadfruit trees have been planted at homes, schools, churches, community gardens, social service organizations, parks, and other sites on Kauai, Oahu, Maui, Lanai, Molokai, and Hawaii Island. These iconic, culturally significant trees will provide beauty and shade, but most importantly, healthy food for home consumption, and to share with family and friends.

It was possible to distribute breadfruit trees in such quantity because of a major propagation breakthrough. Many breadfruit varieties, including the Hawaiian ‘Ulu, are seedless and must be propagated vegetatively using root shoots or root cuttings. While this method is successful – after all, it is how islanders propagated and spread breadfruit trees throughout the vast Pacific region over the millennia – it is slow and time consuming, with a low success rate.

The Breadfruit Institute and research collaborators have developed pioneering micropropagation methods to produce healthy and vigorous breadfruit plants. A partnership with an innovative horticultural company, Cultivaris LLC, (www.globalbreadfruit.com) now makes it possible to propagate and distribute millions of breadfruit trees. Since 2009, more than 25,000 trees have been propagated by 26 countries in Africa, the Caribbean, Central America, Asia, and Oceania. It is exciting to see this heritage Pacific crop being used in tree planting projects around the globe.

To learn more about our work visit: www.breadfruit.org and www.facebook.com/breadfruitinstitute

Diane Ragone, PhD, is director of the Breadfruit Institute at the National Tropical Botanical Garden.

Forest Farming Foods on YouTube
Forest farming is an important agroforestry practice that can be used to produce food. In 2013 NAC, Virginia Tech University and the Forest Service Southern Research Station developed a series of YouTube videos on forest farming. These videos have been promoted on the Extension Forest Farming Community of Practice YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/extensionforestfarming

Some examples of food forests:
Kilaha Kiaele Forest Farming Kalalau, HI
Baltimore Orchard Project, Baltimore, MD
Southern Heights Food Forest, Lincoln, NE
Hazelwood Food Forest, Pittsburgh, PA
6th Ward Park, Helena, MT
Beacon Food Forest, Seattle, WA
Ponderosa Park, Basalt, CO
Southern Heights Food Forest, Lincoln, NE
Baltimore Orchard Project, Baltimore, MD
Hazelwood Food Forest, Pittsburgh, PA
6th Ward Park, Helena, MT
Beacon Food Forest, Seattle, WA
Ponderosa Park, Basalt, CO

www.extension.org/forest_farming

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Food hubs manage the aggregation, distribution and marketing of source-identified products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.

**FOOD HUB FACTS**

- 5 producers
- Median number of producers or suppliers per food hub: 36
- Customers are usually within 400 miles of the food hub: 400
- Percentage of food hubs surveyed that began operations within the last 5 years: 62%
- Non-profit, for-profit, or have another organizational framework: 19%, 34%, 47%

**Percentage of food hubs surveyed that are either non-profit, for profit, or have another organizational framework.**

Howard do we get the food that is produced in agroforestry systems to consumers? In addition to smaller market outlets like farmers markets and large scale commodity markets, food hubs are an emerging market outlet for many types of producers. The National Food Hub Coalition defines a food hub as: “A business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.” The emphasis on promoting the strength and viability of small and mid-sized producers, and the frequent inclusion of additional environmental and social goals, is what sets food hubs apart from regular food wholesalers.

Straddling the realms of direct marketing and conventional wholesale markets, food hubs provide a key service to mid-sized family farmers who are too small to survive within highly competitive and vertically consolidated supply chains, yet too big to get by on smaller direct marketing channels like farmers markets. Food hubs aggregate products from multiple farms and sell it into wholesale and retail markets, expanding access to locally produced food for consumers in their region. Other models of food hubs include direct to consumer subscription programs akin to community supported agriculture and online models that provide platforms for interested customers to search for and connect with producers directly. Food hubs also expand the number of market outlets that are accessible to small or mid-sized farms, since they often supply schools, hospitals, restaurants and grocery stores.

One of the key components of food hub market strategy is to provide ‘source identified’ local or regional food products to their customers. A source identified product is one that is connected to its farm of origin, most frequently through labeling the product with the farm’s name. Some food hubs provide additional information about the particular farm and/or farmers by including pictures or stories of the farm in signage at the point of sale, in newsletters to customers, or on their website. Through telling the story of producers and production, food hubs provide a key opportunity for consumer education and promotion of regional food systems.

Producers with agroforestry systems often also have economic, social, and environmental goals, many of which are met directly through their agroforestry systems. Agroforestry systems can help diversify producers’ income streams, create environmental benefits such as reduced soil erosion or increased habitat, and provide recreational and educational benefits to nearby communities. Food hubs may offer an opportunity for producers with agroforestry systems to connect with new markets and scale up their businesses.
John and Todd Hopkins of Forks Farm are not new to agroforestry or local foods. In fact, they started farming over 20 years ago on their 86-acre farm at the confluence of two rivers in Columbia County, Pennsylvania. Now, they find that they have built quite a community around their family farm, from their long-standing loyal customers to the many people whose farms they have helped to start, including neighbors, customers, and former employees. Their story is an inspiration.

John and Todd raise and sell entirely grassfed and grain-finished animals without tillage or chemicals, and use trees around their farm in many creative ways. These farming choices make them ideal farmers for the Chesapeake Bay watershed, which has been challenged over the past decade with high sediment and nutrient loads that result in eutrophication and algae blooms.

When they bought their land in the late 1980s, however, it was not in great shape. Thus, John and Todd have embraced an adaptive management approach. As John is not solely a farmer, but also a consulting forester and Certified Arborist, he quickly noticed that the stand of virginia pines growing on steep ground were overly dense. This left the forest floor barren and trees kept blowing over. In the early 1990s, he thinned out the stand, keeping a diverse mix of seed-producing hardwoods but removing most of the pines. He also chopped the downed logs to hasten the return of nutrients to the soil that would soon support a silvopasture.

After this thinning, John and Todd started intensively grazing animals to improve and rehabilitate the land. For instance, John says that while there are five butchers within 90 miles, there are few slaughterhouses, and he hopes to encourage the next generation of entrepreneurs to go into the independent slaughter business.

Although John and Todd started small, their high quality products have attracted loyal customers and demand has steadily grown. This year, they grew 60 beef cattle, 75 hogs, 30 lambs, 3,500 chickens, 170 turkeys, and countless eggs. As demand has grown, rather than expanding their own operation, John and Todd are sharing the soaring market demand by partnering with other farmers in the area through the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA). Now they sell products from 25-30 other farmers through their farm stand, buyers’ clubs, and wholesale marketing to brewpubs and restaurants.

By Colleen Rossier, National Agroforestry Center, Lincoln, NE

It is all about how well you time your rotations, manage your animals, and read the landscape.
Observe!

networks across food sectors to grow their Partnership in Iowa; they've created nested community look for ways to build mutually – in our guilds it’s seaberry, purple prairie form of plants. Choose your nitrogen fixer planting and testing the next forest garden establishing our orchard. For us, that means fruit trees to test, and grafted new scionwood; vortices. It's always with great anticipation bodies sluggish from consecutive polar slope, past land use, organization history, etc.

Inside Agroforestry

By Erin Schneider, Hilltop Community Farm, La Valle, WI

Forest Gardening: Growing a Community for Your Orchard

By Erin Schneider, Hilltop Community Farm, La Valle, WI

In 2010 we began to plant our dream of growing more fruit and building community, while also seeking to improve soil and water quality and increase biodiversity and habitat for pollinators on our farm. What’s more, while we wanted to expand our markets and farm income we wanted to better leverage our labor, so we sought perennials that would do naturally well on our farm. We already had raspberries, gooseberries and apples in the local neighborhood so we decided to add in quince, currants, saskatoons, aronia, seaberry, honeyberry, and American elderberry, all of which is equally well-adapted to our southern Wisconsin biome. These fruits are high-yielding, environmentally and grower-friendly, and are an exceptionally nutritional food source.

Elderberries ready to be harvested from Forest Garden. Photo by Erin Schneider.

So you’re into unusual fruit? What does that have to do with agroforestry and building community?

The shift is not just thinking about fruit, but thinking about function and how to grow food/fruits in relation to each other. A key innovation in our orchard is the use of forest garden guilds as an orchard design tool. You’re probably familiar with guilds – groups of people in a profession who enhance each other’s skills and possibilities by sharing information and resources with each other. Forest garden guilds are the arboreal equivalent, a clump of species that - when planted together - complement one another by partitioning resources and/or creating networks of mutual support. With an overstory (or two) of fruit or nut bearing trees and an understory of shrubs, vines and new ground-covers, their design requires an eye both to complementarity and maximizing the capture of sunlight in three dimensions (see Edible Forest Gardens, by Dave Jacke and Eric Tohmenester, 2009 or http://www.edibleforestgardens.com/). A forest garden guild is not a new idea, but one whose time has certainly come. We can consciously apply the principles of plant community function to the design of landscapes and our farms that mimic forest structure and function, and also grow food, fuel, fiber, fodder, fertilizer, “farmacuticals,” and fun.

On our farm, the result is so far looking to be greater than the sum of its parts. In the past year, our orchard has really started to take shape and we’ve begun to harvest a substantial amount of currants. We’ve also had a lot of fun along the way. Each year in early July, we throw open the farm for our Annual Earth Day project. With an orchard of 3 60-tree plots we’ve had a lot of fun along the way. Each year in early July, we throw open the farm for our Annual Earth Day project.

How this work has broken down on the land.

Canopy layer: We did not plant large canopies on our orchard due to space; instead, our fruit trees serve the function of a canopy layer. We have a highly productive ‘big mama bur oak’ at the bottom of our orchard slope where apples are planted; adjacent to the orchard another 3 acre slope where we have planted black walnuts, and red oak trees. Along our forest edges we are considering meat goats to support brush management.

Overstory: Fruit trees – Quince – 17; Apples – 4; Cherry – 4; Persimmons – 2; Apricots – 2

Shrub layer: 20 seaberry; 23 elderberry; 32 saskatoon; 60 currants – planted along the drip line of overstory layer; 20 honeyberry; 60 aronia berry; 25 hazelnuts. In each forest garden we have 1 nitrogen fixing shrub (seaberry) and medicinal plant (elderberry). Gooseberries did not take (we think due to sequencing, gooseberries really prefer shade), so we substituted 20 honeyberries for gooseberry plants in 2012.

Understory: Mix examples include: dynamic accumulator plants – comfrey, lovage, horseradish root in swale; mt. mint where apples are planted; purple prairie clover/blue false indigo; leadplant; direct seeded/transplanted chives, dill, yellow cone flower. NE aster, black-eyed susan, penstemon, prairie phlox, butterfly weed, sulphur (the latter we are finding makes a great hedgerow plant).

For our one-acre orchard we replicated 23 forest gardens in 4 different planting strips. Since then we prepare for future plantings by sheet mulching and we continue to tweak and try to find the optimal mix of understory and groundcover plantings.

Tips for your food forest:

Forest garden guilds can also serve as a metaphor for how you relate to people and to your community. A few transferable tips to consider while you establish your food forest:

Observe! Pay attention to what’s going on around you. Light, water, slope, fruit load: organization history, etc. Connect to place, connect to the people and plants there. This will help inform decisions.

Build your soil – if possible take 1 – 3 years transitioning with a mix of cover crops. Start adding fertility in the form of plants. Choose your nitrogen fixer – in our guild it’s seaberry, purple prairie clover, baptisia, but it could be any of the legumes or Eragraceae family. In your community look for ways to build mutually beneficial relationships. A good example of building community is the Value Chain Partnership in Iowa; they’ve created nested networks across farms that harvest for their local food economy.

Forest gardening has much to offer on a practical level, and they continue to teach us about how to live in community as free and interdependent beings in a functional way. At the start of another farm season I am once again reminded of how much we rely on one another and the land to make a living. And ultimately, I want to be happy, make an honest living with dignity, and do what I love. And I love fruit, I love people, I love to farm. I hope you find success experimenting with finding the right mix of plants and people for your farm and communities to thrive. 4

Contact: Erin Schneider hilltopfarm@gmail.com; www.hilltopcommunityfarm.org

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Introduction

It’s been a long slow awakening this year as plum trees reluctantly break bud, our bodies sluggish from consecutive polar vortices. It’s always with great anticipation and exuberance that we welcome the planting season at our farm. By now we’ve compared notes with growers, ordered new fruit trees to test, and grafted new scionwood; now we’re ready to dig in for a 4th season establishing our orchard. For us, that means planting and tending the next forest garden guild.
Upcoming Events

June 18, 2014
Growing Forage in Woodlands Webinar
Online
http://silvopasture.ning.com/

June 18, 2014
Commercial Mushroom Production
Field Day
Schuyler County, NY
http://blogs.cornell.edu/mushrooms/events/

July 1, 2014
Trees Forever Agroforestry Workshop
Villisca, IA
http://treesforever.org/

For more upcoming events, visit our website calendar: http://nac.unl.edu/events/index.htm