

Dear Mayor Hanneman, Town Council Members,
Planning Commission Members and Town Planners:

April 28th, 2024

I was heartened to be a part of the Mingle at the Garden Club on April 25th, joining my community in imagining Jenson Field. It was a pleasant surprise to hear the enthusiasm for the idea of a food forest, and to that end I am attaching my research into this type of community garden, since it wasn't covered in the materials town staff shared.

As all of you who walked the field understand, it is something more than a buildable lot, or lots. A map does not tell you about the soil, the water, the neighborhood.

Food Forest is a new/ancient way of gardening, one that takes into consideration the nature of the site, takes advantage of its features, rather than trying to engineer that site into being something it's not. The very sogginess of this land can be turned into a plus, instead of a burden to our infrastructure. The incredible fertility can be used to create a dense yield of food, instead of something that requires constant weeding and mowing. A mature food forest is park-like with an edible landscape. It has the same climate change mitigation features as any forested park.

In the pages that follow you can learn more. There is a plethora of food forest information on You Tube. There's a real food forest that might be a great model to follow, one that's very successful in being self-sustaining and is a real gift to its community. It's called Beacon Food Forest, sitting in the heart of Seattle. Why don't we take a field trip? Perhaps the mayor could invite someone from Beacon Food Forest to come speak to another town gathering over Jenson Field?

While we travel into the city, we might note the vacant commercial buildings there. Seattle misread its future needs and now is suffering financially because of it. The United Nation reports tanking birthrates world wide, including in the United States, and projects this trend to continue into the next century. While La Conner needs a balance of housing to serve a balanced community, there is no mandate to build housing that is not viable.

Thank you all for your service to our wonderful home.

Maggie Wilder
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BENEFITS OF A FOOD FOREST GARDEN IN JENSON FIELD:

- Improved Nutritional Food, Available to All
- Conservation and Improvement to a soil already in the 1% of top agricultural soils in the world
- Community gardens build social network and alleviate loneliness
- A Food Forest can help mitigate flooding (Jenson Field is a natural catch-basin for flood water – see photographs)
- Provides a space for quiet recreation (disappearing spaces in La Conner)
- Intergenerational project
- Creates stable ecosystem
- Helps sequester carbon and mitigates climate change (More biomass created than in standard gardening or industrial farming)
- No waste system

Possible crops include:

Filberts

All fruit and nut trees acclimated to the PNW plus ones that might be suitable to a warming climate

Perennial Vegetables including artichoke, rhubarb, asparagus

Annual vegetables

Vertical Vines: grapes, kiwi, Scarlett Runner beans

Ground Covers: thyme, oregano, rosemary

Bushes: Blueberry, raspberry, Marionberry

Mycelium: edible mushrooms

CORE PRINCIPLES OF FOOD FORESTS

Bio-diverse, dense, edible ecosystem modeled on the natural cycles of forests.

Plant niches are created, usually at least seven, using a variety of plant heights: Tall trees (overstory), small trees (understory), shrubs, herbaceous perennials, ground covers, vining plants, and a root zone.

Guilds, or zones of support and companion plantings are created. Examples would include soil-building species, such as legumes. Other plants to include would be ones that attract pollinators. Emphasis is on perennial plants, with a few annuals.

Food forests are permaculture, and designed heavily in the beginning so that they become self-sustaining and do not require annual tilling or heavy weeding. Invasive species do not have a chance to take over because all the biological niches are filled already.

The intent of a Food Forest is long range regenerative gardening. Mature Food Forests are spectacular in their biomass and eventually produce larger harvests per acre than industrial farming. Additionally they create their own input (fertilizers) and export no waste.

EXAMPLES OF FOOD FORESTS IN PNW*

Bainbridge Food Forest

Duvall Food Forest

Kokana Farm & Food Forest, Chimacum

Beacon Food Forest, Seattle

Ranier Beach Urban Farm and Wetland, Seattle

The Forest Farmstead, Paulsbo

Freyja's Food Forest, Sequim

* Please note, some of these food forests grow commercially. All use the same principles of sustainable, regenerative permaculture.

STANDING WATER JENSON FIELD
WINTER 23/24

