

Civic Food Forest Initiative

In Sidmouth we have the country's only civic arboretum ... 600+ notable trees located over the whole valley on public and private land ... and we believe this concept could be replicated to create a Sid Valley Civic Food Forest.

Food forests offer local communities a great deal. Not only do they have the potential to improve participants' physical and mental health, they help participants combat loneliness, improve environmental resilience and produce food with almost zero food miles!

Having researched the idea of a civic food forest, with colleagues based in places as far apart as the Balkans and Bavaria to the Arctic Circle, I can see no evidence of there being a civic food forest anywhere in Europe, perhaps the world. So Sidmouth could be the first anywhere.

The idea behind a civic food forest is for public and private landowners/gardeners to plant a few square metres (or more) to a food forest, ideally with perennials/edimentals etc. It is something that can be incorporated into an existing flower or veg bed, at home or on an allotment or in public areas.

For example an apple, plum or pear tree could be underplanted with a few bush fruit such as blackcurrants or gooseberries. Alongside it a clump of raspberries could be planted and scrambling through the tree there could be a hop, Caucasian spinach or mashua. Additional plants could include both ground cover and herbaceous species with mint, strawberries, perennial kale etc.

The food produced could be for personal use or for the community. It depends on the location and site ownership.

The food forest team would provide training and advice including printed and online materials such as plant lists and a "How to build your first food forest" guide.

We would also examine the feasibility of providing a starter pack of plants that first timers could use to build their first food forest. We already have reserves of a few

species and would look for modest grant aid to buy in stock plants that local people could propagate and share.

Expression of Interest

At this stage we are seeking expressions of interest from individuals, local groups and landowners and include a link below to a very short survey to ascertain the level of support this initiative might expect.

Please complete the survey, it will help us in our planning, whether you give the idea a thumbs up or down!

All responses are confidential.

Survey link <https://forms.gle/qFpv9HPghxoPHUS57>

Mashua

Skirret

Mitsuba

Korean Mint

Saltbush

Sea Kale