



The Benefits of Perennial Food Production

When many people think of growing their own food at home, their minds leap immediately to growing typical annual crops in a vegetable garden. But food production does not need to focus on annual cultivation. In fact, there are many benefits to embracing perennial food sources.

What Is Perennial Food Production?

Perennials are simply plants that grow in your garden over a number of years. Biennial plants live over two years. Perennials endure for longer and may often remain in place for many years. Annuals (or plants treated as annuals in a vegetable garden) grow, set seed, and die, or are removed in a single season. When we talk about perennials, sometimes we are only referring to the group of plants known as herbaceous perennials. But technically, perennials are a group that also includes trees, shrubs, and sub-shrubs, too.

Perennial Food Sources

Perennial food sources include fruit trees, nut trees, trees with edible leaves, fruit and berry bushes, fruiting canes and climbers, perennial soft fruits like strawberries, perennial vegetables, perennial herbs and spices, and edible flowers.

Why Embrace Perennial Food Production?

Whether in a garden or on a farm, perennial food production is an alternative to annual production methods which can deplete the soil and take a lot of hard work. Embracing perennials is one way to work more with nature, rather than fighting it. Perennial food production can, among other things:

- Sequester more carbon and help us tackle our climate crisis.
- Boost biodiversity and aid and welcome local wildlife.
- Protect and nurture the soil, creating functioning ecosystems that thrive long-term.
- Create closed-loop, low-maintenance systems that require, once established, no outside input!
- Provide natural abundance, providing us not only with food but also with a range of other yields.

Well-designed perennial food-producing systems are, in many ways, the answer to questions over how we can meet our own human needs in a more sustainable and eco-friendly way.

Depending on the specifics of the site and situation, and the plants chosen for a perennial planting scheme, embracing perennials can also help you to manage water more wisely on your property.

Perennial plants can be crucial to create ecosystem function and to aid the function of water management features within a landscape.

Selection of specific native perennial plants can allow you create a food-producing system in a garden or on a farm that is better suited to the environment in an area. Learning more about the perennials native to your area could be a good place to begin.

Ideas for Perennial Food Production

On larger properties or farms, larger food forests or other agroforestry schemes might be created using mostly perennial plants. And larger fruiting hedgerows or edible windbreak hedgerows might be established. Perennial vegetables might even take the place of annual crops and, in future, we may even have perennial grains to replace our staple annual grain crops.

Soil Lovers say: Embracing Perennial Food Production Is A Wonderful Idea, No Matter Where You Live.

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