



Note- much of the design report has been cut to keep clients anonymous.

This design looks at an urban lot that was mostly ecologically fallow. The owners had enough sense to not poison their outdoor living space- and a wide variety of native volunteers have already arrived to their budding forest garden. Wild ferns, for example, started popping up after enough “neglect of lawn care” to brighten up the spring with their beautiful fractal patterns and edible fiddleheads. We have used maple for Bonsai (art) and walnut seedlings can be sold or traded. Another interesting case of abundance in plain site- this time it is a few mature, productive walnut trees that shade out much of the understory. This provides a constraint on design, given allelopaths exuded by the leaves and roots. Even with the juglone influence on the soil, however, there are plenty of things that can grow and be adapted from the wild for free. In this case, we design an understory guild to fill in open niches within the food forest. Usable, open garden space is used a perennial nursery space or annual production, based off need and season. Change in mindset allows us to think of the wild-like germinating maples and walnuts as an already-in-place tree nursery- our forest garden was several steps ahead of us designing it!

This design utilizes essentially 3 patterns- 1 (yellow): drifting herbs/shrubs on canopy drip-line edgespace, 2 (blue): clumping shade-lovers in the understory, and 3 (green): an open, ordered blank slate rectangular space.

PICTURE DESCRIPTION, forest garden plant suggestions

1 (yellow): Jerusalem artichoke (starchy, harvest any-time, “ground-apple”), Yarrow (great medicinal), Willow, Rubus (blackberries, raspberries, thimbleberries, etc - SOMETHING will do alright), Onions, shallots, garlic (duh) - can get early start before the trees leaf out, Serviceberry (specialty berry, substantial yields possible off of even 1 bush), Wild rose (rose hips, specialty superfood berry, shade)

2 (blue): Stinging nettle (edible greens perennial, does very well in shade), Elderberry (specialty berry, substantial yields possible off of even 1 bush), Ribes (gooseberry, currants- known for producing in shade), Wild Ginger (yum. Shade loving, creeping ground cover), & lots of tender flowers grow only under shade.

3 (green): Nearly infinite possibilities. Planted 2017 w/ propagation stalk of biocultural staples ~ crosne, sea-kale, potato onions, egyptian walking onions, groundnut, mountain yam, Fuki..

Ubiquitous- mix clover, dandelion into lawn mix for edible, N fixation, dynamic accumulation, diversification, etc. Comfrey’s real useful, too.

Consider transplanting understory forest species found in oak/walnut forest, particularly in radial symmetries underneath walnut canopy. Anything that grows in native forests is fair game to try and learn more about too. I’d recommend surveying plant species down by the river, nearby state park, the falls, north shore if you’re ever up there etc.) If not edible/medicinal (decent chance some part of plant is either), can be great for ornamental purposes and biodiversity in soil health, pollinator/beneficial predatory/native insects habitat, etc.