



Farming the Woods: An Integrated Permaculture Approach to Growing Food and Medicinals in Temperate Forests

By Ken Mudge, Steve Gabriel

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In the eyes of many people, the practices of forestry and farming are mutually exclusive, because in the modern world, agriculture involves open fields, straight rows, and machinery to grow crops, while forests are primarily reserved for timber and firewood harvesting. *Farming the Woods* invites a remarkably different perspective: that a healthy forest can be maintained while growing a wide range of food, medicinal, and other non-timber products. While this concept of “forest farming” may seem like an obscure practice, history indicates that much of humanity lived and sustained itself from tree-based systems in the past; only recently have people traded the forest for the field. The good news is that this is not an either-or scenario; forest farms can be most productive in places where the plow is not: on steep slopes, and in shallow soils. It is an invaluable practice to integrate into any farm or homestead, especially as the need for unique value-added products and supplemental income becomes more and more important for farmers.

Many already know that daily indulgences we take for granted such as coffee, chocolate, and many tropical fruits, all originate in forest ecosystems. But few know that such abundance is also available in the cool temperate forests of North America. *Farming the Woods* is the first in-depth guide for farmers and gardeners who have access to an established woodland and are looking for productive ways to manage it. Authors Ken Mudge and Steve Gabriel describe this process as “productive conservation,” guided by the processes and relationships found in natural forest ecosystems.

Farming the Woods covers in detail how to cultivate, harvest, and market high-value non-timber forest crops such as American ginseng, shiitake mushrooms, ramps (wild leeks), maple syrup, fruit and nut trees, ornamental ferns, and more. Comprehensive information is also offered on historical perspectives of forest farming; mimicking the forest in a changing climate; cultivation of medicinal crops; creating a forest nursery; harvesting and utilizing wood products; the role of animals in the forest farm; and how to design and manage your forest farm once it's set up. This book is a must-read for farmers and gardeners interested in

incorporating aspects of agroforestry, permaculture, forest gardening, and sustainable woodlot management into the concept of a whole-farm organism.

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Editorial Review

Review

Choice-

"This excellent book by Mudge (Cornell Univ.) and Gabriel (educator, forest farmer, and ecologist, Finger Lakes region, New York) highlights the diverse income streams that forest landowners or individuals who want to design a forested environment on their land can cultivate. The book begins with clear definitions of forest farming, agroforestry practices, and a historical perspective on cultivating crops in the forest. A foundational understanding of forest ecology is presented, including forest food webs, succession and disturbance, nature mimicry, and adaptation as the climate changes. Later chapters focus on cultivating trees for fruits, nuts, or syrups; using nontimber forest products; growing mushrooms for food and medicine; gathering high-value medicinal plants; producing forest products in nurseries; harvesting wood products; and incorporating animals in the system as possible forest farm endeavors. The discussions of crops suggested in this detailed text are supported with diverse charts and interesting case studies to help readers find the path that best suits their interests. The conclusion provides guidelines for success in the design of forest farms.

Summing Up: Highly recommended. All levels/libraries."

Permaculture-

Forests, Ken Mudge and Steven Gabriel write, have long been humanity's pantry, where our species and many others have found the food, medicines and materials needed for survival. It is only within the last few hundred years, that we have become, as the saying goes, unable to see the forest for the trees. Land populated primarily with trees often only means lumber or an uncleared building site. *Farming the Woods* seeks to remind readers of those days, encouraging and enticing future forest farmers with thoughts of savory mushrooms, sweet saps, hearty nuts, and the rich meat of animals raised under the leaves, presenting all a farmer needs to begin making that dream a reality. *Farming the Woods* is sure to become a trusted companion for all farmer types. Whether one plans to solely work the forest or to use forested ground as a working farm, Ken Mudge and Steve Gabriel have crafted a tome destined to become a classic. The calm, friendly and knowledgeable voices of experience present a well-written book that will be useful for generations."

Booklist-

"It seems that the only thing farming and forestry have in common is that they both take place outdoors. Yet, according the authors of this unorthodox but exceptionally useful handbook, 'forest farming,' which involves gathering a wide variety of plants, from mushrooms to medicinals, predates agriculture. Aiming their advice at readers living in temperate climate zones, including the upper half of North America, Mudge and Gabriel draw on their expertise in the rapidly emerging field of agroforestry to provide in-depth tips on cultivating mushrooms, gathering fruits and nuts, harvesting popular herbs such as ginseng, and even managing goats for maintaining canopy sheltered grasses and ornamentals. Along with sumptuous illustrations and

invaluable case studies, their work provides a wealth of information for anyone with wooded land looking for ways to better manage it as well as reap a little extra profit from its rich agricultural potential.”

“What a joy to read! Nice pictures, great case studies, and well organized. I can tell the authors put their heart and soul into this book. *Farming the Woods* is *the* source for temperate climate agroforestry, particularly for Northeast permaculture designers and teachers.”--**Jonathan Bates, Owner of Food Forest Farm & contributing author of *Paradise Lot***

“My particular focus of research is in mushrooms, and *Farming the Woods* not only offers detailed methodology and techniques for woodland mushroom cultivation, but also adds insight on scheduling and calendars to help orchestrate yields in seasonal climates. I have always wanted to find this information on forest farming bundled together into a collaborative matrix with nut, berry, and rhizome production, and this book helps bridge sustainable agriculture and a healthy, circular systems approach. The authors urge us to take advantage of forested acreage we may have thought was unusable. Fill your forests with food!”--**Tradd Cotter, author of *Organic Mushroom Farming and Mycoremediation***

“At last, a comprehensive forest farming guide for cool temperate climates! The authors have done a superb job explaining forest ecology and describing how to integrate fruits, nuts, mushrooms, medicinals, animals, and more into forest systems. A must-read for anyone interested in agroforestry, forest gardening, or utilizing forests for specialty crops.”--**Martin Crawford, author of *Creating a Forest Garden***

Publishers Weekly-

"In this latest of the publisher's serious, readable, and eminently useful books on cutting-edge permaculture practices, Cornell University professor Mudge and Fingerlakes forest farmer and horticulturalist Gabriel take a step outside the permaculture trend toward forest gardening?gardening that emulates forest patterns?and focus on farming in the woods by maintaining a healthy forest 'while growing a wide range of food, medicinal, and other non-timber products.' Beginning with a nuanced cultural history of forest farming, Mudge and Gabriel share their expertise on an abundance of woodland products: pollination techniques for paw-paws; the comparative economics of shiitakes and ginseng; maple, birch, and walnut sugaring methods; hazelnut breeding; and the safe use of a chain saw, to name but a few. A thoughtfully speculative but practical section on the possible effects of climate change reflects the authors' humble and hopeful perspective that 'much of the trouble in the world today is due to disconnection from ... larger cycles. Forest farming invites us to change these cycles and to offer a gift for generations to come.'"

About the Author

Ken Mudge has been involved in agroforestry research, teaching, and extension for over twenty years. His research has focused on non-timber forest products including nitrogen-fixing trees, American ginseng, forest-cultivated mushrooms, and others. He teaches courses including a practicum in forest farming, plant

propagation, and grafting. He is principal investigator on a NE SARE-funded extension project, in collaboration with the University of Vermont and with established shiitake farmers (including coauthor Steve Gabriel) to train forest owners in shiitake mushroom production as a business enterprise.

Steve Gabriel is an ecologist, educator, author, and forest farmer who has lived most of his life in the Finger Lakes region of New York. His personal mission is to reconnect people of all ages with the natural world and to provide the tools for good management of forests and other landscapes.

He currently splits his time between work for the Cornell Small Farms Program, and developing the farm he runs with wife Elizabeth, Wellspring Forest Farm, which produces shiitake mushrooms, duck eggs, pastured lamb, nursery trees, and maple syrup.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christina McMullen:

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Growing Food and Medicinals in Temperate Forests as good book not only by the cover but also with the content. This is one e-book that can break don't judge book by its protect, so do you still needing yet another sixth sense to pick this kind of!? Oh come on your looking at sixth sense already told you so why you have to listening to another sixth sense.

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