**FORMAT OF FOOD**

**SHOULD SOMERVILLE BUILD A FOOD FOREST?**

**INTRODUCTION**

With its eleven active community gardens and the implementation of the Urban Agriculture Ordinance, Somerville has shown its interest in creating space to grow food in the city. However, the city still faces challenges when it comes to serving all the residents who want access to their own garden plot.

In search of solutions, this project has identified eligible vacant parcels for the construction of a future community garden. Further, this project proposes a food forest incorporating wild edibles that are already prevalent in the Somerville area as the form this future garden should take.

- **11** Active Community Gardens
- **225** Individual Plots
- **>200** Names on Waiting List
- **2 Years** Average Wait Time

**SUITABLE PARCELS BY PROXIMITY**

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ZONES**

Of the limited vacant parcels in Somerville, only two were identified as most suitable from this analysis. These areas are in environmental justice zones, within walking distance to public schools and public transit while outside of the buffer zones surrounding existing community gardens and grocery stores. As these areas are very close to each other, the city might consider utilizing both of these lots as connected growing space, similar to how South Street farm sites 1 and 2 are used.

**IMAGINING A FUTURE FOOD FOREST**

A food forest is a type of a garden that mimics a forest in that it consists of layers of food-producing and medicinal plants. With thoughtful planning, this type of garden can be highly productive and require less continual maintenance than an annually planted garden.

An important piece of this research seeks to explore the possibility of integrating plants that are already prevalent and growing wild around Somerville. Although spreading information on wild edibles is no quick solution to food insecurity, reframing our perspective on these plants has potential to better connect us to our neighborhoods and natural surroundings, even in a city so urbanized as Somerville.

**WILD EDIBLES AND COMMON GROCERY STORE PRODUCE**

**NUTRITIONAL COMPARISON**

Above is a sampling of wild edibles commonly found throughout the Northeast. These plants grow prevalently and spontaneously in and around Somerville. Surprisingly, these plants’ nutritional profiles hold their own against common grocery store produce items many have come accustomed to.

Presenting these plants and encouraging community members to engage with them through a food forest format gives people the power to walk on the sidewalk and recognize the flora around them, and if they so choose, to eat it as well.

**LEVELS**

**FOOD FOREST HIERARCHY**

**CANOPY**

**DWARF FRUIT AND NUT**

**PERENNIALS**

**GROUND COVER**

**BENEFITS OF A FOOD FOREST**

- **Less** continual maintenance required
- **High Productivity** and variety
- **Public** space means involvement when one wants and can
- **Ecosystem** & habitat creation through edible landscaping
- **Educational** opportunities for all ages

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

Thank you to Kyle Monahan, Rebecca Shakespeare, and John de la Parra for their guidance and advice. Thank you to Sasha Dluznosky for sharing his Adobe Illustrator expertise.

**MAPS:**

GCS 1983 Massachusetts State Plane, Mainland Zone (FIPS 2001)

Map Projection: Lambert Conformal Conic

Data:
City of Somerville GIS
MASS-GIS
Tufts University M Drive

**DATA SOURCES:**

City of Somerville - Somerville Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2016


Somerville TreeKeeper

USDA FoodData Central

Wild Urban Plants of the Northeast- Del Tredici