



Visit

The Jesse Gates

EDIBLE FOREST

The Jesse Gates Edible Forest at Wells Church is a current edible forest pilot project in Jackson, Mississippi. Many things set this project apart from others before. The site has nine raised beds for vegetables but the design includes twenty-four fruit trees, sixteen berry bushes and three grapevines. The gardens are kept organic as much as possible, specifically avoiding any chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Construction of the garden utilized recycled material including concrete to outline the beds from an old driveway, dirt that was leftover from edging and gutter cleaning, and composted limbs and twigs, plus layers of newspaper to control weeds. Organic compost was also purchased from a local garden center to supplement the gardens. The Wells Church food pantry is the outlet for the garden produce and the church members as well as the food pantry recipients are involved in maintaining the garden. A partnership was also created with Operation Shoestring, a nearby nonprofit organization, to bring children to the garden to plant and harvest. The children dined on the harvest of the garden and the harvested produce was then distributed among the food pantry recipients. To ensure the success of this project, the community, church and food pantry recipients were surveyed and interest in the project gauged. These are vital steps in insuring the success of this project.

The Jesse Gates Edible Forest is located next to Wells Methodist Church at 2019 Bailey Avenue, Jackson, MS



Resources:

Edible Forests of Mississippi is a statewide program of the Mississippi Urban Forest Council. Visit our web site to learn more. Funds for this project were provided in part through the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce, USDA Specialty Crop Grant Program.

Mississippi State University Extension Service: www.msucares.com

National Gardening Association: <http://assoc.garden.org>

Food Skills For Self Sufficiency: www.food-skills-for-self-sufficiency.com

American Community Gardening Association: www.communitygarden.org

Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce: www.mdac.state.ms.us

America The Beautiful Fund: <http://america-the-beautiful.org/>

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MISSISSIPPI URBAN FOREST COUNCIL



Edible Forests of Mississippi

Tool Kit & Resource Guide



One Common Goal
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EDIBLE FORESTS

Tool Kit & Resource Guide OF MISSISSIPPI

Why An Edible Forest?

Edible Forest of Mississippi provides education, training and additional resources in an effort to encourage the establishment of community orchards statewide. Mississippi citizens have the highest rate of obesity in the US at well over 30%. A large segment of the population also suffers from poor nutrition and other health issues, such as diabetes and heart disease, related to diets low in fresh fruit and vegetables. Many also do not understand the direct health benefits of a good diet derived from fresh, locally grown produce. Communities statewide have open spaces and opportunity to plant fruit orchards with minimal cost and maintenance. In addition to supporting healthier citizens, locally grown produce can supplement incomes and serve as a source of produce for local shelters, soup kitchens, churches and other groups.

Site Selection:

Site selection is very important when planning an orchard. Sites should have good drainage, nutrient rich soil, and lots of sunlight. Soil nutrients can be addressed if that is lacking but sunlight and good drainage are vital. It is also necessary to assess the surrounding areas to determine if vegetation is on the site that could block sunlight or steal nutrients from the orchard as it grows. A location close to the orchard's human resources and water sources is imperative. Planning should also encompass awareness of utilities and underground service lines.

Human Resources:

Manpower and commitment to success is critical to the development and continuation of a successful orchard. A number of approaches that can be taken to plant and maintain an orchard exist. Citizen volunteers, civic groups, students, church groups, local government or some combination of these are all viable options. It is necessary to have the involvement of trained individuals even if only as consultants.

Elements Needed:

A few basic elements are key to the success and sustainability of an orchard:

1. People -Human resources to plant and maintain.
2. Place -A site with necessary ingredients for a bountiful harvest.
3. Plants -Proper plant selection.
4. Preparation -This includes all aspects from soil, sun light, water and tools.
5. Purpose -A solid plan for distribution and use.
6. Establish a method for produce distribution or use by the local community.

Suggested Uses:

Local soup kitchens or food pantries
After school programs or senior meal delivery
Sell for profits and provide demonstrations
Citizen's dispersal on harvest days
Community composting and recycling center
Harvest festivals and training workshops
Mulching and local farmers' markets

Plant Selection:

Selecting the appropriate variety of fruit trees is critical to the success of the orchard. It is important to match tree selection with the USDA defined separate zones for different areas of the country. Also, consider the space requirements as well as the amount of maintenance, insect control, sunlight and pollination needed. This should be considered during planning. Suggested native fruit species include:

Tall Trees

- Pecan & Hickories
- Mulberry

Small Trees

- Persimmons
- American Plum
- Pawpaw Fig
- Chinquapin
- Chickasaw Plum

Shrubby Berries

- Blackberry
- Sparkleberry
- Elderberry
- Blueberry

Fruiting Vines

- Muscadines
- Grapes

Site Preparation:

Once the design of the orchard has been determined, several elements should be considered in preparing the site. The most important is the initial soil test. This will determine which nutrients need to be added. Remove vegetation that competes with the fruit trees and find sources for mulch that will be used for weed control and root protection.

