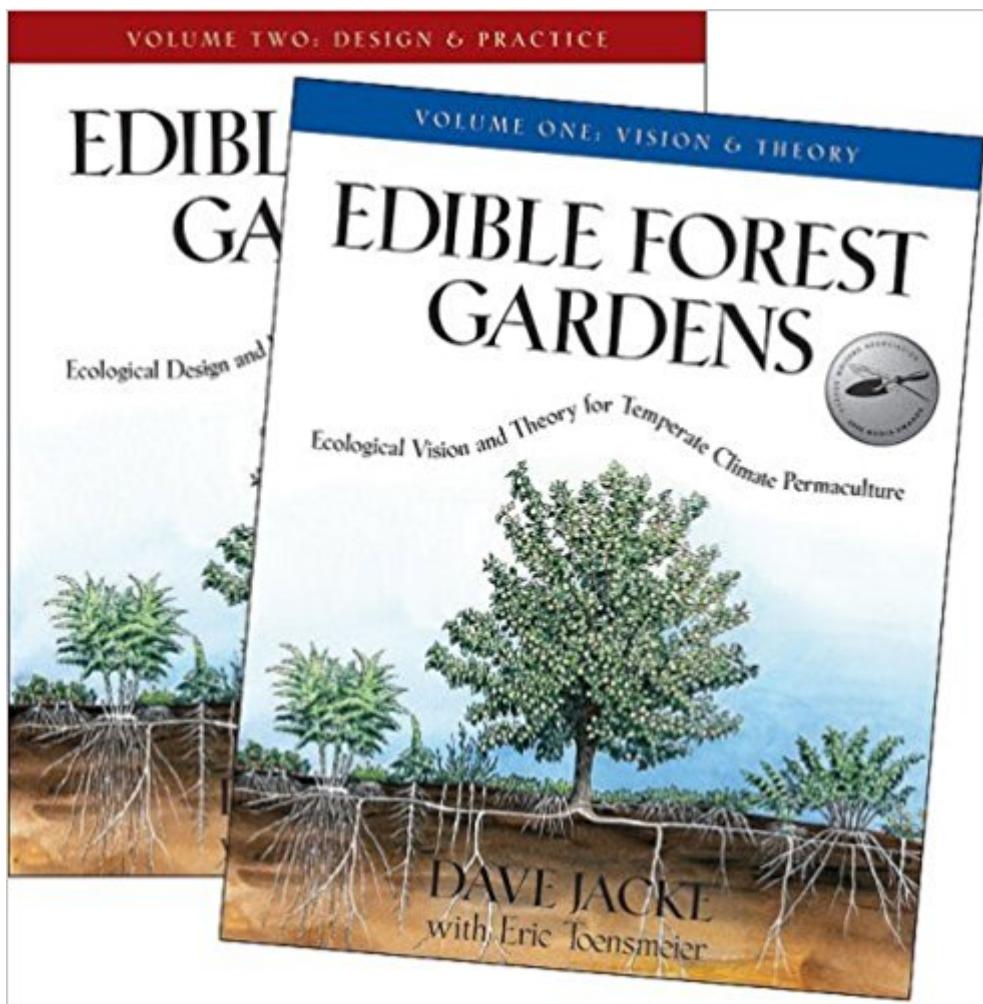


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Edible Forest Gardens (2 Volume Set)



Synopsis

Edible Forest Gardens is a groundbreaking two-volume work that spells out and explores the key concepts of forest ecology and applies them to the needs of natural gardeners in temperate climates. Volume I lays out the vision of the forest garden and explains the basic ecological principles that make it work. In Volume II, Dave Jacke and Eric Toensmeier move on to practical considerations: concrete ways to design, establish, and maintain your own forest garden. Along the way they present case studies and examples, as well as tables, illustrations, and a uniquely valuable "plant matrix" that lists hundreds of the best edible and useful species. Taken together, the two volumes of Edible Forest Gardens offer an advanced course in ecological gardening—one that will forever change the way you look at plants and your environment. What is an edible forest garden? An edible forest garden is a perennial polyculture of multipurpose plants. Most plants regrow every year without replanting: perennials. Many species grow together: a polyculture. Each plant contributes to the success of the whole by fulfilling many functions: multipurpose. In other words, a forest garden is an edible ecosystem, a consciously designed community of mutually beneficial plants and animals intended for human food production. Edible forest gardens provide more than just a variety of foods. The seven F's apply here: food, fuel, fiber, fodder, fertilizer, and "farmaceuticals," as well as fun. A beautiful, lush environment can be a conscious focus of your garden design, or a side benefit you enjoy

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Customer Reviews

HortIdeas-We reviewed the first volume of this two-volume set in September 2005 HortIdeas--in fact, we were so impressed by it that we devoted that month's Book Reviews section entirely to it. Until Mycelium Running--another amazingly important and well-done book--appeared, we were considering doing the same this month for the second volume of Edible Forest Gardens, which is much thicker (by more than 270 pages!) than the first volume. The shorter length of this review certainly does not reflect the relative importance of the volumes--we recommend that anyone interested in experimenting with temperate-zone "gardening in the image of the forest" should study both. Although Volume 2 ostensibly emphasizes "practical" information building on the "theoretical" ideas in Volume 1, it is clear that both volumes are essentially theoretical. That's because (as we discussed in our review of Volume 1) nobody has yet convincingly shown the viability of forest gardening (relying heavily on perennial crops) in temperate areas as a sustainable alternative to conventional gardening (based mainly on annual crops). Jacke and Toensmeier are, admirably, attempting to disseminate ideas gathered from a variety of source that might enable such viability. Ultimately, at this stage development of temperate-zone forest gardening techniques, virtually all approaches are experimental and in need of validation. We simply do not currently know their limitations. Understanding that knowledge on "best practices" for temperate-zone forest gardening needs to be established experimentally can be exciting for those willing and able to adopt the scientific attitude: no matter how they turn out, the results of an experiment, performed appropriately (meaning especially that adequate control treatments are provided), are never "bad." In other words, we think that would-be temperate-zone forest gardeners who are sincerely interested in helping to establish this novel form of agriculture should proceed by trying to test some of Jacke and Toensmeier's numerous design, site preparation, species choice and establishment, and management guidelines. We view Volume 2 of Edible Forest Gardens not as a recipe book for what works but rather as a compendium of possibilities for what could work--an invitation par excellence to experimentation instead of complacency. Right on! Plants and Gardens News--Patricia Jonas, Brooklyn Botanic Garden-But even if you grow enough organic food to feed yourself, are you doing what's best for the ecosystem? "Many drawbacks of modern agriculture persist in organic farming and gardening," Dave Jacke and Eric Toensmeier write in Edible Forest Gardens, because they do not "mimic the structure of natural systems, only selected functions." Even Quail Hill Farm members are still harvesting mostly annual crops grown in plowed fields. Jacke and Toensmeier offer a radical vision for stepping out of the conceptual continuum of conventional agriculture and organic farming. They point to the productivity of temperate forests--which is twice that of agricultural land in terms of net calories--and take that as their design model. Building on Robert Hart's classic book,

Forest Gardening, and incorporating permaculture practice, Jacke and Toensmeier propose a garden where many species of edible perennial plants are grown together in a design that mimics forest structure and function. *Edible Forest Gardens* is an ambitious two-volume work whose influence should extend well beyond ecologists and permaculturists and, in the best of all outcomes, reach into the mainstream. Volume one lays out the "Ecological Vision and Theory for Temperate Climate Permaculture," and it also includes a very useful analysis of existing forest gardens (one only 50 by 90 feet) and a tantalizing 30-page appendix of "top 100" species. As of this writing, volume two, which focuses on practical design and maintenance considerations, is just being released, but on the evidence of volume one, I have no doubt the set will be an indispensable reference for gardeners and farmers for decades. "When people have food gardens," the authors write, "they usually are tucked out of sight and out of view of the neighbors. They rely on external inputs of energy, nutrients, insect and disease controls, and water and are based primarily on annual plants. For some reason, growing food is considered unsightly, unseemly, possibly antisocial, and in some towns and cities, illegal! The tremendous infrastructure we have built in our cities and towns reflects a culture and horticulture of separation and isolation." The consequences of such attitudes about growing food have been disastrous, and each of us can contribute to the repair effort. Jacke and Toensmeier say that the principles of forest gardening can be applied even in a tiny urban yard or on a rooftop. Containers of edible perennials and annuals on a rooftop are not most farmers' idea of agriculture, but I grow nearly 20 percent of the authors' top 100 species and intend to look for ways to take this small start much further. And what about chocolate and oranges? Clearly there are foods that cannot be grown in a temperate forest. "We do not expect forest gardening to replace regular gardening or the foods we know and love," the authors admit. "Just how far we can take forest gardening in supplying food for ourselves is not yet determined." Finding the answer may be the most optimistic work gardeners and farmers can do. "These will be the benchmark works in the field for many years. The level of scholarship and meticulous footnoting is unsurpassed by anything I've seen in permaculture literature." --Toby Hemenway, author of *Gaia's Garden* "A tree de force! A must-have set of books for anyone serious about polyculture, integrated organic garden and landscape design, permaculture in the temperate zones and, of course, food forests. The charts of condensed information alone are worth the price of admission. The best book on these topics in years. Keep these books within arm's reach at all times!" --Robert Kourick, author of *Designing and Maintaining Your Edible Landscape Naturally*

"...this book will define the intellectual territory of its subject for at least a generation...Dave Jacke

has knit an indigenous practice at once ancient and renaissant with the mainstream of scientific exploration. He has given us legitimacy – and by us I mean all the ecological agricultural explorers of the epoch – and a cogency that will now be impossible to denigrate or diminish...An excellent and essential reference, brilliantly conceived and passionately written, Edible Forest Gardens should be on every permaculturist's reading list for the year ahead." --Peter Bane Publisher, The Permaculture Activist magazine "...But the book I will be keeping by me for the seasons ahead... is Edible Forest Gardens by Dave Jacke with Eric Toensmeier. In its way this book--the first of two volumes--is a sequel to the wonderful Tree Crops: A Permanent Agriculture (1929) by J. Russell Smith.... Edible Forest Gardens offers a vision of the garden that reaches well beneath its aesthetic surface and into its ecological depths. It reminds us that whatever gardens are an oasis from, they can never be an oasis from the natural world or our own underlying economic needs." --Verlyn Klinkenborg The New York Times Book Review June 5, 2005

This 2 book set is essential to building a truly perennial Edible Food Forest. The vast and detailed information in these two books are invaluable! These books are as important to me as Bill Mollison's "Permaculture A Designer's Manual".The Appendices alone are 144 pages! I got to take a tour Eric Toensmeier's tenth of an acre Food Forest, as I live fairly close to him, and it was amazing to see over 100+ varieties of perennial food being grown on a small lot! You will not be sorry in getting these books!

I am starting a business called Epic Edible Backyards, and researching permaculture and ways to maximize food production. This set of books has been on my reading list for a while and they were well worth the wait. For someone interested in ecology, nature, permaculture, and design, you will enjoy all of the little and big drops of wisdom in these books.

Impressed to find so much information in what I thought was "just another garden book". Edible Forest Gardens 2 volume set are invaluable to guide us back to our "roots" so to speak. The forest with it's plants and trees all interconnected (poly-culture)in an ecosystem designed to bring life, production and rejuvenation back to the forest. Man(IN GENERAL TERMS)thinking he/she would improve things by putting them in "order" (monoculture)actually disordered the system. This set of books brings hopes that each individual will rethink our "steps" watch where we walk. In the Boy Scouts as a scout Master I taught the boys to leave the camp site better than what it was when you got there. This holds true for everything in life, but in this bigger picture the camp site (our forest)are

in a mess that will take decades to restore. I highly recommend Edible Forest Gardens 2 volume for anyone who wants to guard his or her's footstep to leave a lasting impression for the next generation and those there after. Speaking of a lasting legacy I also recommend A Journey Into the Fourth Dimension: The Lasting Legacy of Derek Saul

I had originally checked these books out at the library, but, being as they are so large, I couldn't even get close to finishing the first one in only two weeks. I was impressed with them, however, and decided to spend the money on my own copies. I was so excited when they arrived--I'm still only partially through Book 1--and it's great having my own copies. And, unlike the ones from the library, these ones were in good shape--I'm a freak about the condition of my books, and I intend to keep these looking as good as they did the day they came!

It's no surprise to learn that Dave and Eric worked for seven years to write the Edible Forest Gardens books; the depth and breadth of permaculture knowledge that they present is incredible. Although I've heard some say that these books are not an easy read, I've found them to be fascinating, enjoyable and indispensable. I started my journey into permaculture with Gaia's Garden by Toby Hemenway, then decided to plant an edible forest in the back yard, so I purchased Volume 2 of Edible Forest Gardens, since it covers the practical consideration of forest gardening. I was so impressed with the book that I then purchased volume 1, which focuses on the ecological vision and theory for temperate climate permaculture. Highly recommended!

The author, Dave Jacke, has nailed this topic cold. Informative, to the point, "hands on" useable information..... Simply the best book I've found on this topic. Mr. Jacke's work is as good or better than Fukuoka, Louis Bromfield, Joel Salatin or Wendell Berry. This book will has become a how-to classic. A must have if your planning a premiculture project of your own.

If there was a "3.5" star rating that would be what I'd have picked. A lot of theory, and what practical information exists is tailored towards the Northeastern America. If you live in other parts of North America you'll find that you need to do a lot of adapting of the information to actually benefit in a practical way. Had I known what little coverage there is outside the Northeast I may not have gotten the book. At \$20-\$30 a good value no matter where you are, but the \$100 price is really only justified if you live in the areas covered by the book.

I am extremely grateful to David and Eric for their love of gardening and their ability to let that love shine through their writing. I am extremely grateful to them for their research and the hard work of writing such a detailed and comprehensive study and additionally, they wrote a great index!

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