



## Project Story: Food Forest Project Phase 1

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With the funding we received from Neighbourhood Small Grants and the work of volunteers at Grafton Agricultural Commons, we made a significant start on building Phase 1 of our 'food forest'. A food forest mimics the resiliency and biodiversity of nature by using a variety of plants. We envision that it will take five years, including this year, to create a food forest that joins the fruit and nut trees that grow at the perimeter of the garden with the vegetable beds growing in the central area. Our vision is to wrap the food forest around three sides of the garden and thereby grow more food, increase the biodiversity of the garden, make the trees and other plants more resilient to the vagaries of a changing climate, and create an attractive place that our volunteers and the public can enjoy.





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This season, we built ‘swales,’ trenches on the contour of the land, to hold water and prevent run-off, and ‘fruit-tree guilds,’ which are a diverse and balanced grouping of plants that fill different ecological niches. We built soil and densely planted flower and cover crop seeds, along with a variety of shrubs and flowers around several fruit trees. As well, we planned the open picnic and play area that will eventually be in this section, a welcoming and relaxing spot for volunteers and visitors.

Some of the volunteers who contributed to the project this summer were participants in free, hands-on workshops teaching how to build swales and fruit-tree guilds. ‘Swale Smart Gardening’ was held on July 14/24, and ‘Fruit Tree Guilds’ workshops were held on July 28/24 and a smaller one on September 22/24. The workshops were offered by a Bowen Island Food Resilience Society board member.

Some plants were donated by Landscaping by Steve for the first swale workshop.

Grafton Agricultural Commons is a collaborative, community garden growing food using organic, regenerative methods. The garden is run by volunteer Bowen residents and open to the public. The ‘Creating A Food Forest’ project generated a lot of energy and enthusiasm made possible thanks to the funding of the Neighbourhood Small Grants. In the future, we will have educational signage that explains the value of food forests and acknowledges this forest’s funders.



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