

What Is a Food Forest?

A free printable for curious children and the grown-ups growing beside them.

Different plants, one cared-for place

A food forest is a planned garden that can include food trees, shrubs, and smaller plants growing at different heights. Plants are chosen for the place, with room, light, and care in mind. Some flowers also provide food for visiting wildlife. A food forest takes time to grow and still needs people to tend it.

What does permaculture mean?

Permaculture is a way to design with nature. We observe first, then think about how the parts of a place can work together. Its ethics include caring for Earth, caring for people, and sharing fairly.

- Ask: What already happens here?
- Plan: What does this place need?
- Care: What can we keep learning?

Start where you are

One suitable plant in an adult-approved pot can be a beginning. A pot is a small growing project; it does not need to become a whole forest. Ask a trusted grown-up before touching or tasting plants.

Draw a plant you would like to learn about. What question would you ask a grown-up?

Plan a Small Place

Use this free drawing page with a grown-up. Planning can begin even when you cannot plant yet.

Choose together

Pick an adult-approved pot, a permitted garden corner, or an imaginary growing place. You do not need to write its address or anyone's name. Keep play spaces and paths in your drawing.

- Where does light reach the place?
- Where can people move and reach comfortably?
- How will a grown-up help with water and care?

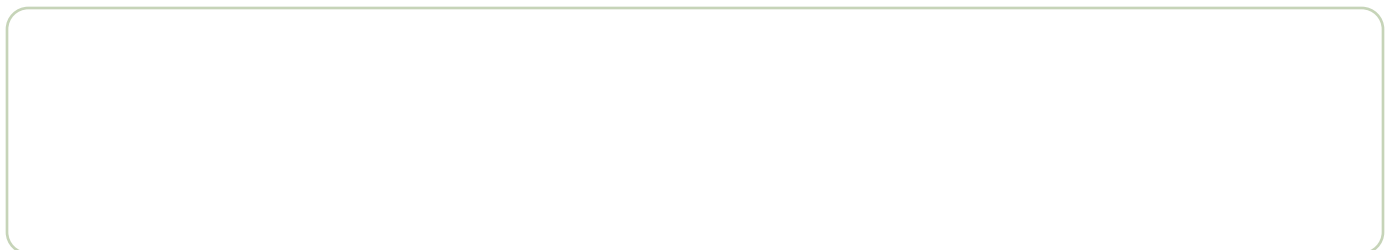
Leave room for a plan

Draw the place below. Add a plant, a clear path, and one question mark where you need more information. Your first plan can change after you observe.

Before anything moves

Adults check permission, safe soil and water, suitable plants, and container stability. They handle heavy pots, digging, and building. Balcony plans need an adult to check building rules, weight limits, and safe placement first.

Draw your small-place plan



One thing I noticed: _____

One question to ask: _____

My Growing Journal

A free observation page to use again as your plant changes. No personal details are needed.

Look before you act

Choose one plant with your grown-up. Look together at its size, leaves, and growing place. If you are starting a seed, your grown-up checks the packet and local growing advice. Seeds and seedlings are for growing, not tasting.

- What looks different from last time?
- What stayed the same?
- What question do you have now?

A drawing is evidence, too

Draw what you actually see. A seed may take time to show a change above the mix. You can record waiting, too. A drooping leaf does not tell the whole story: ask a grown-up to help you check what the plant needs.

Care together

Check before watering instead of following one rule for every plant. Keep soil and mix away from your mouth, avoid dusty material, and wash hands after gardening.

Draw or record what you see

Date: _____

I noticed: _____

My question: _____

With my grown-up, we decided to: _____

Notice a Living Place

This free page is for looking and wondering with a trusted grown-up, without collecting wildlife.

Find a safe viewing spot

Your grown-up chooses a permitted place and checks the conditions. Stay on an approved path or look from a window. A flower pot, lawn, or garden can all offer things to notice. A quiet place may still have life you cannot see.

- Where are the light and shade?
- Do any leaves or flowers move?
- What colors, shapes, or visitors do you notice?

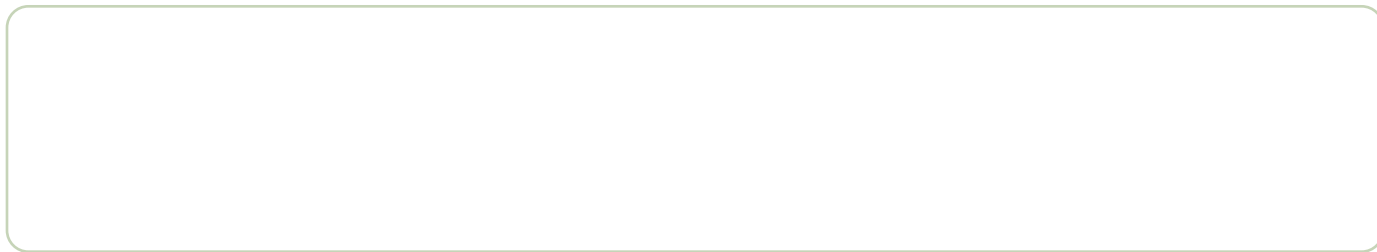
Watch without disturbing

Do not touch, catch, chase, feed, or approach insects or nests. Never taste flowers or unfamiliar plants. Your grown-up follows any allergy safety plan. If the place is unsuitable, use a picture instead.

Keep your questions

Draw one observation and one question. You do not need to know every visitor's name. Some animals help plants move pollen, but visitors and flowers change with the place and season.

Draw something you noticed



I wonder: _____

On another visit, I could look for: _____

A Small Beginning for Families

A free parent and caregiver guide. Start with curiosity and a project you can care for together.

Make one manageable choice

Choose a locally suitable plant, season, and permitted place. A clean pot with drainage may be enough. Check available light, safe water, the plant's eventual size, and an appropriate growing mix. For seed starting, use seeds sold for planting and follow the packet with local advice.

Let the child be an observer

Invite drawings, questions, and small supervised care jobs. Ask what changed before suggesting a solution. Waiting and an unsuccessful attempt can lead to useful questions; a harvest is not guaranteed.

- Who will help with care when you are away?
- Can everyone reach and participate comfortably?
- What would you like to notice next?

Keep safety close

Adults manage tools, heavy containers, growing inputs, and tasting. Review allergies and identify edible parts before any optional tasting. Seeds, seedlings, unknown plants, and growing mix stay out of mouths. Wash hands afterward. No garden space today? Begin with a drawing or an adult-approved observation.

Together, choose one small question to investigate. Use the growing journal to record what you find.

Make Room for Regular Growing Time

A free teacher starter for a small, staff-led learning experience that fits your school.

From a story to an opportunity

In Book 10, the children's work inspires their school to make weekly growing time part of each class's learning with a teacher. Your school can choose its own suitable rhythm and scale. Begin with one clear learning question and the permissions and support your setting needs.

No planting land? Start small

A few approved containers can support hands-on learning where conditions allow. Where growing is not possible yet, children can observe a suitable plant, draw a plan, or record changes from pictures. These are beginnings, not substitutes for an entire food forest.

Give learning and care a routine

Make time to observe, ask, draw, compare, and care. Growing can connect plant life, soil, water, insects, food, cooperation, and responsibility. Let children's questions guide investigations while adults lead site, tool, food-safety, and program decisions.

- Involve school leadership, facilities staff, and families as appropriate.
- Plan accessible participation, allergy precautions, and safe inputs.
- Assign holiday care and recurring costs before planting.
- Use local growing advice; follow school rules for any harvest or tasting.

What can students observe regularly? Who will support care between learning sessions?

Grow with a Grown-up

A free safety reminder for supervised growing. Your adult adapts the activity to your setting and needs.

Before you begin

A trusted adult checks permission, the place, water, growing materials, and any allergy plan. Stay on safe paths. Adults manage digging, sharp tools, heavy pots, structures, and chemicals. Ask for an easier way to join if an activity does not suit you.

Look, ask, and leave in place

Seeds and seedlings are not snacks. Do not taste unfamiliar plants or flowers. Watch wildlife without touching or approaching it. Tell your grown-up about nests, animal waste, or anything uncertain. Pictures can be used instead of handling materials.

Keep growing and food handling separate

Keep soil and mix away from food and mouths; avoid dusty materials. Leave compost management to adults, and never handle or sniff moldy compost. Do not use raw manure or pet waste for these activities.

- Wash hands after gardening and before food preparation.
- Taste only identified food a responsible adult approves.
- Wash approved produce under clean running water, without soap.
- Adults handle knives, storage, and school food-service decisions.

Before starting, tell your grown-up which job you would like to try. Decide together how to do it safely.

Grow Where You Live

A free local-planning page for grown-ups and children. Good questions travel; planting plans need local checks.

Begin with your conditions

Ask a local growing adviser about suitable plants and seasons. Observe light, space, wind, water, and the growing medium. A warm patio, exposed balcony, and school bed can need different care even in the same area.

What a USDA zone tells you

For the United States, USDA's Plant Hardiness Zone Map describes average extreme winter cold. It helps with perennial plant selection. A ZIP-level result is a general guide; the exact growing spot may differ. It does not supply vegetable planting dates or guarantee a plant will thrive.

Find advice for your place

In the U.S., start with Cooperative Extension. In Canada, use Natural Resources Canada's maps and local advice; Canadian and USDA zone systems differ. Elsewhere, ask a local university, agricultural advisory service, or established horticultural organization. Follow locally relevant plant guidance rather than another country's calendar.

- Check the plant, season, and frost or heat conditions.
- Confirm permission, water, access, and adult help.
- Keep learning from what your own growing place shows you.

A question for our local adviser: _____

A condition we should observe: _____

Share a Small Beginning

A free reflection page for sharing an idea with someone you already know, with a grown-up's help.

Share what you learned

You can share a drawing, an observation, or a useful question. Explain one thing you tried and one thing you would check next time. An idea does not need a perfect harvest before it can help someone think.

- What surprised you?
- Who helped with care?
- What would a new grower need to ask?

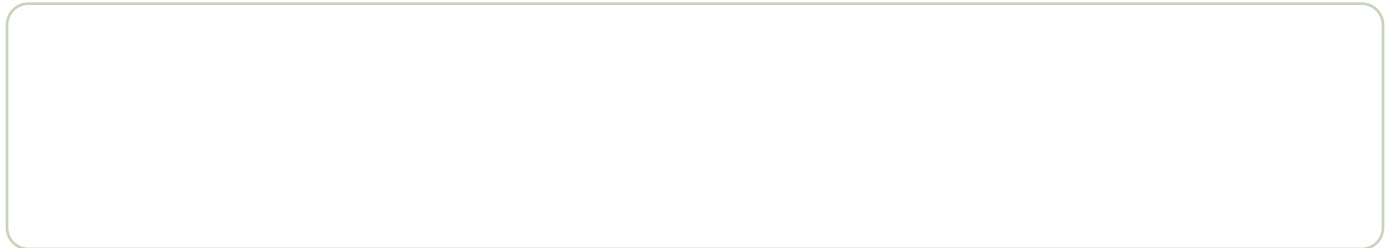
Their place needs its own plan

Listen to what the other person notices about their space. Their light, weather, plants, permissions, or helpers may differ from yours. Share questions and encouragement instead of promising that the same design will work everywhere.

A safe next step

Ask a trusted adult before changing shared land or giving away plants or seeds. Adults check suitability and movement rules. You do not need to post pictures, names, or locations online to share a beginning. A conversation and a drawing are enough.

Draw one idea you could share



One thing I learned: _____

One question we could explore together: _____