

Suters Glen Permaculture Farm

Picture tour of a homestead with edible gardens and natural lawn care solutions



By: Cory Suter Permaculture Farmer, Co-chair of Urban Ag Work Group for Fairfax Food Council

(Hobby gardeners: Hala Elbarmil & Allison Suter assist with weeding, and some planting)



Suters Glen

Permaculture Farm

5.34 acre homestead
just off Popes Head Rd
near 123 in Fairfax, VA
22030

Orchard in partial bloom
March 17, 2020

Lambs: Monty & Clover
born March 30, 2020



The magic of any place is best experienced over multiple seasons using all five senses



The taste of just picked produce is so good, kids like to eat fruits and vegetables from our garden



We hope this tour
will be a feast for
your eyes and
imagination for
what is possible





This picture was
taken Spring
2016, a year after
we bought Suters
Glen

Picture of annual garden taken four years later, April 6, 2020 at sunset





View of half of
rear pasture
taken from top of
roof
November 2016

Entrance to
Suters Glen

March 2018





Following
driveway past
guest cottage

April 2020

Remodeled
1925

Farmhouse that
was on a 100+
acre plot for
most of its' life

Unless otherwise
labeled, all pictures
in this slideshow are
from different
perspectives of the
5.34 acre remaining
lot we bought.





Rear of home
as seen from
wildflower
meadow with
bachelor's
buttons and
blackberries
in bloom

Cory found his philosophy of gardening in the permaculture literature that calls us to mimic natural systems so that we can **produce more with less work.**

Since we bought Suters Glen in 2015, we have never tilled this garden, and as far as we know, zero chemicals have been used in this garden for at least 24 years.

No till production works, by keeping soil covered with mulches or plants and letting nature aerate the soil for us. Yes those tomato plants are over eight feet tall, and produce well.





Burying rotting wood and adding lots of organic matter to soil, both increases the fertility of the soil and sequesters carbon long term if the soil is left undisturbed.

My best performing plants grow in planting beds that use hügelkultur, or buried wood as pictured below during development of new planting bed.





Step 1) Select a Sunny Spot

(Popular Annual vegetables such as tomatoes and peppers need a minimum of six hours of sunlight each day to fruit well. Most leafy greens can do well with only around four hours of sunlight.)



Step 2) Outline Your Planting Bed





**Optional
Step 2B)
Dig out any
walkways**



**Step 3)
Cover soil w/
organic matter
as quickly as
possible**

Pictured here is the addition of woodchips for the access path, and several wheel barrows of composted herbivore manure, which is an ideal fertilizer for plants





Step 4)
Cover area
with
cardboard as
a weed block



**Step 5)
Then
immediately
cover with 2-
3 inches of
Compost**





Step 6)

Plant what you like to eat, but include pest resistant plants such as herbs around perimeter



Ideal Front Yard Veggie

- **Okra 'Red Burgundy'**
- *Allium Tuberosum*
- Productive vegetable w/ lovely flowers from July until fall.
- Fresh cooked okra is not slimy.



Suters Glen Permaculture Farm

- Okra performs better than tomatoes in hot, humid weather.
- Direct sow seeds in mid May or transplant around four week old plants



Step 7)

Fill in with companion plants

Good Companions for Okra:

- Tomatoes
- Basil
- Lettuce
- Nasturtiums

(Also, beans, radishes and peppers)



Edible pansies
and yellow flower
pot with eggplant
added to provided
much needed
additional color

I like using
complimentary
colors such as
yellow and purple
or green and red





Good companions for Artichoke, the mint green plant in center of picture, are tarragon, bush beans or peas

Garlic Chives

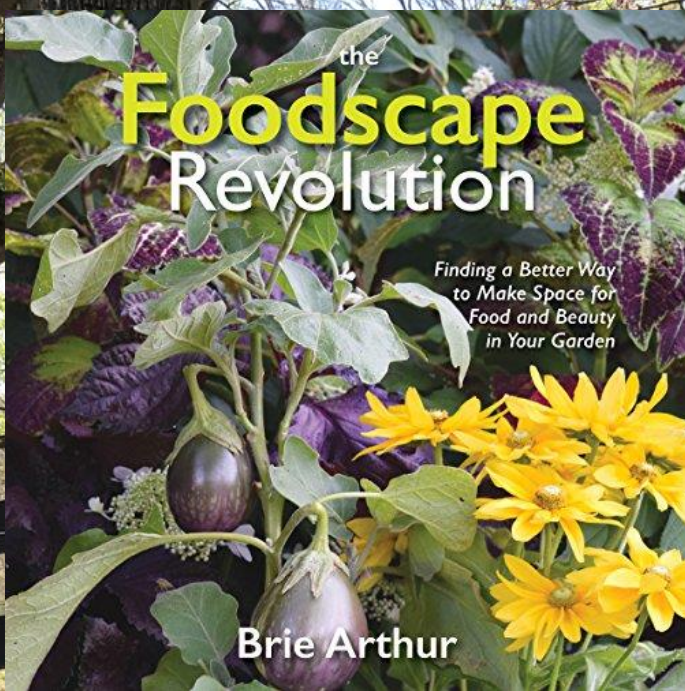
Allium Tuberosum

- Self-seeding perennial that deer and pests avoid.
- All Parts are edible: Leaves, flowers and bulbs make nice substitute for onions and garlic
- Lovely flowers in August & September
- May be harvested almost year round, February to November

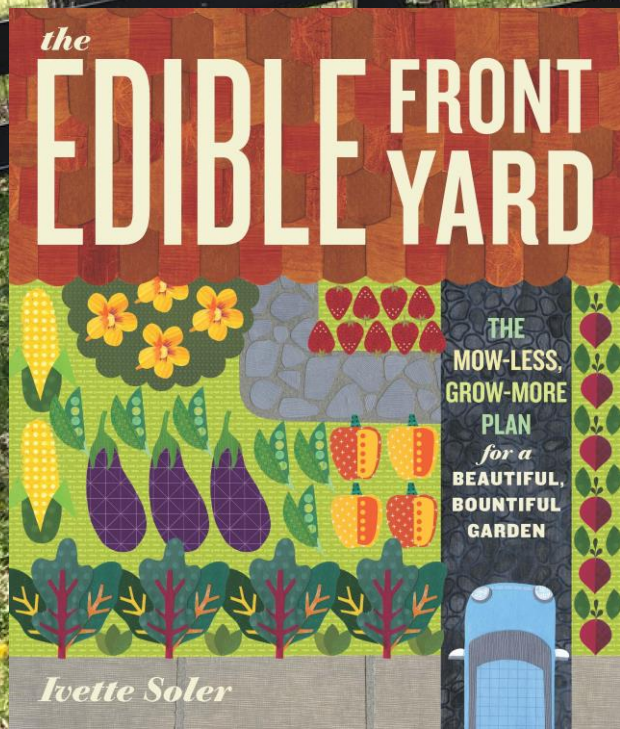




Plants from allium family such as garlic chives and onions repel pests naturally



Book resources
for learning more



Rosalind Creasy

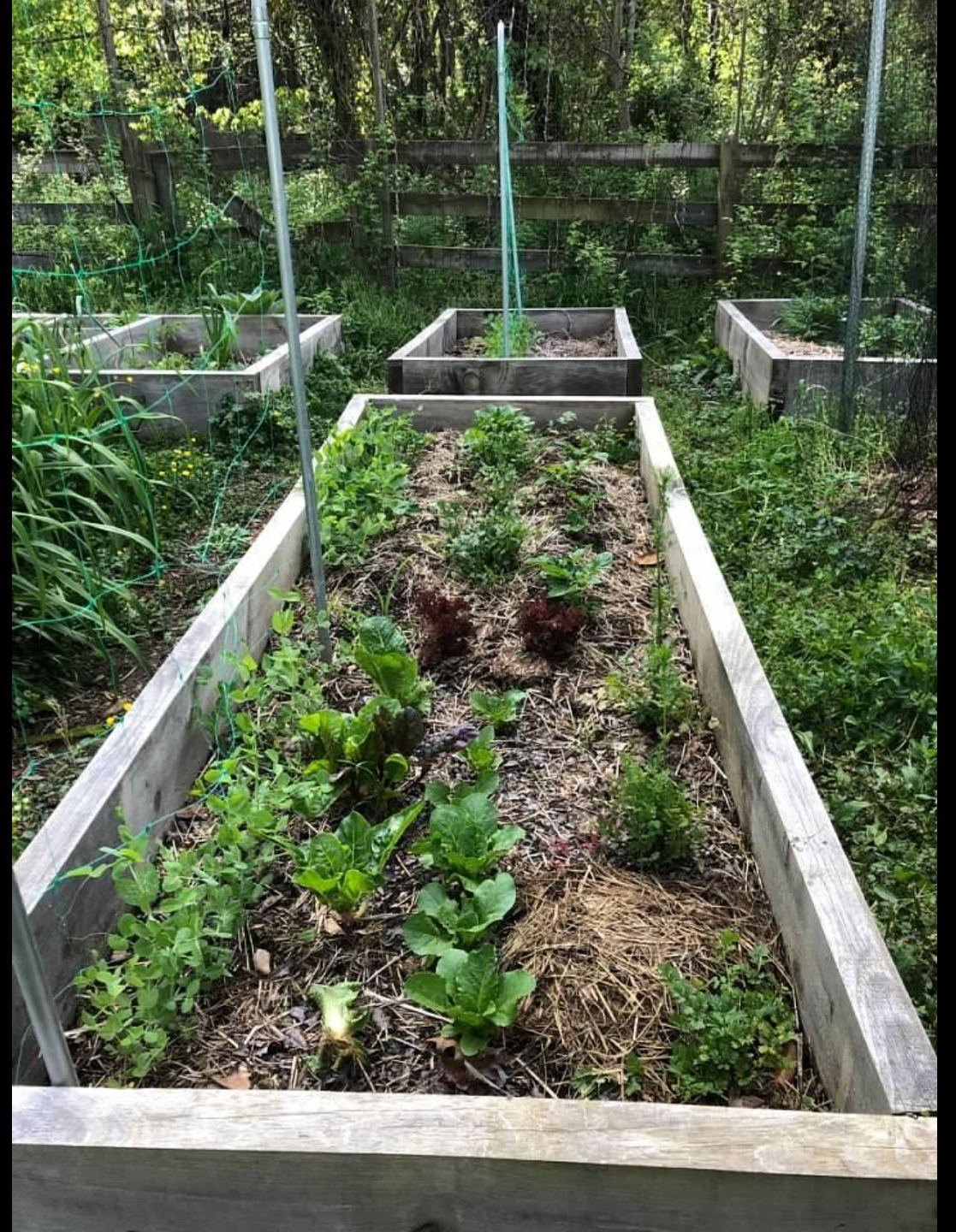
Edible Landscaping

Now You Can Have Your Gorgeous Garden and Eat It Too!



Simple Soil Recipe

- Eight to 12 inches of organic straw on top of existing soil in raised bed
- Add 3 – 4 inches of organic compost
- Plant what you like to eat





Rear yard
with
milkweed,
daylilies, and
mullein
starting to
bloom



On left:
Nanking
Cherry Bush
blooming in
March

On right:
Russian
Pomegranate
with young
leaves in April



A Garden
doesn't need
to stop once
you enter the
house.





Goat's Rue is commonly pulled as a weed, but I let it grow up my fence to feed pollinators, fix nitrogen in my soil, and then feed to my compost as a green manure before the seeds mature.



Another counter-cultural technique used at Suters Glen is to use a mower only about five times or less each year.





When I do mow, I set the height at four inches. This encourages thicker grass and less mowing

As this picture illustrates, this technique may also allow more flowers to flourish in shady spots-feeding pollinators, or in sunny spots if you don't mow clover, buttercup and/or dandelions before they go to seed.

This picture was taken on June 14th, 2020 after only mowing the yard once in mid May since the fall of 2019.

Only mowed once in over seven months!:

This part of the yard has also not been grazed by sheep in over a year. The flower bed around tree has been weeded, but needs fresh mulch.





To be fair, though, grass had been sending up seed heads in my front yard wildflower meadow before I mowed.

Picture taken May 9th, 2020 a few days before I mowed for the first time in 2020

Parts of the property with more sun have sheep rotated onto them for weed control, mowing and natural fertilizer.





Buttercups and
Dogwoods
blooming in front
yard

May 2nd, 2020



To keep things neater between monthly mowing during the summer, I use a weed eater to clean grass off stepping stones and to edge some beds.

(The three figs in picture are mulched with straw left over from their winter protection; the one furthest to right hadn't budded yet)





One week later,
the chamomile
at the top of the
wall bloomed.

Mustard Green
with yellow
flower in
foreground

Edible Pansies
interplanted
with Garlic
along sides





Four Generations of Gardeners in 1990

Ira – Age 98

Grandma Mary – Age 69

Mom Ruth – Age 33

Your virtual tour host:

Cory Suter – Age 7

w/ two younger siblings

This picture is of your host's grandparents' garden in Orrville Ohio thirty years ago.

29 years later in Orrville Ohio:

Four Generations of Gardeners 2019

Grandma Mary – Age 98

Mom Ruth – Age 62

Cory Suter, your virtual tour host – Age 36

Jonathan – age 7 (& Caleb, age 3)



This slide illustrates how People who Grow Their Own Food Live Longer

1. Okinawa, Japan
2. Sardinia, Italy
3. Loma Linda, California
4. Nicoya, Costa Rico
5. Ikaria, Greece

In a study of the five communities on earth with the most centenarians, a few characteristics stood out.

- People in these communities tended gardens for food
- They valued their cooperative relationships with each other

The other secret to Longevity and good health

Do NOT use poisons.

1. Pesticides kill other creatures that would otherwise like to eat your pests
2. Herbicides such as Roundup kill beneficial plants and creatures
3. Chemical fertilizers can destroy natural regenerative life in soil

When we protect the land, a healthy ecosystem feeds our body and our soul. All pictures of wildlife taken at poison-free Suters Glen





Grafted four in one cherry tree in bloom in March, immediately following new strawberry bed expansion.

Same place again in May after strawberries were planted in straw



Where to Buy Edible Plants

1. Local Plant Nurseries

- DePaul's *Urban Farm*
2599 Chain Bridge Rd,
Vienna
- Merrifield Garden Center(s)
12101 Lee Hwy, Fairfax
OR
8132 Lee Hwy, Falls Church
- Burke Nursery
9401 Burke Rd. Burke

2. Seed Savers Exchange

www.seedsavers.org

3. Edible Landscaping

361 Spirit Ridge Ln, Afton

Ediblelandscaping.com

4. Raintree Nursery

www.raintreenursery.com

5. Burnt Ridge Nursery

www.burntridgenursery.com

6. One Green World

www.onegreenworld.com

7. Whitman Farms

www.whitmanfarms.com



Fairfax Food Council Resources

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/food-council/urban-agriculture



- Copy of Cory Suter's Presentation on Edible Landscaping Plants (Click on link to access: "Resources mentioned in our workshops")
- Planning, Planting and Maintaining Edible Gardens Resource Guide
- Free tool library access