

Forest gardens

An experiment in horticulture based on woodland complexity



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‘Transformative learning for a more sustainable and equitable world’

What is a forest garden?



- Food production system that mimics young woodland
- Adapted for cool temperate systems from 1970s

Forest garden in spring

Alexanders

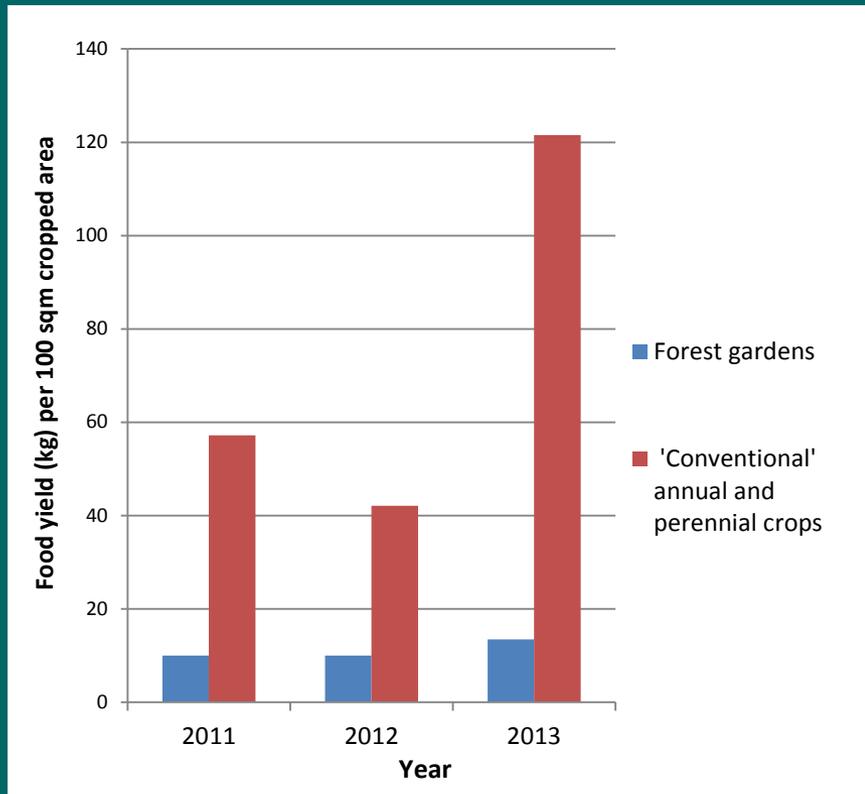
Ice plant

Japanese quince

Woodland strawberry



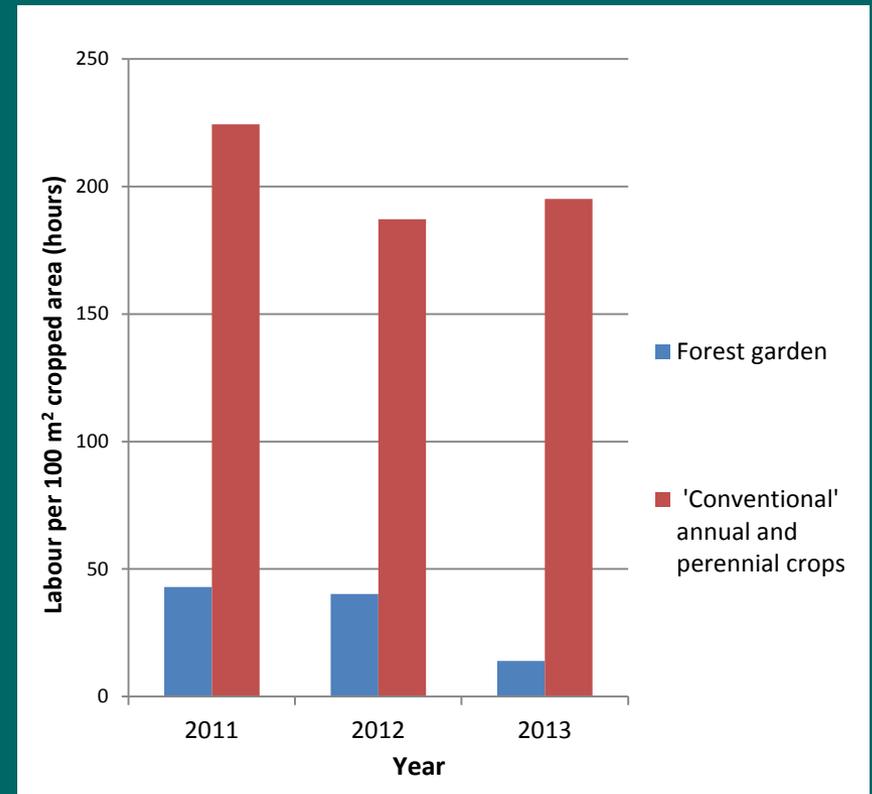
Comparison of yield and labour



Yield

Forest garden - 2.3kg/100m²

'Conventional' - 13kg/100m²

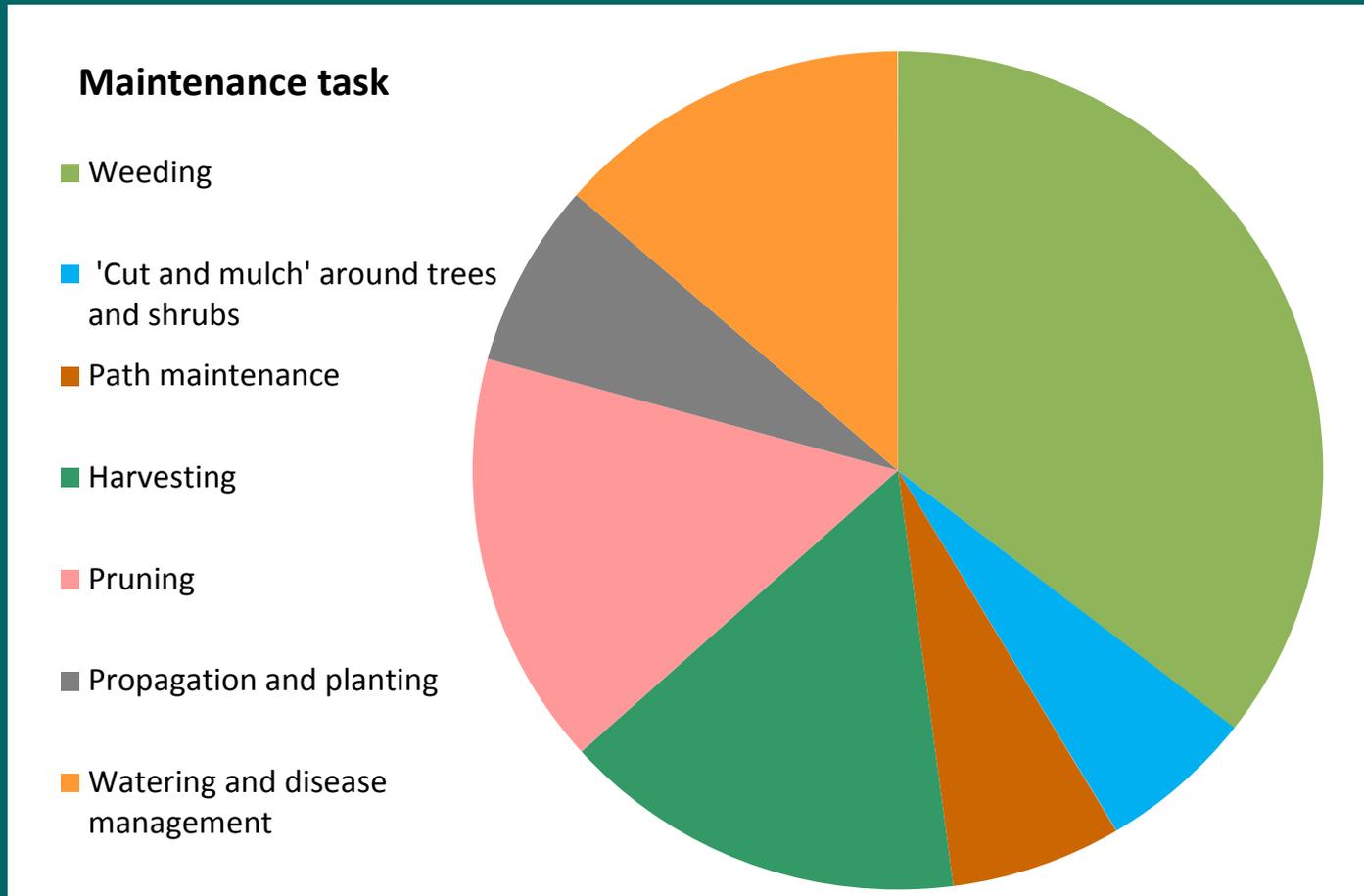


Labour

Forest garden – 32 hrs/100m²

'Conventional' – 202 hrs/100m²

Maintenance tasks



% time by task in 2011 (total = 169 hours)

Forest garden maintenance



Weeding

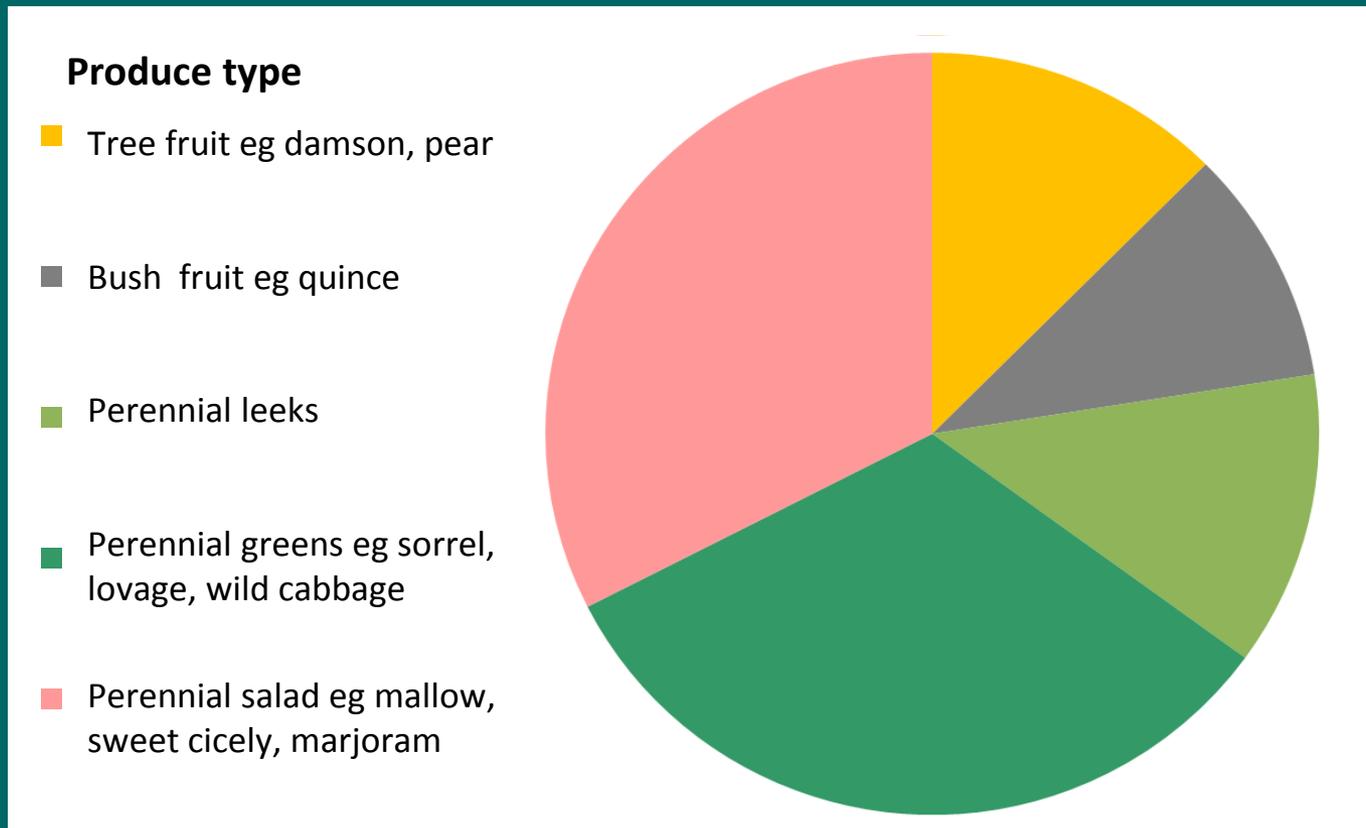


'Cut and mulch'



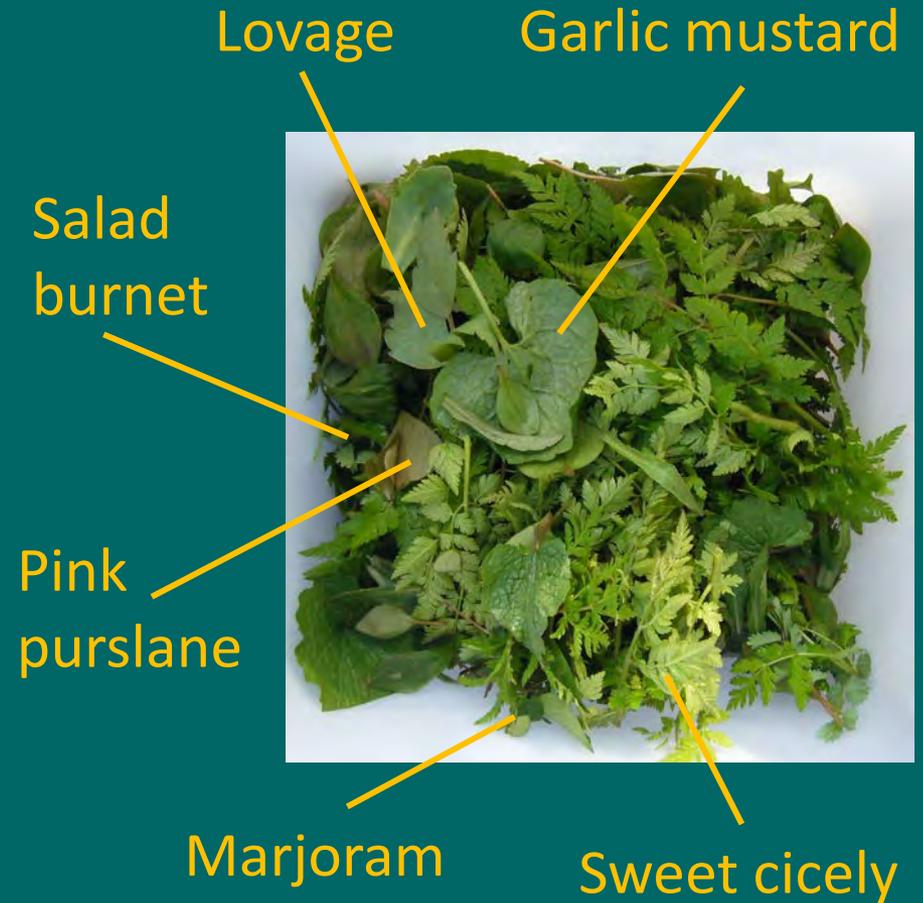
Planting

Food produce



% yield by crop type in 2011 (total = 40 kg)

Perennial leaf salads



Perennial leaf greens



Babbington's leek



Wild cabbage



French sorrel



Good King Henry

Lovage



Candied stems



Syrup



Soup

Fruit-bearing shrubs



Chokeberry



Hawthorn cultivars



Autumn olive



Food from a complex ecosystem



- Elevated soil carbon
- Nutrient cycling
- Low disturbance
- High species diversity
- Resource partitioning
- Minimal inputs
- Temporal succession

Forest gardens – the future



- Agroforestry and Forest Garden Network - 100 demonstration sites
- Permaculture Association - Baseline survey and detailed study

Thank you for listening



References

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3. Picasso, V.D. *et al.* 2011. Diverse perennial crop mixtures sustain higher productivity over time based on ecological complementarity. *Renew. Agric. & Food Systems*. **26** (4).
4. Grivetti, L.E., Ogle, B.M. 2000. Value of traditional foods in meeting macro- and micro nutrient needs: the wild plant connection. *Nutr. Res. Rev.* **13**(1).