Planting practices in the Food Forest focus on one or more of the four practices developed to increase the food producing capacity of marginal or underutilized land while maintaining conservation practices. The four practices include:

1. Use of vertical as well as horizontal space
2. Development of a plant guild that provides natural fertility and pest protection
3. Reduction or elimination of synthetic inputs
4. Production of a wide variety of food products marketable in the local foods system

The concept of the food forest integrates five levels of plant growth to achieve the objectives. The overstory is full or dwarf sized trees. In this instance only dwarf fruit trees were utilized. The brush layer is the next layer followed by an herbaceous layer, then an herb layer, ground cover and finally a root layer.

For 2013, work log activities were justified by pertaining to one of the following practices.

Fruit trees, addition or replacement

-- Use of vertical space: Fruit trees maintain the overstory of the food forest

-- Local foods: Apples, pears, and peaches are high value items in local foods systems

Brush (blackberries, red raspberries, buckwheat), addition

-- Use of horizontal space: Berry brambles contribute to shrub layer of the food forest

-- Local foods: Berries are a high value item in local food systems

-- Natural fertility: Buckwheat accumulates Ca, P, and other minor nutrients and acts as a green manure

-- Pest protection: Attracts beneficials to prey on pests

-- Reduce inputs: Buckwheat is allelopathic and used to inhibit weed growth

Herbs (lemon balm, stevia, spearmint), addition

-- Use of horizontal space: The quick growth and spread of herbs minimizes weeds

-- Pest protection: Stevia repels aphids, spearmints repels cabbage moths, aphids, and flea beetles

-- Natural fertility: Lemon balm attracts pollinators

Groundcover (strawberries, nasturtiums, marigolds), addition

-- Use of horizontal space: Strawberries, nasturtiums and marigolds occupy ground space to minimize take over of weeds

-- Local foods: Berries and flowers are high values items in a local food system. Nasturtiums are edible flowers that are sold as salad garnish.

-- Pest protection: Single gold marigolds deter root-knot nematode infestation of melons.

Nasturtiums attract hoverflies to feed on aphids

Root (garlic, onion, rutabaga, parsnip, asparagus), addition

-- Use of space: Garlic and onion occupy root space eliminating space for weed growth

Rutabage minimizes soil compaction in a new site

-- Pest protection: Garlic and onion deter root borers around fruit trees

Asparagus repels nematodes

-- Local foods: Garlic and green onions are high value items in a local food system.

Rutabaga, entire plant is edible

Parsnips and Rutabage are nutrient dense and high in fiber – an

alternative hearty option for vegans and vegetarians in a local food system

Asparagus is a high demand item during its short season