



Pears growing at the Midvale School & Community Garden Orchard in Madison

**Urban Edible Landscaping, Orchards, and
Fruiting Street Trees in the U.S.
Summary Including Land Tenure and Liability Arrangements
July 2010**

Town of Madison

Email from Gary Davis, parks commissioner, July 7, 2010:

Their parks commission initiated a fruit program and town crews are planting fruit trees in their parks. Town crews will be managing the trees organically, including spraying dormant oils to control insect pests.

Rapid City, South Dakota

This Earth Day, they planted 100 apple trees along city greenways through a public – private partnership led by volunteers who initiated the project a year ago. They have assistance from the urban forester of Rapid City. Coverage in their newspaper:

http://www.rapidcityjournal.com/article_a3525498-54bf-11df-a842-001cc4c002e0.html

On the group's website:

<http://www.rapidcityurbanorchard.com/>

They use a Memorandum of Understanding for fruit tree stewards, which outlines volunteer maintenance responsibilities, clarifies that the fruit is public produce for any park user, explains that trees can be removed by parks, and indemnifies the city from damages. It is here:

<http://www.rapidcityurbanorchard.com/Memorandum%20RCPD%20Orchard%20Project.htm>

Chicago

Kilbourn Park Orchard in Chicago, Illinois

On the Chicago Park District's website:

http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/parks.detail/object_id/cc924714-abbf-4724-85a9-3519d4d3a856.cfm

The first-ever public fruit tree orchard in a major metropolitan city was planted in Kilbourn Park at the Organic Greenhouse in fall 2008. The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation generously donated 24 high-quality, mature fruit trees and helped plant with a team of volunteers a new orchard at Kilbourn Park. The fruit trees include apples, pears, plums, cherries, and paw paws. They are still getting adjusted to their new home, but we look forward to years of harvesting fruit in the park! In addition, we planted currants, goumie berries, blackberries, raspberries and several grape vines. These fruits are going to be a wonderful addition to our already abundant strawberry harvest.

On the Fruit Tree Planting Foundation's website:

<http://www.ftpf.org/accomplishments.htm> (scroll down to Kilbourne Park)

... Some of the trees measured more than 25 feet in height and 5000 pounds in weight. FTTF held a workshop through the city's "Organic Gardening Series" to provide training and inspiration for about 50 community members to plant more trees. In addition to providing park visitors with improved nutrition from fresh fruits, the trees will improve the air, soil, and water quality of the surrounding environment, while bringing visibility and support to Kilbourn Park's community outreach efforts.

Phone interview with Julie Thompson, Park Supervisor, Kilbourne Park, June 10, 2010:

All is going well with the orchard, although they lost some trees from the initial planting because they chose to try planting very large trees. This orchard is managed by the parks staff, with the assistance of volunteers who sign individual waivers when they get involved.

Chicago's Community Gardens in Parks

Community gardens for individual food cultivation on public land are not leased by a non-profit, but instead garden groups sign a Letter of Commitment with the city, and individuals who garden sign a Liability Waiver.

Letter of Commitment

http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/docs/13afdd47-8d9d-4927-ace4-b1b16813c7b2_document.pdf

Liability Waiver

http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/docs/461b9e6b-5afe-4fb2-9ea7-ea5f20bdc189_document.pdf

Growing Power in Grant Park

Milwaukee-based Growing Power has planted a half acre farm in the heart of Chicago, with beautiful and productive edibles in Grant Park as a demonstration and education project. This is a partnership with the Chicago Park District.

Boston

Beginning in 1990, Earthworks has worked with volunteers and the city of Boston to plant urban orchards in parks. They have planted several thousand trees and been involved in a variety of ways in planting and maintaining many orchards – perhaps 60 or more - some of which were then adopted by community groups, some cut down to make way for buildings, and so forth. Currently they are actively involved with just about a dozen orchards. <http://www.earthworksboston.org/urbanorchards>

Phone interview with Doris Burford, Boston Earthworks, July 12, 2010

Their 21-year old urban orchards program in the parks and other public land is very large and successful. They do not lease land from the city, rather they plant in parts and other public spaces with city support and collaboration. Earthworks has an insurance policy which covers participants and volunteers specifically during public events that they host - workshops, harvest parties, etc. The fruit that they grow is available for anyone to pick, and they neither insure the volunteers who take care of the trees through the seasons, nor the parks users who stop to harvest. On Sunday they harvested 80 pounds of apricots and donated them to a womens' shelter yesterday.

San Francisco

Liability Waiver Template from the Sustainable Cities Institute, based on the 2007 San Francisco Rec & Parks Community Gardens Program document:

http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/view/page.basic/legislation/feature.legislation/Model_Doc_Community_Garden_Waiver_Agrmt

Philadelphia

Philadelphia has an impressive new urban orchards initiative, launched in 2007 as an economic development measure for the city. Its 19 orchards, where a total of 567 trees and vines have been planted, are owned and cared for by a variety of groups. Fruit use is determined by those managing each orchard. They can allow free public harvest, but do not have to. Some of the orchards sell their fruit. Some are fenced, some are not. They use permacultural techniques, practice integrated pest management to reduce pest damage with a minimum of toxics, encourage carbon offset investment noting that fruit trees sequester more carbon than softwoods commonly planted for carbon credits, and they make the point that fruit and nut trees are among the lowest maintenance of all food plants.

<http://www.phillyorchards.org/>

Portland

Portland has a large community gardens program in the city parks, with city staff who manage the gardens. There are fruit trees at 15 community garden sites, cared for by volunteers. They hold an annual cider pressing event and teach classes for volunteers in fruit tree maintenance. Participants are covered by the city's insurance for all these fruit-related activities.

City Fruit Program

<http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/index.cfm?c=39846&a=200913>

Phone interview with Leslie Pohl-Kosbau, Director of Community Gardens, a program of the Portland Parks Department, July 13, 2010:

Street trees in Portland are planted by a non-profit called Friends of Trees, which gets permits for planting from the city. Fruit trees are among the list of approved trees and are often planted along the sidewalk strip (terrace). Many homeowners have also planted fruit trees along the sidewalks, and the city has allowed this, since it builds the urban tree canopy, although these planting do not have permits. The city planted a large apple orchard in a city park in 1991, and their city crews care for the trees, with the help of volunteers. Although the orchard is in a public space, the city asks that park users do not harvest from the trees. This is so that there will be enough apples for educational events including a cider pressing party in the fall.

Detroit

Madison Fruits and Nuts brought Ashley Atkinson, program director for the Greening of Detroit, to present to Madison city staff on Earth Day, 2010. Ashley pointed out that fruit trees are much more productive and demand much less maintenance than vegetable gardens. A single mature apple tree often produces 200 pounds of fruit per year. She described their wide range of gardening and greening programs in Detroit, including urban agriculture small businesses and for-profit orchards where city gardeners cultivate plums, cherries, and other fruit for sale at farmers markets, restaurants, etc. Greening of Detroit also has fruit tree nurseries, where they grow out whips (young trees) for several years until they are large enough for planting at schools, community gardens, etc. The Greening of Detroit leases some land from the city, although not for edible landscaping for public consumption, but for other urban agriculture efforts, tree nurseries, etc. (On July 1, Detroit closed 77 parks, including many of their largest, due to budget cuts. Article in the Wall Street Journal: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704911704575327261513106280.html>)

Street Trees

Madison has many delicious juneberries (*Amelanchier* spp.) as street trees now. In the coming years, we are expected to lose almost 1/3 of our street trees to Emerald Ash Borer. This is an expensive catastrophe. But it is also an opportunity for substantial public investment in public produce, as replacement trees will be in the city budget. Homeowners now choose between a list of species for their street trees. The list of options can be expanded to include fruit and nut species. An ordinance would need to be passed to specify that cleanup of any fallen fruit is the responsibility of the homeowner, with language and enforcement patterned on the ordinance on winter snow cleanup. We suggest that dwarf and semi-dwarf fruit trees be encouraged under power lines, where tall shade trees would not be possible anyway.

Other References

Fallen Fruit in Los Angeles. They have a broad network of volunteers who are fruit artists, advocates, gleaners, and fruit tree stewards. LA has an abundance of backyard and public fruit, including orchard remnants in sections of the city built on land that had been planted in commercial orchards. Their website is a must-read: <http://www.fallenfruit.org/>

Darrin Nordahl. *Public Produce, The New Urban Agriculture*. 2009. A survey of cities in the US that are creating public produce and edible landscaping projects, where produce is freely available public land.

Other urban public fruit programs / fruiting street trees:

Treefolks Urban Orchard Program, Austin; TreePeople Fruit Tree Program, Los Angeles; Walnut Way Conservation Corps, Milwaukee (with groups of homeowners selling their backyard peaches at farmers markets); Urban Gleaners, Portland metro area; Community Fruit Tree Harvest, Seattle; Richmond (British Columbia) Fruit Tree Sharing Project; Victoria (British Columbia) Fruit Tree Project; LifeCycles Project Society, Victoria; Growing Food in Cities, Scotland; Forage Oakland in Oakland, Berkeley, and San Francisco; Toronto-based not far from the tree was profiled by Dale Duncan of Spacing Toronto.