

# Food Systems

Bananas, artichokes, potatoes and so much more! **20 minutes at this station!**

Food embeds us in the fabric of Nature

Michael Pollan

**Goal:** Urban Farming: Produce a diversity of the best quality and most ethically produced food I can. In my yard you will see:

1. a seasonal variety of different food and herb plants,
2. three different growing areas, and
3. backyard chickens.

1. As Master Gardeners, we know the value of growing our own food both in taste and quality AND the joy we get in producing it. Most of us already practice regenerative agricultural methods. Anecdotally, we all have stories about how we have enriched our soil, increased the number of pollinators or grown food that we might not think would grow here. What we may not realize is that as we are doing so we are sequestering CO<sub>2</sub> by putting organic matter in the soil and we are reducing the energy and water used to grow and transport our food to us. The average distance that a meal travels to the US table is 1500 miles. There are enormous environmental costs and enormous food waste in the way our industrial food system produces our food. Anything we can do from eating lower on the food chain, reducing food waste, or eating locally and seasonally, will lessen the environmental impact of producing out food.
2. I eat from my garden year-round. In my yard, I grow about sixteen fruits, four of them native, about a dozen herbs and this year, 26 food plants so far. I eat seasonally and so when the season is over, I wait until next year.
3. I have three garden areas: the front kitchen garden which extends around the east side of the house (established 2013), the backyard gardens around the perimeter of the lot (established 2005ish) and the back-alley garden (established 2007). I also have a chicken garden (established 2014), next to the chicken yard, where I grow greens for my chickens. The gardens I eat from are the only gardens I water on a regular basis and I rotate families of crops through them on a three-year rotation. In addition, I do not “grow in rows”. For example, in the winter, many of the greens I use grow in the patio collecting surface of the kitchen garden as the rock holds the sun’s heat. That is one reason I can grow bananas in the front bed. Look also in the perimeter gardens where vegetables are planted alongside fruit trees and in

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the alley garden which currently has a mixture of different Solanaceae (tomatoes, potatoes, tomatillos, eggplant) interspersed with melon, garlic, chard and Malabar spinach.

4. My backyard chickens are Barred Plymouth Rocks or Barred Plymouth Rock crosses. Barred Rocks are a dual-purpose breed. They are outside year-round. I do not provide supplemental light in the winter, (eggs are a seasonal product) so that my girls can rest and rebuild. For more information, check out the Chicken Folder.
5. Look at the Garden Cover folder and the example behind you. These garden covers are very versatile and easily made. I use mine in winter cold and in summer heat to moderate soil temperatures and retain soil moisture and extend the growing season. Some plants (Swiss Chard, blackberries) I grow in the shade to extend the growing season.