

SUDBURY SHARED HARVEST

WORK-BEE GUIDE

Wild onions (also called Egyptian Walking Onions)

It's pretty safe to remove grass and dandelions, which compete with more desirable plants for nutrients and spread aggressively. The only thing to watch for is there are a few wild onions that can look like grass when they're young. If you break off a small piece and it smells like onion - leave it. If not, it's an ordinary grass and you can pull it out.



Coltsfoot

Coltsfoot has been invading what used to be our asparagus patch (there is very little asparagus left). It spreads through extensive underground roots, so is difficult to remove. We tried digging it out, but it seems to spread more when the roots are disturbed, so we are trying a new method: tiring it out.

We snip it off near the base with a scissors and leave the leaves in the garden (we leave most plants on the ground rather than removing them from the garden, except if it's something that might take hold again by its roots). It doesn't look tidy, but it helps to recycle nutrients.



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Comfrey

Comfrey is not edible, but it is a really cool plant that has very deep roots that can reach nutrients that other plants cannot and it grows very fast.

With Comfrey we do what we call "chop and drop" throughout the season, because it keeps on growing back when we cut it down.

The top photo was taken in mid-May, so you can see how early it grows. The bottom one was taken one week after cutting the plant all the way down at the base, so don't be afraid to chop and drop - we promise it will come back!

The leaves are very thick and have a kind of soft/hairy texture so are hard to miss, but ask us if you're not sure.



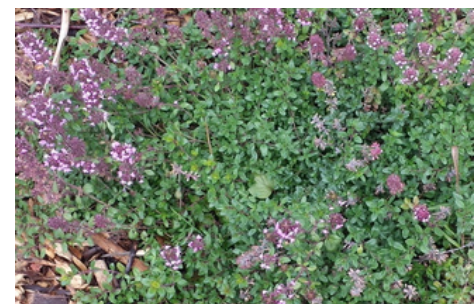
Creeping Thyme

Creeping Thyme is a low growing plant that can be found throughout the food forest. It is edible, but it has a much stronger flavour than the thyme that is usually used as a spice (that type is grown as an annual - it does not usually survive the winter here).

We encourage it to spread by transplanting pieces of it to other parts of the garden (only during cool weather periods, in spring and fall). We also encourage it to spread by moving woodchips away from it (it needs some soil to grab onto because of how it "creeps" along the ground).

The first photo is early in the season. Eventually purple flowers will show up which are very popular with bees!

Fun fact: all the Creeping Thyme at Delki Dozzi started as 18 small plants, each in a 4 inch pot.



Lupines

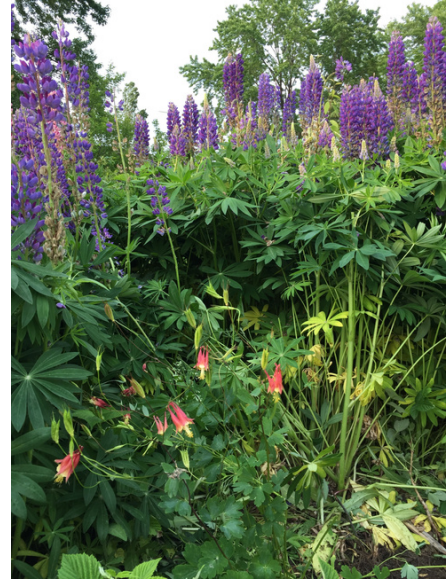
Yes, they are pretty, but the lupines at Delki Dozzi are not native to our area and can become invasive.

We planted them mainly for the ability to "fix" nitrogen from the air and make it into something that can be used by itself and other plants, kind of like a natural fertilizer.

They are perennial and spread by rhizomes and seed and as of 2023, we have too many of them! We have been digging some up where they are choking out other plants and we are also removing some of the seed heads before the seeds have finished developing.

The first photo shows their very extensive rhizome/root system, so you have to dig deep to remove them.

The second photo shows one of our very few wild columbine plants (pinkish-red flowers) surrounded by lupines. We simply clip off some of the purple lupine flowers with a shears to prevent the seeds from developing.



Apple thinning

Most of an apple tree's energy goes into producing seeds. In the first week of July each year, we have the opportunity maximize fruit production by something we call thinning.

As you can see in the photo at right, apples often develop in clusters of three or more fruits, which all compete for the nutrients available through that particular branch.

By removing one or two apples from a cluster, the tree puts all the energy into a smaller number of apples, enabling them to grow to a larger size. How many apples we remove depends on how many immature apples are there in the first week of July, which is just before the seeds begin to develop.

Bonus! Immature apples can be used to make your own pectin for jams and jellies. Here's a recipe:
<https://www.ruralsprout.com/homemade-pectin-from-windfall-apples/>



watering (not!)

Believe it or not, we only water plants in the food forests for the first 3 to 6 months after planting.

They are drought tolerant and adapted to our climate, so they will actually be healthier if we allow them to be watered by whatever rain we happen to get. If watered too much, the plants won't develop the deep roots that enable them to survive in drought conditions.

The photo at right was taken in the middle of the *very dry* summer of 2023, six years after this pollinator patch was planted and five years after it was watered by anything but rain!



transplanting

When the weather is cool, in spring and fall, we sometimes dig up chunks of existing plants and transplant them to other parts of the same food forest or to another food forest.

Free plants - why not? By moving transplants to areas without much growth, we help the natural process by which some plants tend to spread.

It doesn't work for every plant, but we've had good success with the Creeping Thyme, Oregano, Prairie Sage strawberries and some others.

All the oregano at Delki Dozzi food forest started from one small transplant donated by a friend. The Prairie Sage all originated from a few small plants.



Perennial Oregano (in flower)



Prairie Sage (Artemisia ludoviciana)