

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR SLOW FOOD GARDENS

A Commitment from Our Land for Our Planet

Slow Food gardens embody the Slow Food philosophy and, as direct tools of change, the principles of the [Slow Food Education Manifesto](#).

1. COMMUNITY

Slow Food gardens value the capacity of every community member, reclaiming the wisdom of older generations, making the most of the energy and creativity of younger people, learning from the curiosity of children and benefitting from the skills of experts.

Slow Food gardens are inclusive and give every individual the chance to contribute to a collective project that promotes the regeneration of the social fabric.

2. OBSERVATION

To create a food garden it is important to first observe the space and the resources available locally with a curious and creative eye, because food can be grown in the most unexpected places: in a flowerbed, on top of a roof, along a footpath... even on a well-exposed wall!

It is important to observe the soil, the plant varieties best adapted to the location and water sources. Reused materials obtained locally, with careful attention paid to environmental impact, can be employed for structures such as fences and compost bins.

3. BIODIVERSITY

Slow Food gardens are havens for local biodiversity, which has adapted to the area's climate and terrain thanks to human selection and environmental conditions. **Native varieties are hardy, nutritious and delicious and do not need artificial inputs** such as chemical fertilizers and pesticides, but they are disappearing! Ask experts and older people where to find seeds and plants.

With its different plants and flowers, a food garden can serve as a tool for understanding, attracting and protecting useful insects, like butterflies, honeybees, bumble bees and ladybirds, as well as reptiles, spiders and other species that live and interact in the habitat.



4. SEEDS

Reproducing local seeds on site means recovering precious knowledge and preserving a unique heritage of at-risk biodiversity. **Exchanging seeds means transmitting knowledge, sustaining productivity and boosting biodiversity.**

A garden is the perfect place to build a community seed bank. A seed community bank offers an opportunity to learn how to select, reproduce and save seeds, ensuring the availability of the crops for the following year while strengthening local communities' seed sovereignty.

5. WATER AND SOIL

In the Slow Food gardens, **common goods** such as water and soil **are promoted and protected.** The living soil is rich in biodiversity: two-thirds of all living beings are found under its surface. To feed them, plant scraps are turned into resources (compost, green manure) and crops are rotated. Natural remedies based on what is locally available, like herbs, flowers and ash, are used to make plant-protection products that can repel harmful insects and prevent diseases.

Techniques that maintain soil moisture, like covering with plant materials (mulching), rainwater collection and the use of traditional irrigation systems combined with new technologies all help to save water and at times can replace more costly solutions. Coming into contact with the earth, being in control of producing the food you eat, exercising the capacity to wait for nature's time, being outdoors and eating delicious and nutritious food is good for the body, the mind and the collective spirit.

6. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Slow Food gardens are symbols of resistance against the industrial and corporate control of local food systems. The people involved in the gardens use ecologically sound methods to produce the foods of their choice, culturally appropriate to their local communities, which helps them to follow a local, healthy diet. **The gardens further promote the rights of people to determine how their food should be produced and managed.**

7. EDUCATION

Food gardens are an opportunity for people of all ages to exercise their senses and learn how to use them to make conscious choices, to find out about local plant varieties, to recover traditional recipes, to promote a healthy and varied diet and to learn how they can harvest the fruits of the land by following the practices and principles of agroecology.

The gardens are places where the pleasure of learning can be cultivated, places for being together and collaborating to create, adapt and implement Slow Food educational tools that allow food to be studied in a complex and multidisciplinary way.



8. WOMEN

Promoting women's empowerment in gardening contributes to sustainable development and to the improvement of living conditions in the local communities. Women participate greatly in the rural economy. Often they are the ones who ensure the food security of their families and communities by producing, processing and selling basic agricultural products, thus improving family living conditions (children's education, care for the sick and elderly, etc.).

When they benefit from an income, women often reinvest it in their homes (nutrition, food, health, school, income-generating activities, etc.), helping to break the cycle of poverty, both in rural and urban contexts.

9. YOUTH

Young women and men represent the future of agriculture, and if their capacities and potential are recognized and strengthened, they can be dynamic drivers of transformation and growth. To combat rural migration and marginalization and to ensure decent and productive employability, it is essential to promote the socio-economic integration of youth, increasing their access to the land and to other productive resources. It is important to empower them within their communities and allow them to be dynamic actors in sustainable local development.

The children and young people involved in the school gardens approach work related to the land with curiosity, gaining respect and interest in agricultural jobs. **Young people studying in the gardens are the foundation for future sustainable communities of consumers and producers.**

10. NETWORK

People who cultivate Slow Food gardens exchange seeds, ideas and information. They can meet, write to each other and form bonds of collaboration and friendship based on the common goal of respecting the Earth through commitment and with pleasure.

Twinnings between food gardens in distant countries can offer opportunities for solidarity and cultural exchanges. The network is open to external influences and collaborations with kindred organizations.

