

## How does one set up a foodshed?

1. First, declare yourself or someone else a leader.
2. Then, develop a small core group of neighbors who are committed to the idea and willing to work to make it happen.
3. Print up a flyer. You are welcome to use the information in this one.
4. Leaders should visit each home in the foodshed to explain the concept and see how many people are interested in taking part. Leave a flyer with each person.
5. Check back to see who is willing to take part. (Don't forget to include kids!)
6. Arrange to visit each participating property to assess current food crops, the condition of trees, etc. Interview owners to find out how many pounds of produce are available each year.
7. Make a list of what is needed for a complete diet, including quantities, and plug in the currently available crops.
8. Determine the best location for additional crops needed, taking into account people's willingness and ability to grow specific crops, and the suitability of specific properties.
9. Allocate particular crops to people willing to grow them.
10. Instruct each person in what to buy, and offer technical assistance as needed. Remember that each person buys his or her own plants and supplies, and does the work of planting and caring for the crops.
11. Follow up with participants on a regular basis, by phone, email or personal visit (best) to be sure things are coming along OK.
12. Set up a regular time and place for the food swap. Make it a fun event with the option of a potluck lunch, activities for the kids, etc.
13. Provide ongoing help with technical issues.
14. Share your knowledge and enthusiasm with others. Re-visit neighbors who have declined to participate, in case they have changed their minds (bring along a sample of some tasty neighborhood food).

This is a new idea for Santa Barbara, so feel free to invent your own strategies, and communicate your successes with others. Eventually it would be good to have a listserv and a website to help disseminate information.

## What are some sources of information?

### WEB SITES:

- Santa Barbara Food Not Lawns (<http://web.me.com/viejavalley/sbfoodnotlawns>)
- Neighborhood Produce Exchange, San Luis Obispo ([www.neighborhoodproduce.org](http://www.neighborhoodproduce.org))
- Eat the Suburbs! ([www.eatthesuburbs.org](http://www.eatthesuburbs.org))
- Wisconsin Foodshed Project ([www.cias.wisc.edu/foodshed/index.html](http://www.cias.wisc.edu/foodshed/index.html))
- The Foodshed and the Food Circle ([www.ibiblio.org/ecolandtech/permaculture/mailarchives/ag+pc-1993-1994/msg00158.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/ecolandtech/permaculture/mailarchives/ag+pc-1993-1994/msg00158.html))

### LISTSERVS:

- Santa Barbara Foodfuture listserv (email [sympa@lists.onenw.org?subject=subscribe%20sb-foodfuture](mailto:sympa@lists.onenw.org?subject=subscribe%20sb-foodfuture) to subscribe)
- Fossil-Free Landscaping listserv (go to <http://groups.google.com/group/Fossil-Free-Landscaping/topics> to subscribe)

### GOOGLE KEY WORDS:

foodshed, food circle, permaculture, permablitz, edible landscaping

### LOCAL CONTACT:

Owen Dell, [odell@silcom.com](mailto:odell@silcom.com)



# BUILDING NEIGHBORHOOD FOODSHEDS

Nurturing the  
Noshosphere



## Introduction

Most of us live in the suburbs, in single-family homes surrounded by a little bit of land. Most suburbs are located on the finest agricultural land on earth, and yet very little food is actually grown there. Most of our food is produced on distant, impersonal mega-farms and delivered to us using large amounts of fossil fuels. Many people are concerned that this fragile and unsustainable system does a lot of environmental damage and could easily collapse for any number of reasons. We have a wonderful opportunity to bring food production back home, literally, by cooperating with our neighbors to grow our own food on our own land. This is especially easy here in Santa Barbara where our growing season is year-round and the climate is suitable for a wide range of crops. Think of your neighborhood as a potential “noshosphere,” a place to create yummy abundance from the ground up.

## What’s a foodshed?

The Wisconsin Foodshed Project says, “The term ‘foodshed,’ borrowed from the concept of a watershed, was coined as early as 1929 to describe the flow of food from the area where it is grown into the place where it is consumed. Recently, the term has been revived as a way of looking at and thinking about local, sustainable food systems.”

A “neighborhood foodshed” is a very local food production and distribution system, set up among immediate neighbors, and is intended to produce healthful abundant food without the use of fossil fuels or the exchange of money, and to foster the development of community as well as nutrition.

A neighborhood foodshed begins by defining geographical boundaries. The area should be small enough that one can easily walk from one end to the other with a load of produce, but large enough to grow most

elements of a complete diet for the residents. It should include around 100 to 150 people. A good size is 6 city blocks or the equivalent.

The next step is to assess the current food production capabilities of the foodshed. How many pounds of avocados are produced? How many eggs? How many apples? And so forth.

Then the neighborhood is “tuned” for a balanced diet, adding in the missing elements. One household can grow annual crops like broccoli, beans or tomatoes. Another can plant some peach trees. Someone can raise fish in their pond. Each person makes a commitment to producing one element in the neighborhood diet. Those who are unable or unwilling to do the physical work can make their land available for others to grow on. Food is grown using permaculture and organic methods.

There could be workdays at which neighbors would help one another with gardening tasks. Experienced permaculturists and other food-growing experts from the neighborhood or outside would be available to offer technical advice. Eventually there would be a city-wide resource for advice and training. And members of a working foodshed could help other neighborhoods to set up their own systems.

Each weekend the food is freely shared at a neighborhood farmer’s market, held in someone’s driveway or in a public location. No money changes hands. This can also be a time for potluck, socializing, etc.

Crops that can only be grown in particular microclimates could be traded out to other foodsheds in the city. Surplus foods could be donated to organizations that feed the hungry and homeless, or sold to local restaurants.

Neighborhood foodsheds are fun, healthful and environmentally beneficial. Oh, and

food-bearing plants can make a beautiful landscape!

## What are the advantages of a foodshed?

1. Fossil-free food – no tractors, no shipping, no pollution, etc.
2. Get corporations out of food.
3. (almost) Free food – no cost other than initial investment, water, fertilizer.
4. Organic, wholesome, absolutely fresh. Lip-smackin' good.
5. Everybody is responsible for one or two elements of a balanced diet, so nobody has to be an expert in growing everything.
6. Free technical help from experienced growers.
7. Growing food is fun!
8. Tune the neighborhood for a balanced diet.
9. Social benefits – meet your neighbors, share ideas as well as food, have fun.
10. Builds community.
11. Saturday farmer's market in your own neighborhood – more fun.
12. Great for the kids, too.
13. Not necessary to grow anything if unable, but you can let part of your yard be used for a community fruit tree, etc. and still be able to take part in the program.
14. No licenses, no permits, no inspections, no rules, no hearings, no corporations, no fees, no contract, no salespeople, no driving, no tiny annoying labels to peel off your fruit. You don't need to ask anybody's permission. Just do it!

