



# Small Scale Solutions for your Farm

## Forest Farming



### Do You Have Problems with:

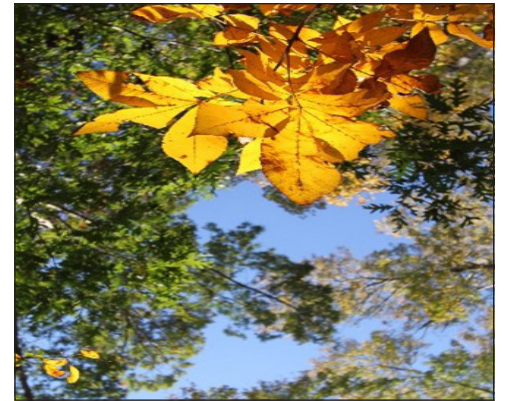
- Lack of short-term income from land
- Dedicated to long-term forest production
- Lack of diversity of marketable crops or products harvested from your land
- Taking advantage of non-traditional or high-value specialty markets

### Purposes and Benefits of Forest Farming

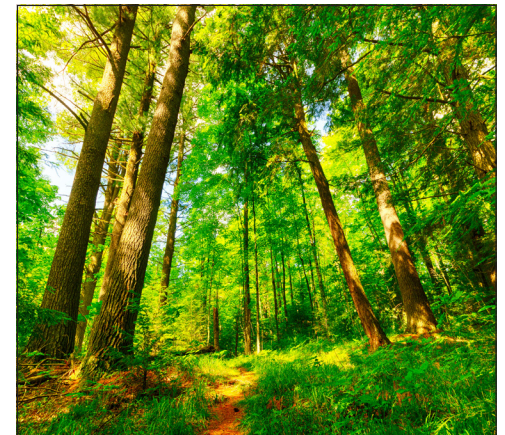
- Provides farm income while trees are maturing and being managed.
- Diversifies sources of farm income with non-timber forest products on forestland
- Provides a regular supply of food, medicinal plants, ornamentals, and other non-timber products, while improving forest productivity and health
- Increases plant diversity by growing a variety of crops that occupy different layers of the canopy, heights and forms on the same area
- Decreases harvest pressure on naturally occurring non-timber forest products
- Allows production of plants that may have harvest limits for natural populations.

### What are Forest Understory Crops:

Forest understory crops are shade tolerant plants that live in the forest or in association with trees.

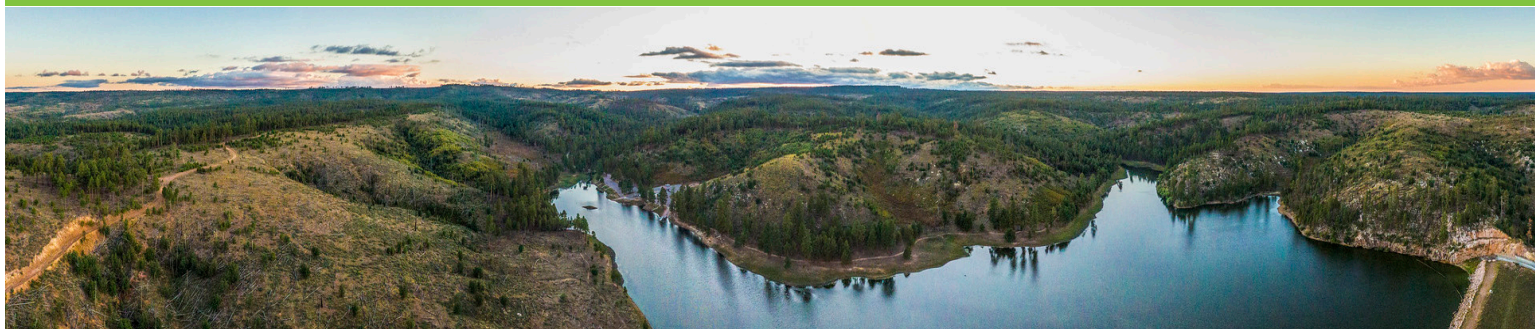


A local forest.



Forest farming and growing forest understory crops can supplement your short-term income and add diversity to your operation.





## Types of Forest Understory Crops

Many of the plant species grown in Forest Farming operations can demand a very high price. However, seeds and roots to establish these plants might also be expensive to obtain and some species require a number of years before the first harvest can be made. Before investing time and money into growing a particular forest understory crop, consider the following:

- Locate a source of technical expertise to assist you
- Obtain production and processing information
- Locate or develop potential markets

## Marketing Considerations

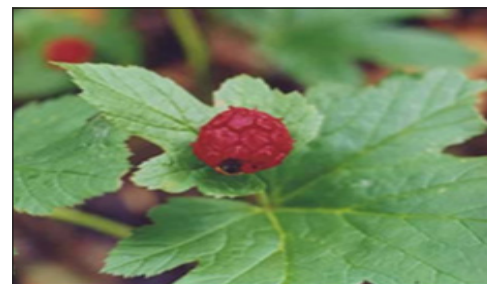
Producers must be sure there are adequate markets for selling their products before entering into any new enterprise. Many of the common products, such as fruits, nuts, berries, greens, and mushrooms can be marketed to local grocery stores, restaurants or at roadside stands. Other specialty products, such as ginseng and herbal supplements will require finding buyers who may or may not be local.

## Planted Production Compared to Harvest of Naturally Occurring Plants:

People harvest mushrooms, herbs, vines, flowers, and a variety of other things from the forest for food, medicines, and crafts. In some cases, over-harvest has resulted in damage to natural sources. Forest Farming systems have been developed to produce the same types of plants or products under a managed environment to prevent over-harvest and to help people make the most of their woodland acreage.



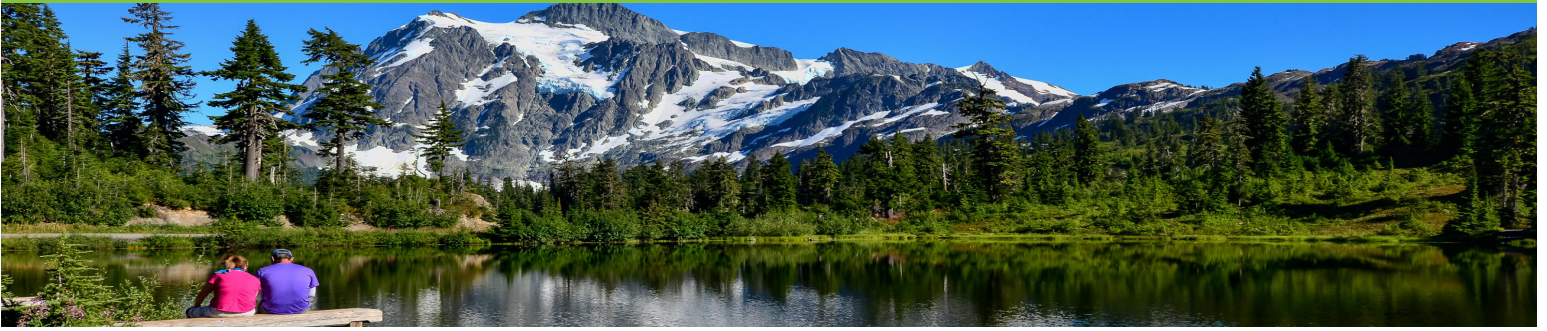
Shiitake mushrooms (below) grow on hardwood logs, such as red and white oak, in a warm, moist environment.



Goldenseal often grows in association with American Ginseng, but has a lower market value.







## Technical and Financial Help Is Available

Whether you measure your farm in terms of feet or acres, your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office has experienced conservationists that can help you develop a Conservation Plan to conserve, maintain, and restore the natural resources on your land and improve the long-term health of your operation.

There is no charge for our assistance. Simply contact your local office to set up an appointment. You may also be eligible to receive financial assistance. Your NRCS office will explain any programs that are available so you can make the best decision for your operation. All NRCS programs and services are voluntary.

## For More Information

Visit the [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) or visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator) to find your local NRCS office. You can also check with your local USDA Service Center, then make an appointment to determine next steps for your conservation goals.

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NRCS conservationist assisting small scale farmer with developing a customized conservation plan.

