Suters Glen Permaculture Farm
Picture tour of a homestead with edible gardens and natural lawn care solutions

By: Cory Suter Permaculture Farmer, Co-chair of Urban Ag Work Group for Fairfax Food Council
(Hobby gardeners: Hala Elbarmil & Allison Suter assist with weeding, and some planting)
Suters Glen
Permaculture Farm
5.34 acre homestead just off Popes Head Rd near 123 in Fairfax, VA 22030

Orchard in partial bloom
March 17, 2020

Lambs: Monty & Clover
born March 30, 2020
The magic of any place is best experienced over multiple seasons using all five senses.
The taste of just picked produce is so good, kids like to eat fruits and vegetables from our garden.
We hope this tour will be a feast for your eyes and imagination for what is possible.
This picture was taken Spring 2016, a year after we bought Suters Glen.
Picture of annual garden taken four years later, April 6, 2020 at sunset
View of half of rear pasture taken from top of roof November 2016
Entrance to Suters Glen

March 2018
Following driveway past guest cottage

April 2020
Remodeled 1925 Farmhouse that was on a 100+ acre plot for most of its’ life

Unless otherwise labeled, all pictures in this slideshow are from different perspectives of the 5.34 acre remaining lot we bought.
Rear of home as seen from wildflower meadow with bachelor’s buttons and blackberries in bloom
Cory found his philosophy of gardening in the permaculture literature that calls us to mimic natural systems so that we can **produce more with less work**.

Since we bought Suters Glen in 2015, we have never tilled this garden, and as far as we know, zero chemicals have been used in this garden for at least 24 years.

No till production works, by keeping soil covered with mulches or plants and letting nature aerate the soil for us. Yes those tomato plants are over eight feet tall, and produce well.
Burying rotting wood and adding lots of organic matter to soil, both increases the fertility of the soil and sequesters carbon long term if the soil is left undisturbed.

My best performing plants grow in planting beds that use hügelkultur, or buried wood as pictured below during development of new planting bed.
Another great soil-building technique is sheet mulching. The following slides teach:

How to Start your own Front Yard Edible Garden

Current Fairfax County zoning allows for 100 square feet of annual garden to be tended in front yards.
Step 1) Select a Sunny Spot

(Popular Annual vegetables such as tomatoes and peppers need a minimum of six hours of sunlight each day to fruit well. Most leafy greens can do well with only around four hours of sunlight.)
Step 2)
Outline Your Planting Bed
Optional
Step 2B)
Dig out any walkways
Step 3) Cover soil w/ organic matter as quickly as possible

Pictured here is the addition of woodchips for the access path, and several wheel barrows of composted herbivore manure, which is an ideal fertilizer for plants.
Step 4)
Cover area with cardboard as a weed block
Step 5)
Then immediately cover with 2-3 inches of Compost
Step 6)
Plant what you like to eat, but include pest resistant plants such as herbs around perimeter.
Ideal Front Yard Veggie

- **Okra ‘Red Burgundy’**
- *Allium Tuberosum*
- Productive vegetable w/ lovely flowers from July until fall.
- Fresh cooked okra is not slimey.

- Okra performs better than tomatoes in hot, humid weather.
- Direct sow seeds in mid May or transplant around four week old plants.
Step 7)

Fill in with companion plants

Good Companions for Okra:

- Tomatoes
- Basil
- Lettuce
- Nasturtiums

(Also, beans, radishes and peppers)
Edible pansies and yellow flower pot with eggplant added to provided much needed additional color.

I like using complimentary colors such as yellow and purple or green and red.
Good companions for Artichoke, the mint green plant in center of picture, are tarragon, bush beans or peas.
Garlic Chives
*Allium Tuberosum*

- Self-seeding perennial that deer and pests avoid.
- All Parts are edible: Leaves, flowers and bulbs make nice substitute for onions and garlic.
- Lovely flowers in August & September.
- May be harvested almost year round, February to November.
Plants from allium family such as garlic chives and onions repel pests naturally.
Simple Soil Recipe

- Eight to 12 inches of organic straw on top of existing soil in raised bed
- Add 3 – 4 inches of organic compost
- Plant what you like to eat
Rear yard with milkweed, daylilies, and mullein starting to bloom.
On left: Nanking Cherry Bush blooming in March

On right: Russian Pomegranate with young leaves in April
A Garden doesn’t need to stop once you enter the house.
Goat’s Rue is commonly pulled as a weed, but I let it grow up my fence to feed pollinators, fix nitrogen in my soil, and then feed to my compost as a green manure before the seeds mature.
Another counter-cultural technique used at Suters Glen is to use a mower only about five times or less each year.
When I do mow, I set the height at four inches. This encourages thicker grass and less mowing. As this picture illustrates, this technique may also allow more flowers to flourish in shady spots—feeding pollinators, or in sunny spots if you don’t mow clover, buttercup and/or dandelions before they go to seed.
This picture was taken on June 14th, 2020 after only mowing the yard once in mid May since the fall of 2019.

Only mowed once in over seven months!:

This part of the yard has also not been grazed by sheep in over a year. The flower bed around tree has been weeded, but needs fresh mulch.
To be fair, though, grass had been sending up seed heads in my front yard wildflower meadow before I mowed.

Picture taken May 9th, 2020 a few days before I mowed for the first time in 2020.
Parts of the property with more sun have sheep rotated onto them for weed control, mowing and natural fertilizer.
Buttercups and Dogwoods blooming in front yard

May 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2020
To keep things neater between monthly mowing during the summer, I use a weed eater to clean grass off stepping stones and to edge some beds.

(The three figs in picture are mulched with straw left over from their winter protection; the one furthest to right hadn’t budded yet)
One week later, the chamomile at the top of the wall bloomed.
Mustard Green with yellow flower in foreground

Edible Pansies interplanted with Garlic along sides
Four Generations of Gardeners in 1990

Ira – Age 98
Grandma Mary – Age 69
Mom Ruth – Age 33
Your virtual tour host:
Cory Suter – Age 7
w/ two younger siblings

This picture is of your host’s grandparents’ garden in Orrville Ohio thirty years ago.
This slide illustrates how **People who Grow Their Own Food Live Longer**

1. Okinawa, Japan
2. Sardinia, Italy
3. Loma Linda, California
4. Nicoya, Costa Rico
5. Ikaria, Greece

In a study of the five communities on earth with the most centenarians, a few characteristics stood out.

- People in these communities tended gardens for food
- They valued their cooperative relationships with each other

29 years later in Orrville Ohio: **Four Generations of Gardeners 2019**

Grandma Mary – Age 98  
Mom Ruth – Age 62  
Cory Suter, your virtual tour host – Age 36  
Jonathan – age 7 (& Caleb, age 3)
The other secret to Longevity and good health

Do NOT use poisons.

1. Pesticides kill other creatures that would otherwise like to eat your pests
2. Herbicides such as Roundup kill beneficial plants and creatures
3. Chemical fertilizers can destroy natural regenerative life in soil

When we protect the land, a healthy ecosystem feeds our body and our soul. All pictures of wildlife taken at poison-free Suters Glen
Grafted four in one cherry tree in bloom in March, immediately following new strawberry bed expansion.

Same place again in May after strawberries were planted in straw
Where to Buy Edible Plants

1. Local Plant Nurseries
   - DePaul's *Urban Farm*
     2599 Chain Bridge Rd, Vienna
   - Merrifield Garden Center(s)
     12101 Lee Hwy, Fairfax
     OR
     8132 Lee Hwy, Falls Church
   - Burke Nursery
     9401 Burke Rd. Burke

2. Seed Savers Exchange
   www.seedsavers.org

3. Edible Landscaping
   361 Spirit Ridge Ln, Afton
   Ediblelandscaping.com

4. Raintree Nursery
   www.raintreenursery.com

5. Burnt Ridge Nursery
   www.burntridgenursery.com

6. One Green World
   www.onegreenworld.com

7. Whitman Farms
   www.whitmanfarms.com
Fairfax Food Council Resources

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/food-council/urban-agriculture

- Copy of Cory Suter’s Presentation on Edible Landscaping Plants (Click on link to access: “Resources mentioned in our workshops”)
- Planning, Planting and Maintaining Edible Gardens Resource Guide
- Free tool library access