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## 1000 Fruit Trees For Lamorinda

By Sophie Braccini



The Taylor family in their backyard, which is being readied to receive 20 antique fruit trees through the Urban Farmers project Photo Siamack Sioshansi

The organization called Urban Farmers, which began the first suburban farming project in Lafayette, now challenges Lamorinda to plant 1000 fruit trees within five years. According to Siamack Sioshansi, the founder of the non-profit group, there are 5 reasons to plant fruit trees. "The first one is to reduce the use of pesticides," says Sioshansi, "peach, pear and apple trees are the most heavily spread trees in our food chain and we want to change that." The second reason is to create an abundance of fruit that can be shared in the community and with those in need. The third reason is that trees are the best tools to extract carbon dioxide from the air and send it back into the soil, the fourth is that Sioshansi hopes that the heirloom fruit's delicious taste will inspire young people to start some type of food industry in the area. And that ties in with the fifth reason, which is to create a link with our own past when, for example, Moraga became an early exporter of pears.

"As part of our organic local farming project, we have decided to plant antique fruit trees," says Sioshansi. "We will get together to buy these heirlooms at a discount and to transport and plant them at no cost." Sioshansi chose non-commercial varieties because of their hardiness, easy care and the amazing taste of the fruit they produce. "Those are trees that are not planted by commercial farmers today because they prefer fruit that will last longer and will look more consistently the same, rather than great tasting varieties," he

explains.

Urban Farmers welcomes all interested residents to join in and choose among the variety of trees that do well in our climate with minimal maintenance. "Some of them are for complete beginners and will require very little work," promises Sioshansi, "and we will continue to give advice on caring and pruning." As an example, he explains that if people do not have the ability to prune themselves, it will be very cost effective to get someone to their home for 20 minutes to do the job.

Sioshansi is particularly proud of the community support that has been surrounding the project. "We had many more people volunteering to be part of the farming project than we could take on," he says, "so we decided to create a training and support group for those who could not be in the initial project."

Others have contributed to the project in many ways. Soil engineer Dick Strong (Voice of the Soil) has donated his services and so did a local landscaper (The Backyard Food Gardens). Chef Julia Myall is developing recipes for the produce created by the project; a plumbing supply house is helping with the acquisition of necessary supplies; a farmer donated a tractor and farm supplies.

To give back to the community, the Urban Farmers is offering to sell fruit trees at half-price to Lamorinda schools and assisted-living communities, and to give them the help they may need to plant the trees.

The trees will cost homeowners between \$20 and \$25. They have to be ordered by December 20 and will arrive in Lafayette on January 2nd. "The producer is Trees of Antiquity; they give us a 20% discount and will deliver the trees for free to Lafayette." The group plans to have a party in Lafayette that day and to organize the transportation of the bare root trees for those who do not have a truck. Planting and tree care instruction will be available.



Volunteers working at an urban mini-farm in Lafayette Picture courtesy of the Urban Farmers

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