

## Fences of Abundance!

Where barriers become invitations—connecting people, pollinators, and place

### WHAT IS A FENCE OF ABUNDANCE?

A Fence of Abundance is a native food forest planted along a fence line or other marginal urban space that:

- Invites community to share in nature's abundance, picking fruit and edible plants as they ripen
- Supports wildlife year-round through native plants and nesting habitat
- Functions as a living demonstration that humans and thriving ecosystems belong together

### PROTOCOL & STANDARDS

A framework for creating native food forests that feed people, pollinators, and the living world  
v1.0 Developed by Brooklyn Rewilders, 2026



#### 1: PRIORITIZE NATIVE PLANTS

At least 75% of plants are native to your local bioregion.



#### 2: EDIBLE ABUNDANCE

At least one harvestable edible per 20 feet of fence. Before adding non-native edibles, look first for what is native and edible in your bioregion.



#### 3: OPEN INVITATION

The harvest must be genuinely available to passersby (Open) or a defined community (Community). A Fence of Abundance is not a private garden. It is a gift from nature, made accessible.



#### 4: ALL-SEASON POLLINATOR SUPPORT

A Fence of Abundance includes complimentary native plants that provide nectar and pollen across the growing season. Aim for blooms from early spring through late fall, supporting native bees, butterflies, and other insects throughout their active periods.



#### 5: FOUR-SEASON HABITAT

Leave Fallen leaves, standing stems, and "messy" areas provide essential overwintering habitat for firefly larvae, native bees, moths, and beneficial insects. Stewards commit to:

- NOT "cleaning up" the planting area in fall
- NOT cutting stems to the ground in autumn—leave standing through winter, cut in spring
- Leaving leaf litter
- Educating neighbors and passersby about why this is intentional, not neglect



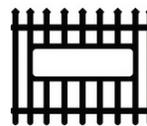
#### 6: NO PESTICIDES OR HERBICIDES

No synthetic pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides may be used in or near the planting area. This includes systemic pesticides applied to the soil. When purchasing plants: Choose nursery stock that has not been treated with neonicotinoids or other systemic pesticides



#### 7: HONORABLE HARVEST PRINCIPLES

All Fences of Abundance are guided by the Honorable Harvest—indigenous principles for receiving nature's gifts with respect and reciprocity. These principles, drawn from the teachings of Robin Wall Kimmerer and shared across many indigenous traditions, are ideally displayed at your site and upheld in your community's practice.



#### 8: INVITATIONAL SIGNAGE

Every Fence of Abundance must display signage that invites community to harvest when ripe:

- Identifies the site as part of the network
- Invites community harvest
- Explains the ecological purpose
- Attributes the Honorable Harvest principles
- Connects to the broader movement (QR code)



#### 9: ANNUAL PHOTO DOCUMENTATION

To remain an active, listed member of the Fence of Abundance network, stewards submit two photos annually:

- One in spring (showing emergence and early growth)
- One in summer (showing abundance - flowers, fruit, wildlife if possible)

## Fences of Abundance!

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

#### Planning Your Fence of Abundance

Before applying to the network, consider these important preparatory steps to ensure your site is safe and set up for success.

#### ASSESS SOIL SAFETY

Urban soils often contain lead from old paint, traffic, and industrial history. The good news: berry fruits have very low heavy metal uptake and are among the safest crops for contaminated soil.

#### When to test your soil:

Test if your site has any of these indicators:

- Pre-1978 building within 30 feet
- Within 50 feet of high-traffic road
- Known industrial site history
- Imported fill soil of unknown origin
- Urban location with old infrastructure

#### Testing requirements:

- Open sites (public access): Testing required if indicators present
- Community sites: Testing highly recommended if indicators present

#### EPA screening levels (updated January 2024):

- 200 ppm lead for residential properties
- 100 ppm if multiple lead sources (old paint + traffic + pipes)

EPA Lead Screening Standards: [epa.gov/superfund/lead-superfund](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/lead-superfund)

#### What if you find contamination?

Don't worry - you can still plant! Research shows berry fruits are naturally safe:

- Raspberries, blueberries, blackberries have very low lead uptake
- Main risk is surface dust, not internal accumulation
- Thorough washing removes surface contamination
- Focus on berries, avoid leafy greens in contaminated areas
- Add 4-6" clean mulch barrier between soil and plants
- Maintain pH 6.5-7.0 to reduce metal availability
- Raised beds recommended if lead exceeds 1,200 ppm

#### Testing resources:

- University extension services: \$25-50
- Urban Soil Lab
- Local health departments (often free)
- DIY test kits: \$10-30 (screening only)

#### Research:

- Cornell - Soil Contaminants & Best Practices for Healthy Gardens: [cwmi.css.cornell.edu/Soil\\_Contaminants.pdf](https://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/Soil_Contaminants.pdf)
- Cornell - Understanding Your Test Results (Metals in Garden Soils and Vegetables): [cwmi.css.cornell.edu/UnderstandingTestResultsMetalsSoilsVeg.pdf](https://cwmi.css.cornell.edu/UnderstandingTestResultsMetalsSoilsVeg.pdf)
- New York Soil Health - Lead Screening Factsheet: <https://www.newyorksoilhealth.org/2024/12/05/new-factsheet-highlights-updated-soil-lead-screening-levels-from-the-us-epa/>

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN: (cont)

#### CONFIRM PROPERTY PERMISSIONS

Make sure you have clear permission from property owner(s) to:

- Install permanent plantings
- Invite community members to harvest
- Post signage
- Commit to multi-year stewardship

For schools, community gardens, or institutional properties, written agreement recommended.

#### ASSESS SITE CONDITIONS

Before applying, verify your site can support thriving plantings:

- Minimum 6 hours direct sun (preferably more)
- Adequate water access for establishment (first year)
- Soil depth of at least 12-18" (or ability to build up)
- Reasonable drainage (not standing water)
- Minimum 10 feet of fence (more is better)

#### UNDERSTAND YOUR COMMITMENT

Fences of Abundance require multi-year commitment:

- Year 1: Significant time for installation and establishment watering
- Years 2-3: Moderate care (weeding, monitoring, watering if needed)
- Year 4+: Low maintenance once established

Consider:

- Can you water regularly the first summer?
- Who will help if you're away or overwhelmed?
- Does your schedule allow for seasonal care?
- Are there community members who might co-steward?

#### PLAN YOUR COMMUNITY INVITATION

Think through how harvest will work:

- Open: Anyone can harvest anytime during daylight?
- Community: Specific group with defined invitation?
- How will you communicate the invitation?
- Will you host organized harvest events?
- What feels right for your property and neighborhood?

#### REVIEW THE PROTOCOL

Make sure you understand and can meet all nine standards before applying. If you have questions, reach out:

[brooklynrewilders@gmail.com](mailto:brooklynrewilders@gmail.com)

Ready?

Apply at [brooklynrewilders.org/fence-of-abundance](https://brooklynrewilders.org/fence-of-abundance)

### Standard #1: Prioritise Native Plants



At least 75% of plants must be native to your local bioregion. Native plants have co-evolved with local insects, birds, and soil for thousands of years. They are the foundation of everything a Fence of Abundance does ecologically.

The 25% allowance exists for non-invasive species with genuine cultural significance — a fig with deep community roots, a heritage fruit variety. Invasive species are never permitted.

#### FINDING YOUR NATIVE PLANTS

NWF Native Plant Finder (by ZIP code): [nwf.org/NativePlantFinder](https://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder)

Audubon Native Plants Database: [audubon.org/native-plants](https://audubon.org/native-plants)

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center: [wildflower.org/plants](https://wildflower.org/plants)

Local native plant society directory: [nanps.org/find-a-society](https://nanps.org/find-a-society)

#### TIPS

- Start with what's already thriving nearby. Healthy plants tell you about your soil and microclimate.
- Ask nurseries whether plants have been treated with neonicotinoids (see Standard 6).
- Mix heights: trees, shrubs, perennials. Even narrow strips benefit from layering.

### Standard #2: Edible Abundance



At least one harvestable edible per 20 linear feet, accessible to the community. Look first for what is native and edible in your bioregion before choosing non-native edibles.

#### FINDING NATIVE EDIBLES

NWF has an excellent guide for North America:

<https://www.nwf.org/Native-Plant-Habitats/Plant-Native/Habitat-Essentials/Seeds-and-Berries>

#### TIPS

- Plant at heights people can easily reach (4–6 feet ideal). Fruit at eye level is inviting and stays clean.
- Choose plants that extend the harvest season: June serviceberries, July blueberries, August elderberries.
- Native annuals (Three Sisters: corn, beans, squash) are welcome additions where stewards have capacity.
- Many edibles serve double duty: elderberries are critical bird habitat, blueberries support specialist bees.



### Standard #3: Open invitation

The harvest must be genuinely accessible.

Two designations qualify:

- **OPEN:** Accessible to any passerby during daylight hours, visible from public sidewalk.
- **COMMUNITY:** Accessible to a defined group (school families, housing residents, congregation members) who are actively invited to harvest.

Both designations are full members of the network. Your map listing will note which applies.

#### TIPS

- Clear signage at eye level is the most powerful invitation: “Please harvest and enjoy.”
- For Community sites, be proactive: announcements in newsletters, at pickups, in bulletins.
- Consider hosting at least one seasonal harvest event each year. These create memories far beyond the harvest itself.

### Standard #4: All-season Pollinator Support



Provide nectar and pollen from early spring through late fall. Different pollinators are active at different times. A bumblebee queen in March and a monarch in September both need food.

#### EXAMPLE BLOOM SEQUENCE TO AIM FOR (NE USA)

- Early spring (March–April): Serviceberry, pussy willow, wild columbine, golden Alexanders
- Late spring (May–June): Raspberry bloom, wild geranium, mountain mint, native viburnum
- Midsummer (July–August): Blueberry bloom, elderberry, milkweed, black-eyed Susan, Joe Pye weed
- Fall (September–November): Goldenrod, native asters, sneezeweed

#### TIPS

- Leave hollow raspberry and elderberry canes standing through winter for stem-nesting bees (see Standard 7).
- Include patches of bare, unmulched ground — 70% of native bees nest in the ground.
- In North America, goldenrod and aster are among the most critical late-season plants. Include them.
- Join the Fence of Abundance iNaturalist project to document wildlife at your site.

### Standard #5: Four-season habitat



Leave stems standing and leaves in place through winter. Hollow canes become mason bee nurseries. Leaf litter shelters firefly larvae for up to two years. Standing stems hold overwintering eggs of dozens of butterfly and moth species.

#### WHAT TO LEAVE

- All stems standing through winter. Cut back in late spring (April–May), not autumn.
- Leaf litter in planting areas through winter. Rake pathways if needed, but leave under plants.
- In spring, bundle cut hollow canes nearby as nesting material for native bees.

#### TIPS

- A small sign helps: “Left wild through winter as habitat for fireflies, bees, and overwintering insects.”
- Fireflies are beloved and their decline is mourned. Leading with fireflies helps neighbors understand.
- Xerces Society’s Leave the Leaves campaign has free resources: [xerces.org/leave-the-leaves](http://xerces.org/leave-the-leaves)

### Standard #6: No Pesticides or Herbicides



No synthetic pesticides, herbicides, or fungicides in or near the planting area. This includes plants pre-treated with neonicotinoids at the nursery before purchase. They destroy ecosystems beyond their intended target.

Neonicotinoids are systemic insecticides routinely applied to nursery stock. They remain in plant tissue for months or years, present in pollen and nectar. A beautiful native plant from a conventional nursery may poison the bees that visit it.

#### FINDING PESTICIDE-FREE PLANTS

- Ask your nursery directly: “Have these been treated with neonicotinoids?”
- Buy from native plant societies or schools, which typically grow without systemic pesticides
- Look for organic-certified nurseries or those explicitly offering pesticide-free stock
- Grow from seed — native seed is increasingly available
- Attend local plant swaps for pesticide-free plants from fellow gardeners

#### TIPS

- For weeds: sheet mulch before planting, hand-pull while young, plant densely to crowd out weeds.
- Xerces Society publishes a neonicotinoid-free gardening guide: [xerces.org](http://xerces.org)
- Frame this positively to neighbors: “Managed without chemicals so bees can safely nest and people can safely harvest.”

### Standard #7: Honorable Harvest Principles



Indigenous principles for receiving nature's gifts with reciprocity. These teachings, shared across many indigenous cultures and articulated by Robin Wall Kimmerer in Braiding Sweetgrass, should be encouraged at your site.

#### THE HONORABLE HARVEST

- Ask permission before taking
- Take only what you need
- Never take the first – that is for the plant
- Never take the last – that is for the seed
- Never take more than half – leave plenty for others and wildlife
- Harvest gently and in ways that encourage growth, so the plant can continue giving
- Use everything you take
- Share what you harvest
- Give thanks
- Give something back – through care, tending, attention

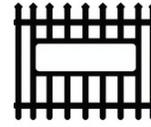
#### VIDEO (3:30min)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEm7gblax0o>

#### TIPS

- Display these principles legibly near the harvest area. They are the philosophical heart of the fence.
- At harvest events, take time to share the origins and meaning of these teachings.
- The principle of giving something back is where stewardship begins. Harvesters often become caregivers.

### Standard #8: Invitational Signage



Clear signage tells passersby they are welcome, explains the ecological purpose, and connects the fence to the wider network. Make your own or order from Brooklyn Rewilders.

#### REQUIRED

- Clear invitation to harvest, visible from the path

#### RECOMMENDED

- Honorable Harvest principles displayed with attribution
- Plant identification with ripeness information
- Site identified as part of Fences of Abundance network
- Contact information for questions

#### TIPS

- Place signs at eye level where genuinely visible. Signs tucked low or behind plants don't work.
- Official Fence of Abundance signage packages available at [brooklynrewilders.org](http://brooklynrewilders.org) (sliding scale pricing).

### Standard #9: Annual Photo Documentation



Submit two photos each year to remain active in the network: one in spring showing emergence, one in summer showing abundance. Photos contribute to our collective archive and tell the story of this movement growing.

#### WHAT TO PHOTOGRAPH

- Spring (March–May): Emergence, early bloom, the fence waking up
- Summer (June–August): Fruit, abundance, and ideally — someone harvesting

#### TIPS

- Photos of people harvesting — especially children — are powerful images for the network but require written permission for use. Wherever possible please include completed photo permission document for each person who's face is visible.
- INSERT PHOTO PERMISSION DOC Link
- Submit at [brooklynrewilders.org/fence-of-abundance](https://brooklynrewilders.org/fence-of-abundance) each year.
- If your fence changes significantly, update us so we can refresh your map listing.

### Join the Network

1. Review the nine standards and confirm your site can meet them. Questions? Reach out before applying — we're glad to help.
2. Complete the online application. Apply at [brooklynrewilders.org/fence-of-abundance](https://brooklynrewilders.org/fence-of-abundance). Include a photo and brief site description. We review within two weeks.
3. Get listed on the map and join the steward community. Approved sites are welcomed into the growing network of Fences of Abundance around the world.
4. Submit annual photos each spring and summer. Stay active, contribute to the collective story, share the abundance.

**Brooklyn Rewilders** reconnects urban communities with nature through hands-on education and rewilding projects, fostering reciprocity, responsibility, and love for the living world that inspires lifelong stewardship.

Any questions contact:  
[brooklynrewilders@gmail.com](mailto:brooklynrewilders@gmail.com)

[brooklynrewilders.org/fence-of-abundance](https://brooklynrewilders.org/fence-of-abundance)