

Breakout Session Role of Edible Trees in Food Security

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Questions, with Responses

1. What role do edible trees play in our community food security?

- At Farmer's Markets:
- Laws protect food banks from liability for distributing food that they receive (Good Samaritan law). Selling it, however, doesn't fall under that category. State law provides an exemption for farmers to sell directly to consumers (e.g. through a farmers' market), as long as it's whole, uncut, etc. Gleaning and reselling are kind of a grey area though, and Maricopa County might have their own interpretation.
- Public Space:
- City officials stated earlier in the workshop that if one person can't have it, no one can have it, with regard to gleaning fruit from public lands. Jonathan Mabry said there ought to be a way to do it--perhaps you sign a permit that releases the city from any liability.
- A food bank would be in a good position to advocate for this with the City because they'd feel good about it and food banks are protected by good samaritan law. In addition, food banks have good relationships with the media, donors, etc., so they could potentially be taking the lead on some things.
- Private Property/Farms:
- Duncan Family Farms (in Goodyear, AZ) is a larger orchard that dedicates 1 acre of their land to the food bank. Nearby women's prison uses their labor to harvest the land, which works really well.
- On a sadder historical note, the Wilmont State prison in AZ used to supply the majority of their own food on their 15-acre farm (with prison labor) back in the 1980s, but was then mandated (during the Reagan years) to switch over to private food service companies.
- There are other organizations/efforts to address food security through edible trees and gleaning though:
 - Iskashitaa is the biggest such organization in Tucson working with gleaning.
 - Also, ASU was involved some time ago with mapping food deserts, but it's fallen by the wayside, as far as we all know.
 - Sustainability Cafe brings people together every month to do education.

Areas for expanding access to gleaned food:

- HOAs. Currently they are kind of a grey area in terms of whether fruit can be harvested there.
- Also new home owners (and rental properties).

2. What are the biggest barriers (and some of the solutions) preventing edible trees from being a boon to food security?

- Storage
- Spraying of Chemicals
 - For example, olive trees at UofA are sprayed to prevent them from fruiting.
 - Perhaps a cost/benefit analysis would help eliminate this problem
 - Maybe a tag indicating a tree that has been sprayed can be used in case some unsprayed trees are going to be harvested (perhaps as part of a pilot project)
- Liability with Accidents during picking
 - Olive trees at UofA are up high. Same is true in general.
- Pruning them for shade is not conducive to harvesting
- Lack of Care by Owners
 - Private ownership and institutions: NAU regularly chops down fruit trees over the summer (when no one is around).
- Processing
 - Only one commercial olive press that we know of in AZ—Cave Creek. And they won't process olives that have been sprayed.
- Creating a Mess (of fallen fruit) if No One Harvest
- If One Person Can't Have It, No One Can Have It (Perspective of City)
- Water intensiveness (at city level)
- Easy availability of Cheap Calories
- Carbon Footprint Argument - Director of Research at Phoenix Botanical Gardens wrote an article recently about the carbon footprint, making the case that they are a positive influence.
- Sharing Information/Privacy
 - Ishkashitaa records all of their properties where they glean. But they haven't posted it because of privacy issues, and not wanting to get random people from the public eyeing people's trees to get fruit for themselves.

3. Action ideas:

- Perhaps the Students for Sustainability at UofA could work on a project to harvest olives and then donate it to the food bank. They could also do a cooking demonstration. University of Santa Barbara and SB Olive Press bottled 1,500 bottles of olive oil and the proceeds were used for scholarships at the University.
- Hold a Harvest Mania event (sort of like the recycling competition) at the University of Arizona

- Better to ask for forgiveness than permission: is it better to come up with a system for harvesting, and go ahead and do it