Martha's Vineyard Perennial Food Forest Plan
Project Brief

In 2022, the Martha's Vineyard Climate Action Plan established a robust framework for mitigating, managing, and adapting to climate change impacts. One objective defined in this plan, under the theme of Food Security, is to *"secure and establish perennial food production in public spaces in every town"*, as a means for enhancing accessibility, resiliency, and ecological health in the local food system and engaging the public in the production and harvest of locally grown food. The Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) is now seeking grant funding from the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program in order to identify where these spaces may be successfully established in each town, and create the tools and resources needed to facilitate the next steps towards accomplishing that goal.

This project aims to identify potential sites for perennial food forests (i.e. mixed plantings of perennial food-producing trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants that mimic the layered structure of a forest) in all six island towns, increase public engagement, knowledge, and skills in the area of perennial food production, and develop plans and resources that can be used by towns and citizens for designing and implementing these food forests. If awarded, MVP Action Grant funding will support the completion of this project between September 2024 and June 2025. The project, led by the MVC and ecological landscape designer Mary Sage Napolitan, in collaboration with local food equity and education partners, community members, and town representatives, will entail three main components:

a) Determination of priority criteria for features and conditions that characterize appropriate food forest sites at-large (e.g. accessibility factors, neighboring population densities, visibility, soil structure); use of defined criteria, digital data and mapping resources, population data, and environmental and social analyses to identify potentially viable food forest spaces Island-wide; and creation of town-scale maps of potential sites for each town, providing refined recommendations for where these food forests might be realistically established.

b) Development of a detailed site design for one public food forest in the town of Aquinnah, on a previously identified and approved town site, which will enable the implementation of the first of these perennial food production spaces on island and create a model for other towns.

c) Creation of a perennial food forest toolkit for Martha's Vineyard, including recommended potential site locations, locally appropriate plant lists, and implementation guidelines.

Upon completion, these project components combined will equip every town with a vision for where and how the goal of public, perennial food production can be achieved Island-wide, and the tools and resources to do so.