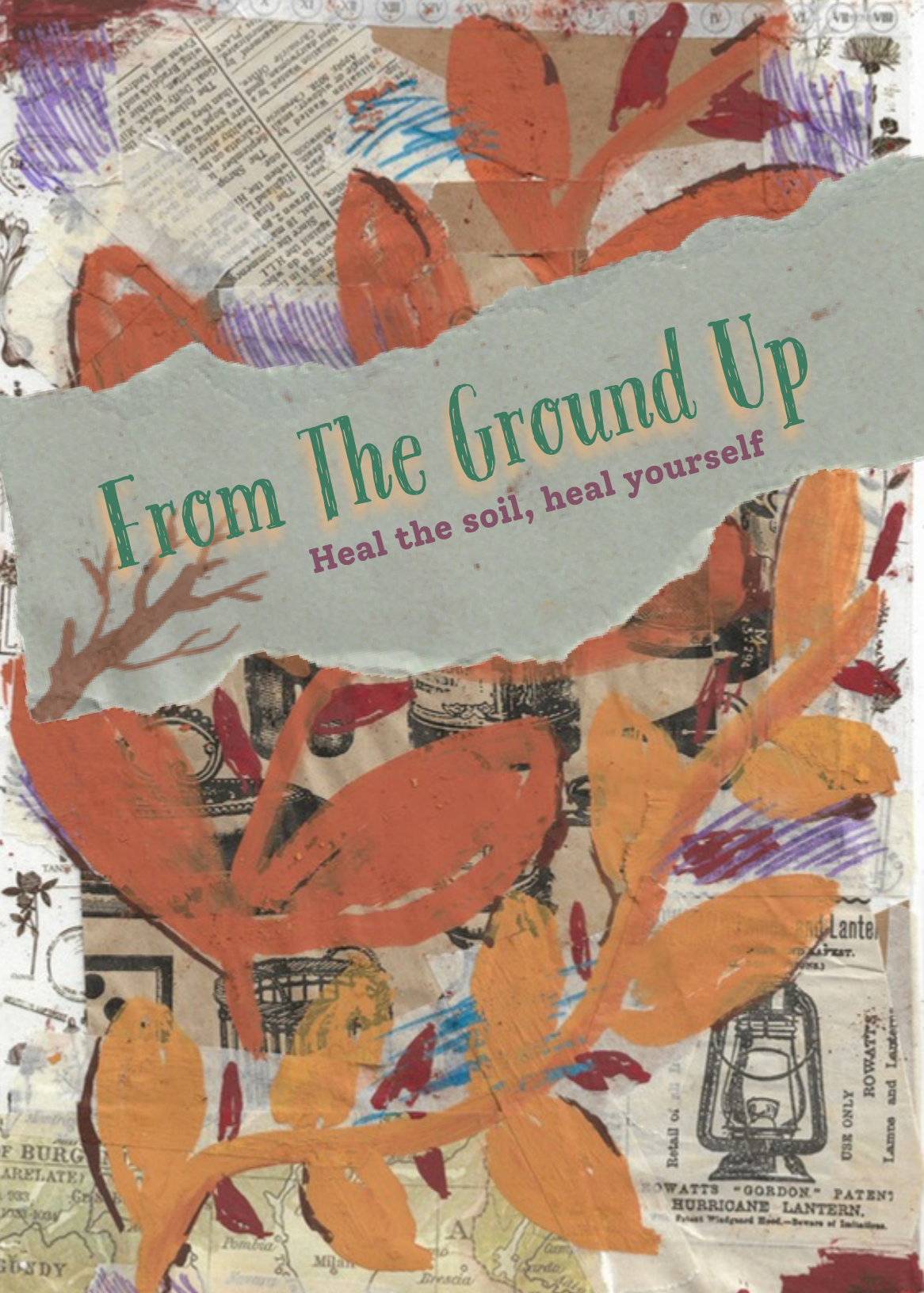


From The Ground Up

Heal the soil, heal yourself



The bad news:

UN research states we only have 60 harvests left due to the critical state of our soils. We often don't think about soil, and take food for granted, but without it none of us would last very long.

Why is it important?

- Soil contains microorganisms important to the health of all life on earth – including our own mental and physical health!
- By supporting our own local food network we are more protected from the effects of geopolitical instability (climate change, tariffs, wars...)
- It improves the local economy with jobs and money, keeping and growing resources within our own communities
- It supports local farmers and businesses, rather than supermarket profits and CEO bonuses
- It improves local biodiversity, we become an integral part of the ecosystem

The good news is YOU can help.

This zine is designed to give accessible, achievable ideas to help anyone in the Forest of Dean support our local soil health and food security. You might even build connections, improve your health or help your community thrive as a result!



★ Get involved ★

There are lots of great projects happening across the Forest of Dean to get involved with, but it can be hard to know what's happening or how to get involved.

The Forest of Dean Climate Action Partnership (FODCAP) act as a hub, bringing people together to make climate and nature action in the Forest of Dean more effective, inclusive, and connected. Find out more about ongoing local projects using The Resilience Web tool, or join the WhatsApp broadcast for the latest callouts and opportunities

Gloucestershire Gleaning organise projects to collect and distribute farm-level food waste

Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF) publicise volunteering opportunities on their website and newsletter

The Forest Foodbank accept donations of money, food or volunteering time to support those experiencing food poverty. If you garden, consider donating your produce gluts!

Feeding Gloucestershire have created a map of local food projects - from free groceries to community meals and more

Use Your Space

There are so many ways to support soil health and food security using your own homes outdoor areas – no matter how much space or time you can spare.

For more information on any of these ideas, visit the links from our resource library on the back cover

Try growing heritage plants like Skirret and Alexanders to better support native wildlife and get better yields for less effort as these variants are best suited for our climate and soil types over centuries of adaptation!

If you prefer a lawn, consider alternatives to turf or astroturf. Native meadow grasses, clover, creeping thyme or moss can be more wildlife-friendly options that help reduce flood risk and improve soil health. They can also be no-mow, so easier to maintain once established!

Try no-dig gardening! Use cardboard or mulch to suppress weeds and add new compost layers on top of your planting areas rather than 'turning over' soil. This improves soil health and the biodiversity of the microorganisms living there, as well as allowing the establishment of mutually beneficial mycorrhizal networks.

For watering, use a rainwater butt and water in the evening to reduce water use

Create mini habitats. Premade habitats like hedgehog houses and insect hotels can be bought from garden centres, or created easily from free items like rotten wood, scrap card and dried leaves

Reduce mowing, especially by taking part in no-mow May or leaving a permanent no-mow area

Feed birds through the winter and follow the latest RSPB guidance to reduce disease

Create a wildlife pond. It doesn't have to be big or expensive - even an old washing up bowl can be used!

Create a windowbox or fence planter filled with pollinator-friendly wild plants

Swap seeds with friends, or attend the annual FOD Seed Swap

Use beginner friendly resources like Project GROW to start growing food

Grow herbs on your windowsill

Dwarf food plant types can grow food in small spaces and even inside - such as 'Tiny Tim' tomatoes and 'Jack Be Little' pumpkins

Buy Local

In the Forest of Dean we are already blessed with lots of incredible local producers. Buying your food from them is one of the easiest ways to ensure local food security, support the local economy as well as eating more delicious and nutritious food!

The easiest way to access a wide range of producers is through a local farm shop or deli, or if you do not live near one of these then the Dean Forest Food Hub offers weekly local deliveries across the district from a huge range of producers. If you are able to support with more than your purchase power, this incredible local project is always looking for volunteers too!

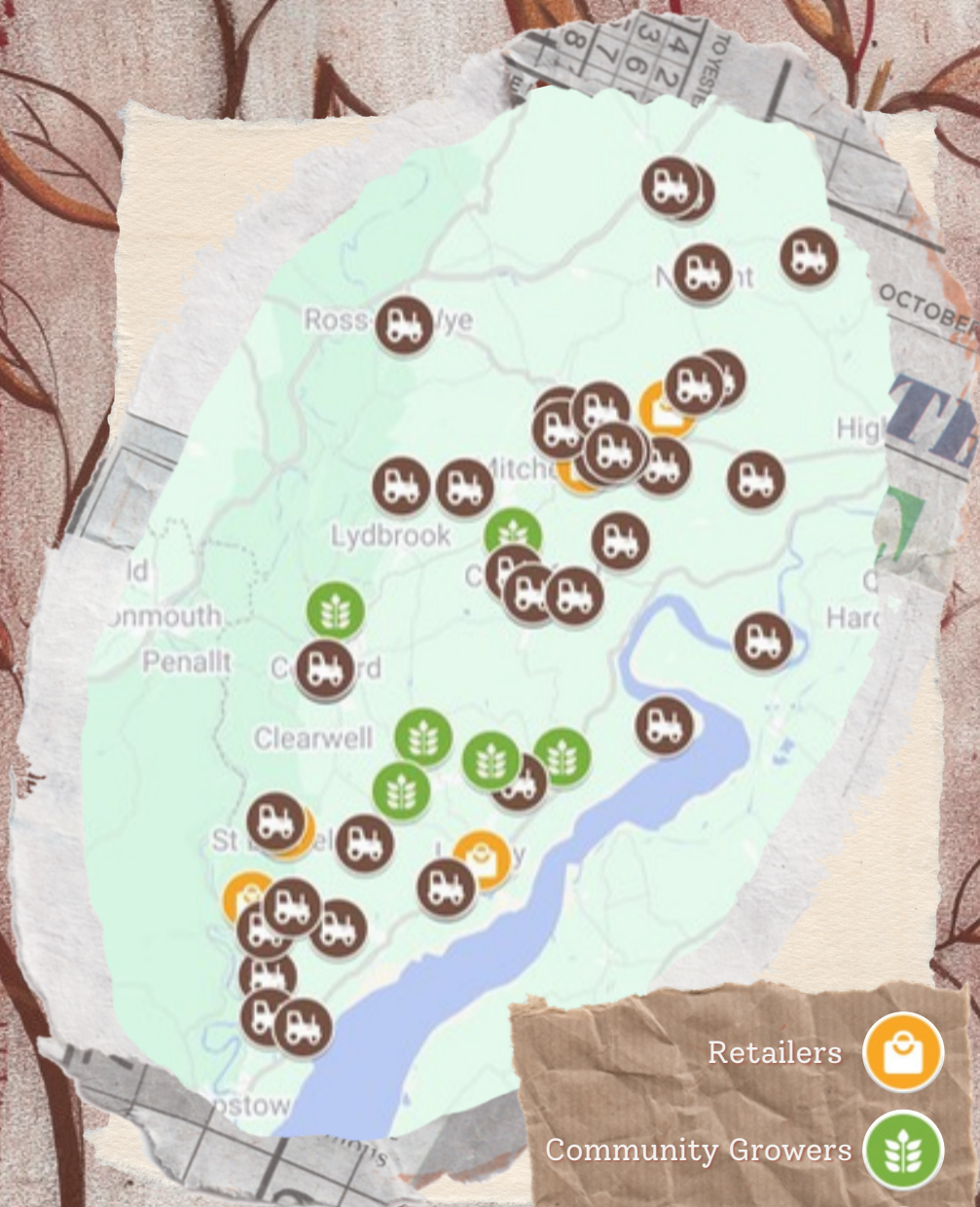
Community
Growers

As well as commercial producers, we have a number of community-led growing projects all across the district. Getting involved with these is a great way to meet people, share knowledge, get outdoors and improve your health.

These projects are also great places to connect with people who may want to swap seeds and/or produce gluts with, even if you grow at home rather than in a community space.

The FODCAP resilience web has contact details and more information for each of the projects.







Resource Library

fodcap.org

fvaf.org.uk/volunteering

feedinggloucestershire.org.uk/food-map

gloucestershiregleaning.co.uk

theforest.foodbank.org.uk/give-help

deanforestfoodhub.org.uk

climatechangegardening.org/make-a-difference

facebook.com/groups/fodseedswap

weareprojectgrow.com

rspb.org.uk

wildlifetrusts.org



This zine was created by members of the Forest of Dean LGBTQIA+ community, with many thanks to our funders and supporters

