

[Music] hello and welcome to the starting and

0:05

operating a successful permaculture Nursery Summit brought to you by the permaculture Institute of North America

0:10

or Pina our next presenter is the magnanimous Ben Caesar presenting on the topic of perennial vegetables and how to

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encourage their greater adaptation Ben is the founder of fiddlehead Nursery established his business in 2012 after a

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journey rooted in permaculture and Forest gardening starting with transform his small Urban yard in G Ontario into

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an edible uh perennial garden Ben then moved to Beaver Valley in 2011 to expand

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his vision at fiddlehead he grows all the plants he sells focusing on Hardy

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perennials suited to his challenging USDA zone 5 climate Ben's farming

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practices emphasize sustainability avoiding chemicals in favor of compost nitrogen fixing plants and perennial

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ground covers to maintain soil Health he also Fosters a learning environment by hosting woofers International Farm

1:01

Workers who exchange labor for education and cultivating a community passionate about sustainable farming and gardening

1:07

welcome Ben great to have you here thanks very much I don't think anybody's

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ever called me Magnus before I was having fun with those adjectives for

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everybody so uh so you know I've been starting with the same question actually two questions that I ask everybody um

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just because they tend to yield interesting results and then I'll let you get on to your presentation and the topic but the first one is how has uh

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permaculture impacted your life would you say hugely uh yeah I wasn't into

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permaculture until I was around 27 and I moved to GF and met a guy who invited me to come and plant a field of nut trees

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with him and he told me about permaculture and it changed my life I uh

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I was really taken with the concept he lent me some books I started experimenting with I wasn't a gardener

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before then and then uh and then I started experimenting in my yard uh planted a couple fruit tree I had a

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pretty small yard so I could only I I think I planted three fruit trees and a bunch of berry bushes and then wanted to

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fill in the understory with a bunch of perennial vegetables that I've been reading about but I had a real hard time

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locating a lot of these plants so that is what spurred the idea of a of a plant

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nursery I I thought here's a niche that I could exploit and uh it would give me an excuse to track down a whole bunch of

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weird and wonderful perennial vegetables um and then I was fortunate enough to be

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able to to get myself a farm um and uh yeah I uh I haven't looked back my the

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the quality of my life is is so wonderful in running a nursery and and I encourage anybody who uh who's thinking

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about it to to just dive in because it's h it's a really wonderful it it it

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allows you um uh yeah wonderful quality of life yeah yeah I think that's one of

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the things that when I and so many people learn about permaculture and kind of get bit by the permaculture bug it

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hints at this or maybe explicitly even talks about the quality of life that is sort of like beyond what we're used to

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and sort of suburban normal uh sort of capitalistic culture and it's something that draws Us in but then sometimes
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we're like well wait how do I make permaculture my livelihood how do I live a permaculture life I already have this
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other job and all this other sort of like preset conditions almost um so with that in mind with that little caveat why
3:35
would you say and you kind of already mentioned this but maybe go a little bit deeper what about the nursery business
3:40
might be like a really good fit for somebody just getting excited about permaculture what how might it be a
3:46
beneficial sort of livelihood or path for folks to go down well one thing is that you can do it on a really small
3:52
scale you can do it on any scale so um you know it's it's a great Hobby and
3:57
then you can make a little extra money on the side or you can sort of expand uh as you're able to um and you really
4:04
don't need much room uh to to start a nursery like uh you know you can you can do it with a really small yard you can
4:10
do it in in a driveway really um so there's there's a lot of possibilities
4:15
for for people running small scale nurseries and then scaling them up or just keeping it at a hobby level uh
4:21
there's you know there's every every kind of scale is available to people and I don't make a lot of money with my
4:27
Nursery I I make some I make enough that I don't have to work during the growing season but I still work uh all winter uh
4:35
at a full-time job so I'm uh you know I don't make my entire living through the nursery but um I'm I'm also subsidizing
4:44
my my life through the the produce that I grow and I you know I have a a pretty
4:49
uh low um uh you I don't I I don't have to pay a lot of money to to live uh
4:56
because I'm growing a lot of my own food and uh and I've become more and more self-sufficient as as the gardens
5:02
develop so I've been I've been lucky in that way yeah and smart in that way you design your life in that that's kind of
5:08
the permaculture thing is multiple streams of income nice resiliency and all the systems that make up your
5:13
livelihood so well without further Ado Ben why don't you uh take it away and lead us on your presentation I'll be
5:19
here if you need me and otherwise um take us take us forth and thanks again for being here okay thanks a lot for
5:25
having me Jesse um so I'm going to talk a little bit about um sort of like how
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to encourage people to grow perenial vegetables and to accept perenial vegetables as a as a concept um uh yeah
5:39
it's uh it's really important I think in an edible forest garden to have a productive understory and uh so a few
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things that I've done with my Nursery that help to um en encourage people to
5:53
to plant and and use perennial vegetables um one is I have a demonstration garden when I when I first
6:00
started the nursery one of the first things I did was to plant a demonstration garden uh in order to um
6:06
show people what you can grow so I lead tasting tours I charge people \$5 for a
6:11
15minute tasting tour around the garden and so I can give them samples uh of
6:17
plants and they can taste them a lot of people are are shocked at how many how What A diversity of different flavors
6:23
and textures you can get from a perennial edible landscape um it's really it's really fun to leave people
6:29

around the garden and uh and an interesting aspect of that is that the tour is quite vastly different from
6:36
the spring through the summer till the fall it changes like the products that come out of the garden is you know
6:42
there's a lot of Chute vegetables in the spring and then leafy greens uh throughout the summer and then more
6:47
fruit uh and nuts develop as the as the season winds down um uh and then um yeah
6:54
I do workshops as Jesse mentioned on designing uh Forest Gardens and uh and I
7:00
also do workshops on plant propagation um so one of the things about uh Forest
7:06
Gardens is that uh it takes a lot of plants uh to fill in the understory and so um if uh if people are serious about
7:14
it or want to fill in a larger area then um it really makes sense uh to learn how to propagate your own plants uh so so
7:22
those are those are great and then obviously in the in the design workshops I talk a lot about perennial vegetables
7:27
and how to use them in the kitchen um and most people have no idea what you're talking about when you mention perennial
7:33
vegetables like what is that uh so then obviously the first answer is asparagus
7:39
and rhubarb are the two most common perennial vegetables that uh that anybody knows and really they're the only common ones in the west
um or in
7:47
North America at least um uh but then uh you know it it really takes a mind shift
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because there are hundreds of different plants that survive the winter uh where I live uh and that uh that people use in
8:00
different parts of the world um so it really is about uh shifting your mind to
8:06
to recognize the the utility of uh of the plants around us so um there are you
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know another really easy bridge for people is to mention some of the ornamental plants that people already
8:20
have in their Gardens that are used in other parts of the world as perennial vegetables so these are things like
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hostas dayes uh sedums Solomon Seal these are all very common plants in the
8:32
ornamental uh plant industry uh that you know some people have Gardens full of
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hostas and they don't know they're edible so um I'm going to be talking more in detail about about uh how how to
8:44
eat them and and stuff later on but um but when you mention these things and they see them in my garden they're like
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what what's that doing there this dayy you know like I have those growing in my place and uh and that you know it's it's
8:58
kind of a revelation when you say say like the the Chinese and the Taiwanese have you know tens of thousands of Acres
9:04
of these under cultivation for their vegetable markets you go to the you know if you go to Japan you'll find hosta
9:10
shoots uh for sale in the supermarkets in the spring uh so you know the the
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fact that these are being very commonly used in other parts of the world demonstrates that that you know that
9:21
they're economically viable and that we that there's a lot of utility to them um
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so uh another way of encouraging people to consider perenial vegetables is uh to
9:34
um to list the benefits because there are multiple benefits to perennial vegetables so um one is nutrient density
9:41
there's been a lot of uh research in the past 10 or 15 years um demonstrating the

9:47
nutrient density of perennial vegetables which are in general far higher uh in in

9:53
nutrient um density than annual vegetables and this is because they have uh deep extensive root systems you know

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it takes them years to develop and to mature but then they have like these these really extensive root systems that

10:06
can access uh minerals from the subsoils and concentrate them in their leaves um and so they're they're you know higher

10:13
in nutrient density than annual vegetables um another is uh they they

10:18
fill the spring hunger Gap this is this is key actually in in my garden I grow a

10:23
lot of annual vegetables I grow tomatoes and peppers and and uh eggplants and cabbage and you know all the I so so I'm

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I'm a big fan of annual vegetables but I have perennial vegetables popping up in

10:35
my garden in March uh April May there like I'm getting an abundance of food

10:40
out of my garden before I'm even planting the annual vegetable garden so

10:45
there's you know there's a Big Spring hunger Gap that can be filled uh with perennial vegetables uh they're very low

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maintenance once they're established it it takes a lot of work to build any Garden but uh with perennial gardens

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it's it's much easier to have a larger perennial garden and put less work into

11:04
it than uh you know smaller annual vegetable garden so if people are limited with their time or the resources

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then um then it makes a lot of sense uh to either complement your annual vegetable garden with perennials or just

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to have to make use of your perennial vegetable gardens a lot of things you know a lot of people have ornamental

11:25
perennial gardens in their yards you know they're small patches of perennials and uh there are a lot of perennial

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vegetables that are beautiful that work very well in ornamental Gardens so they can be incorporated into existing

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Gardens very easily um they add diversity to both the landscape and your

11:45
diet you know that diversity is key to resilience uh and and health uh so

11:51
that's you know it's sort of a given and uh and then a lot of ground uh perennial

11:57
vegetables act as ground covers and ground covers are you know living Ground

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Covers uh are the key to low maintenance Gardens so I'm a I'm a huge fan of

12:08
edible Ground Covers um and then a lot of them also attract beneficial insects

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so uh you know having plants blooming throughout the the growing season is

12:19
really important and a lot of those are uh are are perennial vegetables uh another way that I sort of

12:26
push the perennial vegetable angle uh on people is that I have an Instagram account and a Facebook page and so I'm

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I'm always posting about how I use these in the kitchen a lot of people look like oh okay I can plant these in my garden

12:40
but how do I use them it's uh you know it's it's a big question mark for a lot of people and there's not a whole lot of

12:45
resources out there on you know how to use all these different plants um so so

12:51
there's uh um you know I I make that available to people I I don't like you know in this uh in today's environment

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it's it's not all that kosher to you know to to push Instagram but if you're

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already on there then then it's a useful platform um and then I sell books as well through my Nursery so I sell books

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there's um uh perennial vegetables by Eric tonm I sell that it's a fantastic

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that was the first book exclusively about perennial vegetables Eric tonm is a fantastic author uh he has a number of

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other books that are well worth checking out um and then Martin Crawford is a key author for me he's a British

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um Gardener uh he's the director of the agroforestry research trust and he's

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written a book how to grow perennial vegetables also I'll mention his um his

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book creating a forest garden is one of the one of my Bibles it's a it's a

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fantastic book uh about designing Forest Gardens that really simplifies the process breaks it down into a stepbystep

13:54

easy to understand process it it really eliminates the the intimidation Factor so I love Martin Crawford look him up on

14:01

um on YouTube he does tours of his forest garden incredibly inspiring and

14:06

then um another one is um Steven barsto he is uh just outside the Arctic Circle

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in Norway he's written a book called Around the World in 80 plants fantastic resource he's experimented with more

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than 2,000 edible plants in his garden and he chooses his 80 favorites to profile in this book and not only does

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he tell you how to use the theit how to grow them but also how they've been used traditionally uh by the indigenous

14:33

people all all around the world um and then another another sort of resource

14:39

I've I've explored a lot is the foraging literature um and I I wasn't really

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interested in foraging I was interested in finding plants that would work well in the forest garden um but as soon as I

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started reading Samuel the he's one of the world Authorities on foraging and he

14:56

inspired me to become a forager and he covers a whole range of different plants that work really well in Forest Gardens

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and he's just a wonderful writer who has you know infuses his writing with a

15:08

deep philosophy about uh living in harmony with nature so uh he's he's really affected me deeply um so I'm

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gonna start sharing my screen here um just bear with me for a sec here I'm

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gonna start little slideshow and just talk about some of my favorite perennial

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vegetables um I'm not going to be able to get through this whole presentation but um I'll uh I'll I'll do what I can

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and uh Havey to answer any questions towards the end so um yeah one of the ways I encourage people to think about

15:43

these is is to sort of have analoges in the annual vegetable world so there's a

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lot of Chute vegetables that use like asparagus there are a lot of uh crops

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from perennial vegetables that g give you unopen flower buds that can be used like Brock

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and then there's obviously a whole bunch of leafy vegetables and then some uh perennial tubous vegetables that are

16:05

used like potatoes um and the leafy vegetables you can think of as as using like spinach um I use a lot of forcing

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buckets in my Gardens in the spring uh for particularly the Chute vegetables uh

16:19
so I'm sure most of you have seen white asparagus in the supermarkets uh this is

16:24
called forcing asparagus so it's not a different variety of asparagus they've just excluded the light from The Young

16:29
chotes so they either Mound the chotes up with soil and then the Chute Gres up through that mound or they use buckets

16:36
to exclude the light so this can be done with a wide R range of different um

16:41
perennial vegetables uh it's it's very useful so I just use plant pots generally uh and then cover the holes

16:47
with duct tape and then put a stone on top um to stop the buckets from blowing away in the wind and uh and I I cover

16:54
the the plants just as I see them emerging from the soil in the spring so on the right is some blanched rhubarb

17:01
that has become really popular and this what this does is um it makes the plants more tender and mild uh they reach for

17:08
the sun this is called EDI olation and uh and so they're they're really tender

17:15
uh when they when you cut them from under the buckets and then generally with perennials you can just cut them right down to the ground and then

17:21
they'll pop back up um so so you can just get one Harvest off each plant but it makes them really lovely in the

17:28
kitchen so uh let me go into a few plant profiles here this is cow parsnip uh I

17:34
sell this through my Nursery nobody ever buys it because it uh it has phyt

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dermatitis so it's um if you uh rub the stem and get the juices on your skin or

17:46
break the stem get the juices on your skin and expose your skin to sunlight it'll cause a serious burn or rash on

17:52
your skin so it removes your Skin's uh layer of protection from the Sun uh so

17:58
you have to be aware of this if you're growing it in your garden but I love this plant because it's a really useful perennial vegetable it was used by the

18:04
IND indigenous people all across Canada and the United States um the it's the

18:10
Young Greens that you're using it's the uh unopened leaves like in the picture there or the unopen flower buds so it's

18:16
the immature parts of the plant they're strongly flavored uh so I cook them you

18:21
can use them as tempura they make a fantastic tempura like really a unique

18:26
flavor um and then you can use them in soups and stews it's a very highly regarded uh vegetable among many

18:33
indigenous groups um this is related to cow Parson or um to to Giant hog weed um

18:39
and giant hog weed by the way is used in the same way in parts of China in Asia it's an edible plant people are

18:45
terrified of giant hogweed but um there's there's a lot of um there's a lot of fearmongering going on about it

18:51
so um so you have to be aware of the um the phyt dermatitis qualities of these

18:56
plants but they're well worth growing in your Garden um cutleaf cone flour this

19:02
is uh another really important uh indigenous food crop the Cherokee name

19:08
for this plant is soan and that is also the Cherokee name for vegetable so that indicates how important it was in their

19:15
culture um so this is native all the way across Canada once again um this is one

19:21
that forms a really good ground cover Al although it's tall it's a tall plant

19:27
when it's flowering it's about six or seven feet tall uh but it's very dense

19:32
uh it's a it's a misconception that ground covers need to be short uh Ground Covers can be quite tall Jerusalem AR

19:38
chokes make a great ground cover what Ground Covers do is they shade the the soil so they prevent weeds from

19:44
germinating and they keep moisture in the soil so uh cutleaf conlow does this

19:50
brilliantly it does spread it's a pretty spread plant it'll spread underground and by seed um and so you have to be

19:57
aware of that it's more suitable for larger areas um but it's a very

20:02
productive vegetable and eaten throughout the growing season until it flowers so it has a long season of

20:08
edibility uh because it's a large Plant it's producing Young Greens it's the Young Greens that you're eating so I

20:14
like them raw I use them in salads uh but I like them even better cooked so I put them in casseres or soups and then

20:21
um I often chop them up and throw them in eggs when I'm when I'm cooking eggs um day lies again they yeah these are

20:29
there's thousands of acres under cultivation in in parts of Asia uh for the dayy uh the unopen flower buds they

20:37
call them Golden Needles so they dry them and then reconstitute them in soups and stews Dees you can eat the flowers

20:44
raw and I often do um I throw them in salads it's really easy to impress people by throwing dayes in a salad um

20:52
and uh but you can only eat about five or six raw uh without any ill effects if

20:57
you eat 10 or 12 you'll get some serious digestive issues so you have to cook them but if you cook them uh then you'll

21:04
have no issues at all and so I use them in tempora um I dry them for winter use

21:10
they're a very useful vegetable crop you can also eat the CHS in the spring as well as the tubers underground so a a

21:16
really uh multi-purpose plant and you know it's dead easy to grow because it makes a good ground cover this is why

21:23
they're so popular in the ornamental plant industry uh elderberries

21:28
these flowers are a a much heralded vegetable in in some parts of Europe so

21:34
uh every year I batter and Fry Elder flowers They're a really easy to grow plant they're they're big they get to be

21:40
you know 10 to 12 feet tall and wide uh but really fantastic and very healthy

21:45
flowers and then the berries come along later so um this is just a picture of um

21:51
Elder flowers and dayes that I've tempor uh Fuki is a Japanese um perennial

21:59
vegetable they use the leaf stock and the unopen flower buds in the spring the spring the the flower buds pop up this

22:04
is flower buds popping up in March March 25th 2023 so this is the earliest

22:10
perennial vegetable can you imagine like getting fresh food out of your garden in March it's fantastic so these are very

22:16
bitter it took me a long time actually to learn how to how to eat these uh and and enjoy them um so the leaf stock and

22:23
the unopened flower buds they they have this like very strong bitter flavor but as tempura they're delicious they're

22:29 really the the the fatty oils really cut the the the bitterness and and complement it beautifully and then the
22:36 stock it's best to boil it and then peel it and then use it in soups and I I quite like it used you know somewhat
22:42 sparingly in soups so uh well well worth growing uh Goji berries are are grown in
22:48 Asia not only for the berries but for the greens in the spring so the young leaves and the stems of the leaves are a
22:56 highly nutritious vegetable uh that is uh that is highly sought after in in uh
23:01 China in Korea um they're they're very commonly grown there for both Leaf
23:06 production and Berry production so a great multi-purpose plant good King Henry is a crop of uh um the Romans the
23:15 Romans cultivated good King Henry as kind of a perennial spinach uh the Young Greens you can eat them raw they're not
23:21 very good raw I prefer to cook them uh when they're they're highly nutritious
23:26 and then these produce a really nice broccoli as well the unopen flower buds uh can be used like broccoli uh these
23:33 make a decent ground cover if you plant them about a foot a foot apart uh the
23:38 plant itself will get to be about a foot and a half so if you overlap the leaves then they make a a decent nonspreading
23:44 ground cover ground nut is a North American uh
23:50 species it's a legume so it fixes nitrogen so it's improving the soil this was an important crop of the indigenous
23:56 people in fact they showed the pioneers how to locate and harvest ground nuts and that helped them get through the
24:01 first few Winters in North America um uh this is a really easy plant to grow it'll it's a Vine so it'll climb up a
24:09 trellis or a fence or other shrubs and uh and it'll spread in time so if you
24:14 plant them it takes you know a few years before you get a decent crop but then every year after that you can Harvest a
24:20 bunch and I just cut the the tubers off the vine they you know they they get to be about the size of a chicken egg uh
24:27 the large ones and then I throw the small ones back uh like I'm fishing to to regrow the next season and they
24:33 should be peeled the Skins are pretty bitter uh but if they're peeled they're very nice if you cook them you should
24:39 cook them um but uh but they're they're excellent cooked I love them in soups and stews um and uh yeah a wonderful
24:48 crop that you can have all winter um hops all the major hop growing regions of the world uh have taken to using the
24:55 ches of hops like asparagus it's a very good uh spring green uh or spring purple
25:02 actually they're purple and and they're beautiful uh they're quite hairy uh so I don't like them raw you can eat them raw
25:09 but I don't like the texture so but just a bit of cooking will mitigate that entirely and then just a little butter
25:15 little salt and pepper you know a little Holland sauce and uh bingo bango it's really good it's very delicious and easy
25:21 to grow uh hon wart and mitsuba um these are the only two plants in their genus
25:27 Crypt Tania um so I started growing mitsuba because I was aware of that from
25:33 the permaculture literature but then Sam there turned me onto hwart which is native it it grows better for me than
25:41 mitsuba it's native to Ontario anyway and some parts of the United States and uh and it does really well in the shade

25:47
so an excellent candidate for a um for a forest garden and uh and these are
25:53
delicious plants you you can eat them raw it's known as mitsuba is known as Japanese parsley they have sort of a
25:59
parsley esque flavor um but uh if you cook them lightly they make a a really
26:04
nice side dish and uh and and form a somewhat good uh ground cover as well
26:10
hostas hostas this is this is one Avenue that I I sort of like persuade people uh
26:17
or or try to get people to to try their hostage because so many people have these in their Gardens and either
26:22
they didn't know they were edible or they figure oh it's just you know it's it's a a novelty the hostas are not a
26:29
novelty they are fantastic vegetables it's one of my favorite crops um and uh it's the shoots in the spring so as a le
26:35
as the leaves emerge in the spring they're these tightly curled Spears and uh you can cut them all uh off the plant
26:43
and it will grow more so you just get one Harvest off each plant and uh they're they're really quite quite uh
26:50
mild in flavor uh I use a bucket to blanch mine quite often and this makes them more tender and uh and it also
26:57
means that you'll get a larger crop because they stretch for the light so it's a really good technique to use with
27:03
hostage it also reminds you to check on them uh if you have a bucket in your garden it's like it's it's sort of like
27:10
looking at you as you walk past and saying like oh you know check check to see where where we are now and then uh I
27:16
use you know I have so many hostes in my garden now that that I can't eat them all at once so I uh I will cook them uh
27:23
and then use a a hand blender to blend them up into a hosta sauce uh which I use with pasta uh I'll use it as sort of
27:31
a a base for sag paneer um I also love them roasted I just roast the choots in the oven a little olive oil a little
27:38
salt and pepper and they're fantastic um I use I use them to make kimchi instead of cabbage um they're they're so mild
27:46
and they they're a lot like cabbage actually in texture and so they they they they can be used in in any number
27:52
of different ways so eat your hoses just try them if you have them um oh one other thing about hoses they make a
27:58
bombproof ground cover this is why they're so popular in the plant industry it's not only that they're beautiful
28:04
it's they're they're extremely low maintenance you know it's you just stick it in the ground walk away and then come
28:11
back to harvest it's the like one of the easiest perennial vegetables to grow
28:16
milked this is a a really important plant to grow just for the monarch butterflies but we can share it with
28:22
them because milkweed offers four different perennial vegetables in the spring there's chots uh the uh the pods
28:29
when they're only about half size so about an inch and a half to two inches in in length um and then the unopened
28:35
flower buds uh make a nice broccoli um and then the silk inside the mature pods
28:40
can be used sort of as a vegan cheese you can use it on pizzas and such uh all of these should be cooked for about 10
28:46
minutes to render them edible um but after that they're they're excellent there are about five% of the population
28:53
have a sensitivity to milkweed so some people will throw up if they eat it so if you try just try a little bit to see
29:00
uh if your body can withstand it but I've been eating it for years I've served it to many many people and I've

29:05
only had two who have had a bad reaction so you know it's uh it's something that that we should all be planting more of

29:11
um the onion family offers a huge variety of different perennial Edibles

29:17
um these are Egyptian walking onions uh the they grow instead of flowers they

29:22
grow little Bubbles at the top of their stocks which get bigger and bigger until the stock Falls over and then they grow

29:27
from there um so they're uh they're walking around your garden and they Pro

29:33
every part of the plant is edible you can eat the underground bulbs you can eat the greens uh in the spring as green

29:38
onions and then the bubbles at the top of the stock you can just pluck them off and chop them up and sauté them like

29:44
onions a really easy to grow versatile uh perennial onion garlic chives uh have

29:51
been cultivated in China for hundreds if not thousands of years um these are much milder than the European chives that

29:58
you're used to really nice flavor um I throw them in salad sometimes but

30:05
lightly sauteed they're they're excellent uh you can also use the flowers in salads same with knotting

30:10
onion noting onion is native uh to Ontario and much of North America these

30:16
are beautiful beautiful onions often sold as ornamentals uh you can eat the the Young Greens they're also mild in

30:23
flavor and the flowers um are beautiful um as as flower decorations you can also

30:28
Infuse vinegar with them um this is the Telson leak bred by Telson Andrews in

30:33
Ottawa um she's a a permaculture plant plant breeder there and uh there are a number of different perennial leaks I

30:39
don't plant annual leaks anymore because I have so much production from my perennial leaks uh you just slice them

30:46
off the ground and then the leak pops back up so you get one Harvest off each plant but a lot of these will self seed

30:52
from bubbles there's also babington's leak which is a very useful plant to have and really easy to grow they take

30:59
care of themselves and then you just go out and harvest this is Welsh onion not

31:04
actually from whales uh these have been cultivated in parts of Asia uh for centuries and uh it's mainly for the

31:11
greens but you can also eat the the underground bulbs you can easily dig up a plant and divide it replant half of it

31:18
and then eat the other half um Ostrich Ferns my Nursery is called fiddlehead

31:24
nursery and it's named after the ostrich Fern um which has you know fiddleheads are one of the only perennial vegetables

31:31
that people recognize um and so it's a it's also a Whimsical name so that's why I chose it as my my Nursery it's also

31:37
native um and it forms a great ground cover a lot of people grow these in uh the understory of their Gardens and and

31:45
don't make use of them so like why not Harvest um your your fiddleheads so to harvest them sustainably you only take

31:52
two or three or or half or less of the fiddleheads off each plant uh because they they won't be able to survive if

31:58
you if you take them all uh so you just have to be aware of that but they they and you have to cook them for about 10

32:04
minutes to render them edible and safe to eat uh but they're you know pretty common in grocery stores in the spring

32:10
in North America so why not grow them in your garden if you have a shady spot um I grow indicator plants in my garden to

32:16
indicate when the wild plants are ready so the plant that I found find around me

32:22
uh are Ostrich Ferns wild leaks wood nettle stinging nettle and common milk

32:28
all of these I have small patches in my Gardens so when they come up in the spring when I see the wild leaks

32:34
emerging in in my in my forest garden I head to the hills and harvest I have

32:39
Acres um where I can Harvest from that's another one where you can absolutely

32:44
Harvest sustainably and in fact increase your stock of wild leaks Sam their put

32:49
out a video last year on how to increase the the uh wild leak population in your

32:54
Woods I have about seven acres of hardwood Bush and uh like a patch of about a meter square of um wild leaks

33:01
and I've started to thin those out and then replant them along the pathways so that uh I have an ever increasing amount

33:08
of wild leaks so there's a lot of concern about over harvesting but it's absolutely possible to harvest them in a

33:13
sustainable way uh wood nettle stinging nettle these are stinging plants I don't want a ton of them in my garden but I I

33:19
want some to let me know when the wild ones are ready um because they're excellent perennial vegetables and then common milk weed too that there's large

33:26
patches that I know where to go to when mine are coming up uh patient dock this

33:31
is the largest of the dock family uh many of you might be familiar with curly dock it's used in in similar ways um but

33:39
uh patient dock is larger and it's more mild in flavor so a a very nice perennial spinach plant uh that um you

33:47
can use just just as you would spinach it also provides um a broccoli so this

33:53
is an image of of three different perennial broccolis that are all ready at the same time so this is uh good King

33:59
Henry patience Dock and Turkish rocket um so uh poke weed is another one that I

34:05
sell through the nursery and uh and people never buy because it's poisonous this is the the most popular poisonous

34:12
plant uh poisonous edible plant in North America um poke weed is is a large Plant

34:19
it's beautiful in the garden every part of it is toxic but the shoots in the spring if you boil them for 10 minutes

34:25
and discard the water then that renders them entirely edible and you uh can then

34:31
fry them with butter or just put them in a soup or whatever and they're they're very delicious and really high in

34:36
nutrients so this is a very popular uh edible plant in uh in North America 50

34:43
years ago 75 years ago it was um there was a can a small canning industry using

34:48
poke weed uh so you could buy it in the supermarket um but for the indigenous people of North America it's been a very

34:55
popular uh Spring Green for many years I love poke weed and people are terrified

35:00
of edible or of poisonous plants but um but they shouldn't be they should be respectful of them and you can teach any

35:07
child that you know you shouldn't eat the leaves of rhubarb are poisonous but we're not afraid of it because we're

35:12
familiar with it it just you know I would encourage people to to think of

35:18

familiarity rather than fear um so yeah poke weed I I love poke weed I serve it

35:23

to everybody Every Spring uh and you get and it's a a huge Harvest that you get off each plant it's a it's a it's a

35:30

really large like bigger than asparagus for each plant so um so they're lovely lovely spring choots scores and era this

35:37

is one that has been cultivated uh for centuries in Europe for the root um it's

35:42

also known as black salfy uh the roots are delicious but each plant only has one Tap Root so you kill the plant to

35:48

harvest the root however it self seeds so you can eat the mom and let the babies live um and it's also really

35:57

good for uh a leaf leaf crop so the leaves are very mild in flavor and you can chop them up and put them in a salad

36:04

or cook them as you would spinach and then the unopen flower buds make a fantastic vegetable as well um seale

36:11

this is one that was popular in England 200 years ago there was a real fad eating seale as a perennial vegetable

36:18

they would use uh clay pots to force the young shoots and uh and then you know

36:23

they would cook them like asparagus this is a beautiful plant works beauti in a an ornamental garden and uh it's in

36:31

flavor it's kind of like a love child between asparagus and cabbage skuret is uh a root vegetable

36:39

that was popular in Roman times as well uh it was the emperor Tiberius is favorite vegetable uh skir you can eat

36:46

the CHS of skirret as well as the roots these are the roots of skirret they're related to carrots each plant has a

36:52

bunch of carrot-like roots they're smaller than carrots they're about the size of your fingers and um they're

36:58

they're very nice you can eat them raw they're good raw they're excellent roasted unfortunately I've developed an

37:04

allergy to scur it I ate it for years with no ill effects but now it it causes

37:10

a rash I uh I'm allergic to that and sunflower seeds these are the only two

37:15

Foods I'm allergic to which is really strange I'm The Perennial vegetable guy and I'm allergic to skirt what the heck anyway Solomon Seal

37:24

this is a beautiful perennial vegetable it forms a really great ground cover uh

37:29

it's about 3 to 4 feet tall these long arching stems with white flowers hanging

37:35

beneath uh it's it's beautiful and it's uh it's a really excellent uh asparagus

37:41

like vegetable it's actually distantly related to asparagus uh I like to blanch

37:46

mine as well using forcing pots um if I don't force them I like to cook them

37:52

they have a a bit of a a strange aftertaste that I'm not fond of uh when

37:57

they're raw but if you cook them that eliminates that completely but if you force them and they're they're white uh

38:04

so this is an image of both forced and unforced um Solomon Seal uh then the

38:10

white ones are really good raw it eliminates that uh that aftertaste

38:15

completely and I just I love chopping them up and throw them throwing them in salads they have a wonderful texture uh

38:21

very juicy um and then the the shoots on the left of this picture no I'm sorry on

38:26

the right of this pict picture are false Solomon Seal which is related and used in the same way these love the shade as

38:32

well they're they're excellent shade loving perennials uh seedless soil this is one of my favorite plants uh I I push

38:40

this on everybody everybody who comes to my Nursery I'm like try this Leaf people are amazed at the flavor of Sor it's

38:46

very sour um I I eat it every day there there are many different species of of

38:52

soril and seedless soril is my favorite for a number of reasons one is that it forms an excellent clumping ground cover

39:00

uh Ground Covers can be thought of in two different ways clumping ground covers and spreading ground covers the clumping ones are fantastic because they

39:07

never spread they they they stay in place they're very low maintenance especially for small spaces so I have a

39:13

patch that is in my demonstration garden that I planted 13 years ago I hardly ever have to weed this patch uh I never

39:20

have to water it uh and it's edible throughout the growing season these leaves stay tender from early spring

39:26

till the first snowfall it's incredible uh so a very productive leafy vegetable

39:33

that can be used Raw it's every salad I make has tons of soril in it and then I

39:38

make soral soup as well this is an egg sandwich with soril in it with a salad with soral uh I have tons of it so I

39:45

cook it down and put it in ice cube trays and freeze it for the winter uh to use in smoothies uh and to make soral

39:52

soup so this is uh soral groundnut stew uh that I made last winter um stinging

39:59

nettle uh some people come to my nursery and they say stinging nettle why on Earth would you grow that plant and then

40:04

other people come and like oh stinging nle I've been looking for this for years and so it's really people have have like

40:10

very different reactions to stinging nle but uh it's this The Sting isn't that bad the the thought of the sting is

40:17

worse than the sting itself um but I usually Harvest with gloves if I don't have gloves on you can sort of run your

40:22

fingers up the stem of the plant and uh and uh harvest in that way to to to avoid the sting uh and just like one

40:30

minute of cooking will completely eliminate the sting stinging there there's a theory out there that stinging

40:35

n stings because it's so high in nutrients that every herbivore out there

40:41

would be eating it down to the ground so it has to protect itself it's it's extremely nutrient dense and uh one you

40:48

know one of the most nutritious vegetables you can grow um so you can use it uh as as spinach you can dry it

40:54

drying it eliminates the thing and you can use it for tea or in soups and stews in the winter um Turkish rocket uh this

41:03

is um a bras uh native to the former USSR uh it's often forged in uh parts of

41:10

the former USSR like Georgia aan um Turkish rocket the the young leaves are

41:17

are are nice cooked I don't like them raw um but the the the unopen flower

41:23

buds the little broccoli that come off of this they are fantastic like a like a a broccoli Rob like a spicy broccoli

41:29

they're really good quite productive uh and then even when the flower's open you can still eat the Clusters as you would

41:35

broccoli um so quite a useful plant Udo is a giant perennial vegetable native to

41:41

Japan this has been forged for centuries in Japan and uh and cultivated uh in

41:46

Japan they cultivate these in tunnels underneath Tokyo uh where they grow these plants um in in pots and uh in

41:54
early spring you can find these in uh farmers markets in Japan so you you cook the young stocks these are much much
42:00
bigger than asparagus like a a mature plant will get to be 9t tall um so they're huge uh perennial
42:07
vegetables you cook them lightly just like three minutes and then peel the stock and then chop them up and uh have
42:13
like traditionally just like a a sauce of sesame oil and soy sauce uh with some
42:19
sesame seeds thrown in really nice uh dish I I love having these Every Spring
42:25
um this is the the shes uh that I've blanched and then yeah cooking those
42:30
wood nettle is related to stinging nle this is native to North America and it's a nicer vegetable than stinging nettle
42:36
the choots are more succulent uh they're more substantial than the shotes of stinging nettle um and uh and equally
42:44
nutritious so uh there's Acres of these down in the flood Plains um if you can
42:50
recognize wood Nal uh go out and get some like it's it's great because if when you harvest it um your you're
42:57
picking the choots and then the plants will bounce right back so you can't over Harvest this it's uh it's a it's a
43:03
really great uh worthwhile spring vegetable to know they do sting uh so
43:08
generally I wear gloves to harvest them but I I harvest so much that I I make a sauce out of it and throw it in in
43:14
yogurt containers in my freezer and have it all winter um so these are barbecued
43:20
wood metal shoots um really good this is just a variet oh there's Lage is is fantastic the Lage Leaf there that's uh
43:28
also the young leaves of um horseradish are edible they're spicy they're not as spicy as the root so these are some
43:34
dishes this is some ways that I sort of use perennial vegetables and you know if I have a whole bunch of different
43:39
perennial vegetables I throw them in eggs and greens or make latkas from them
43:44
um another way soups and stews this is you know a really easy way to use a whole bunch of different weird and
43:50
wonderful perennial vegetables all at once um green sauce I I make a lot of
43:55
green sauce from the various vegetables like I have I have too much food coming out of my garden all at once in the
44:02
spring it's kind of overwhelming so I do like to make a whole bunch of green sauce to put away for the winter um and
44:09
so I have you know I'm eating from my garden all winter so I just use um old um uh yogurt containers uh and then and
44:17
then throw them you know put them put them in labels I have a small chest freezer and so I fill that up with uh
44:23
with green sauce to use all winter Pizza it's a great way to use pennial vegetables uh perennial salads I always throw a
44:29
bunch of flowers you know there's there's a whole bunch of plants with edible flowers and uh like why not throw
44:35
them on your salads the only reason we don't see flowers in the grocery stores is because they Wilt too quickly for
44:41
them to carry them right it's like a and and they they it's just so easy to
44:46
impress people with edible flowers and they're also highly nutritious so so why not throw more edible flowers into our
44:53
meals anise hup is uh is a native uh mint family relative that doesn't spread
45:00
underground bumblebees love this plant a whole bunch of different pollinators love this plant and the leaves taste

45:06
like sweet licorice if you like licorice my goodness start growing in E his up I throw these in salads for sure any any

45:12
salad I'll throw some leaves of this in a little goes a long way too because they're quite flavorful and then I dry

45:17
this for tea as well uh the leaves of Basswood I'm really I'm really interested in uh tree bearing perennial

45:24
vegetables uh I'm I yeah so the young leaves of Basswood are excellent the seeds can also be roasted

45:31
and used uh as a as a a chocolate substitute uh my friend Ken Ro made me a

45:38
made us a chocolate cake once using uh Basswood seeds I'm gonna stop there I

45:44
see we're uh we're getting on to uh to time I'm sorry I've sort of just like been Rolling Along here I never want you

45:51
to stop I never want you to stop it's so good uh if people have questions

45:57
um please go ahead and put them in the chat that was really energizing and you know I have a fair amount of perennial

46:03
vegetables but not nearly as many as you and it just gets me excited for spring like to see my uh Fuki come up and my

46:09
Turkish rockets and then plant a whole heck of a bunch more so this was so good your Your Enthusiasm is infectious I

46:16
want to come and walk around your garden and have you be like try this try that please please dud everybody's welcome

46:23
are uh question are there any that you found that are deer resistant or or some that are better than others maybe you

46:29
know I have a couple of dogs that do a pretty good job of keeping deer away from my house so so I I can't really

46:35
answer that like my my hosta shoots I get to them before the deer do um generally um most of these perennial

46:44
vegetables like the animals don't even really recognize them I have a lot of rabbits on my property and uh and they

46:49
don't seem to bother many of my perennials so I'm it might be that I'm just lucky in the deer haven't really

46:55
clued in to to what's out there so I think hasta notoriously gets ate up by deer pretty quickly there's a question

47:01
here about different zones someone's in San Diego and they're like I love the ones you're showing but is there a book

47:07
or a resource you would Point them to to find the different uh perennial vegetables that work in their zone so

47:13
the one by Eric tonm uh covers a range of different climate zones so there's a lot that he writes about that that I

47:19
salivate over that I can't grow in my area so that that's a good one also Martin Crawford in England uh has a

47:25
milder climate than I do so his his book will also cover a whole bunch uh it's just called how to grow perennial

47:31
vegetables perfect uh bradden ask are there any lists of perennial vegetables with their annual uh productivity so I'm

47:39
thinking about I think it's like a some quantifying the productivity yeah it's a

47:44
good question I don't know of any lists off hand uh in general perennial

47:49
vegetables are less productive than annual vegetables because annuals have been bred over the centuries to be

47:54
highly productive uh but they require a lot more maintenance a lot more fertility um and it's easier to cultivate like a larger area with

48:01
perennial vegetables and then get enough food uh through that yeah well just on

48:07
that question since you have all this experience if somebody was starting a new with perennial vegetables how many

48:13
of each variety would you suggest they start with and then determine whether they like them and then to grow them to

48:19
more like what's a good place to start yeah one or two of each plant that's how I started getting and then you know and
48:25
then you can learn how to propagate them because that's that's huge and so you want more diversity um so I would only
48:31
get one or two of each plant and then learn how to propagate those perfect um how do you attract customers to come to
48:37
your site and buy plants that's that's a great question I need to answer that
48:42
myself yeah I do you know I I do social media uh I do Instagram and Facebook uh
48:48
and then a lot of it is word of mouth I have a lot of repeat customers coming back uh I have a table at the GF organic
48:53
conference every year and I do talks there as well so so yeah people are generally I I hope that people spread
49:00
the word on their own because I'm I'm not great at marketing yeah yep absolutely uh it looks like sker you
49:06
have your hand raised you can hop on in if you if you want to if that's you um uh yeah just just really quick uh on
49:13
books uh stepen barow has a one called Around the World in 80 plants and he's
49:19
at the Arctic Circle in Norway um and so his stuff is really reliable for cold
49:24
zon so I I really recommend that for the uh cold climate people is to look at
49:30
Steven barstow's book but the other two books Ben mentioned are both also those those are the three main books perfect I
49:37
agree I love stepen Bar's book yep yep thank you sker appreciate it and uh guys
49:42
uh unless there's any final questions let's let Ben get on with his day um what would be the place to point people
49:48
to for all things Ben Caesar to come to your garden to buy your plants that sort of thing uh I guess just Google
49:54
fiddlehead Nursery uh and my website has profiles of all the plants that I that I
50:00
talk about um and so you know not only do I sell them but I give lots of
50:06
information about how to use them uh how big they get and what you know the Sun and shade requirements and all that
50:11
stuff so go to my website that's awesome I really appreciate how much you shared how to use them how to cook them the
50:17
best ways to cook them that's often a stumbling point it's like cool I grew it now what so thank you so much ben this
50:23
was really energizing really great information um thanks everybody next up is Ken Asos and he he'll be on in about
50:29
four minutes so we'll hop off and we'll hop on that Zoom link and I'll see you all then thanks again Ben have a good day we'll see you soon
thank you take
50:37
care great [Music]
50:43
show it's nice that P is there to speak up and help network the permaculture
50:50
movement it's only capturing a fraction of the movement that are officially involved and are members so
50:57
um boy if if P could get all the perac cultures or half of them or a fourth of
51:02
them to all sign up and working together CH could just really do so much
51:09
more just every one of my 2,000 students and all the students that have been
51:15
through the course wherever they are in the world have in some way made a profound impact and we can do much more
51:22

if we could link them up and support them strategically so that's why I'm asking for support for fire