

70+ Favourite Plants for Edible Forest Gardens in Ontario/Québec (Hardiness Zones 4b/5a) - by Bonita Ford

Layer	Size	Name	Notes	Fixes Nitrogen	Attracts Beneficial Insects (eg. apiaceae, asteraceae, lamiaceae, brassicaceae)	Moderate site conditions (sun to part sun; sandy clay to sand clay loam)	Drier site conditions (sandier soil and full sun)	Wet site conditions (flood-plain)	Juglone-tolerance
1 shrub to large tree	12-60'	alder (<i>Alnus</i> spp.)	fixes nitrogen and fast-growing for wind-shelter	x			promising	favourite	
2 tree	25-35' std; 5-12' dwarf	apple (<i>Malus domestica</i> or <i>pumila</i>)	edible fruit, good for winter storage (however, can be prone to fire blight)			favourite			
3 tree	25-30'	Asian pear (<i>Pyrus pyrifolia</i> or <i>bretschneideris</i>)	edible fruit, good for winter storage (however, can be prone to fire blight)			honourable mention			
4 tree large	75-100'	basswood (<i>Tilia americana</i>)	edible young leaves for salads; flowers for tea; apparently coppices well			favourite			
5 tree large	75-100'	black walnut (<i>Juglans nigra</i>)	edible nuts (though hard to crack); sap can be boiled syrup; nut husks and leaves for medicine; beautiful wood (produces juglone)			honourable mention			favourite
6 tree	40' std	mulberry (<i>Morus alba</i>)	edible fruit			promising			promising
7 tree	25-40' std; 8-15' dwarf	pear (<i>Pyrus communis</i>)	edible fruit			promising	promising		
8 tree	15-18'	plum "Toka" (<i>Prunus salicina</i> "Toka")	delicious edible fruit (ours fruited in 3 years)			favourite			
9 tree	20'	sour cherry (<i>Prunus cerasus</i>)	edible fruit				promising		
10 shrub large	6-12'	elderberry (<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>)	edible flowers and fruit for cooking and medicine			favourite		promising	
11 shrub large	6-20'	false indigo (<i>Amorpha fruticosa</i>)	fixes nitrogen, apparently fast-growing in our cold humid climate	x		promising			

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12	shrub/trailing vine	8'	gojiberry (<i>Lycium barbarum</i>)	edible shoots, best in spring (however, other people have a hard time establishing it in the region; ours is in a warm sheltered microclimate and grow rampantly, so must be cut back twice a year or will take over; it took 3 or 4 years to start fruiting)			honourable mention			
13	shrub	5'	haskap (<i>Lonicera caerulea</i>)	edible fruit (use row-cover or net to protect fruit from birds)			favourite		promising	
14	shrub large	12-20'	hazelbert (<i>Corylus x hybrid</i>)	edible nuts (we planted on two different years and they're having a hard time getting established)			promising			promising
15	shrub large	6-12'	high bush cranberry (<i>Viburnum trilobum</i>)	edible fruit for cooking					promising	
16	shrub large	12-15'	Manchurian apricot (<i>Prunus mandschurica</i>)	edible fruit (we planted on two different years and they're having a hard time getting established)			promising			
17	shrub	4-8'	raspberries (<i>Rubus spp.</i>)	edible fruit (however, they'll spread, so are best for a simple polyculture; use row-cover or net to protect fruit from birds)			favourite			favourite
18	shrub	3-5'	red and white currants (<i>Ribes rubrum</i> or <i>R. silvestre</i>)	edible fruit (these were our fastest shrub to establish and are our most abundant fruit)			favourite	promising		
19	vine		river grape (<i>Vitis riparia?</i>)	edible fruit					favourite	
20	shrub	8-20'	Siberian pea shrub (<i>Caragana arborens</i>)	(however, does not grow rapidly in our cold humid climate, so not ideal for chop and drop)	x		honourable mention			

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21	herbaceous		anise hyssop (Agastache foeniculum)	edible leaves for salads, tea; for pollinators; tolerates part-shade		x	favourite			
22	herbaceous		arugula (Eruca sativa)	hardy reseeding annual; broadcast seeds grow well on wood chips in part sun		x	favourite			
23	herbaceous		arugula perennial (Diptotaxis tenuifolia)	edible greens for salads (slow to appear in spring; possibly sensitive to extreme cold temperatures, below -25C, so mulch well in fall)		x	favourite			
24	herbaceous		asparagus (Asparagus officinalis)	edible shoots (however, they'll take some space, so are best for a simple polyculture)			honourable mention			
25	herbaceous		bee balm (Monarda didyma)	flowers and leaves for tea; for pollinators and hummingbirds (prefers part sun)		x	favourite	promising	promising	favourite
26	herbaceous		beetberry (Chenopodium capitatum)	reseeding annual; edible greens and small fruits for salads (however, reseeds like crazy)			honourable mention			
27	herbaceous		calendula (Calendula officinalis)	reseeding annual; medicinal and edible flowers and leaves		x	favourite			
28	herbaceous		catnip or cat mint (Nepeta cataria)	edible leaves for teas (however, spreads easily in moderate conditions)		x	honourable mention	favourite		favourite
29	herbaceous		cattail (Typha latifolia, T. angustifolia)	edible shoots, flowers, pollen and roots for cooking; best to harvest from clean sites with no concerns of water pollution (however, in very wet conditions, they spread more quickly than other plants)					honourable mention	

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30	herbaceous		chives (<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>)	edible leaves for salads and cooking, among first greens in spring; for beneficial insects		?	favourite	promising	promising	favourite
31	herbaceous vine		cinnamon yam (<i>Dioscorea batatas</i>)	edible tuber for cooking (slow to appear in spring; possibly sensitive to extreme cold temperatures, below -25C, so mulch well in fall)			favourite			
32	herbaceous		comfrey (<i>Symphytum officinale</i>)	chop and drop for potassium, compost activator; for medicine and pollinators (however, choose a good location, it's there to stay!)		x	honourable mention			
33	herbaceous		common daylily or orange daylily (<i>Hemerocallis fulva</i>)	edible shoots for salad or cooking, edible flowers and tubers; among first greens in spring (however, spreads easily in moderate conditions)		?	honourable mention		favourite	
34	herbaceous		crosnes or Chinese artichoke (<i>Stachys affinis</i>)	edible tuber (thrives in sandy soils)		x	favourite			
35	herbaceous		echinacea (<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>)	roots for medicine; beautiful flowers for pollinators (apparently leaves and flowers are edible)		x	favourite			
36	herbaceous		garlic chives (<i>Allium tuberosum</i>)	edible leaves for salads and cooking, among first greens in spring; for beneficial insects		?	favourite	promising	promising	favourite
37	herbaceous		gobo or cultivated burdock (<i>Arctium lapa</i>)	edible roots		x		favourite		
38	herbaceous		Good King Henry (<i>Chenopodium bonus-henricus</i>)	edible leaves (more palatable when cooked)			favourite			

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39	herbaceous ground cover		ground ivy (Glechoma hederacea)	spreads quickly, easy to remove; leaves for medicine (among first flowers in spring for pollinators)		x	favourite			
40	herbaceous vine		groundnut (Apios americana)	edible tubers for cooking; fixes nitrogen (slow to appear in spring; possibly sensitive to extreme cold temperatures, below -25C, so mulch well in fall)	x	?	favourite			
41	herbaceous		horseradish (Armoracia rusticana)	edible roots		x	favourite	favourite		
42	herbaceous		hosta (Funkia spp.)	edible leaves cooked (H. montana and H. sieboldii are most popular for eating; very shade-tolerant)			favourite			favourite
43	large herbaceous	7'	Jerusalem Artichoke or sunchoke (Helianthus tuberosus)	edible roots, best harvested in fall or spring (however, they'll take some space, so are best for a simple polyculture)		x	honourable mention	honourable mention		
44	herbaceous		Korean celery (Dystaenia takesimana)	edible leaves; flowers for pollinators		x	promising	promising		
45	herbaceous		lavender (Lavendula angustifolia?)	medicinal and edible flowers and leaves; beautiful flowers for pollinators		x	favourite	promising		
46	herbaceous		lemon balm (Melissa officinalis)	for tea and pollinators (however, spreads easily in moderate conditions)		x	honourable mention		promising	
47	herbaceous		lovage (Levisticum officinale)	edible leaves and stems		x	favourite			

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48	herbaceous		lupin perennial (<i>Lupinus perennis</i>)	fixes nitrogen, grows back quickly, so good for chop and drop; beautiful flowers for pollinators; not edible (spreads easily by seed)	x	x	favourite	promising		
49	herbaceous	4'+	marshmallow (<i>Althaea officinalis</i>)	flowers, leaves and roots for medicine; edible leaves; for pollinators		?	favourite			
50	large herbaceous	6'	maximillian sunflower (<i>Helianthus maximiliani</i>)	edible shoots; for pollinators; apparently good deer screen		x	favourite			
51	herbaceous		mint (<i>Mentha</i> spp.)	for tea and pollinators; makes a reasonable ground-cover (however, spreads easily in moderate conditions)		x	honourable mention		favourite	
52	herbaceous		mountain mint (<i>Pycnanthemum virginianum</i>)	edible leaves; a favourite for diverse pollinators (does not spread like mentha spp.)		x	favourite			
53	herbaceous		onion Egyptian walking (<i>Allium cepa proliferum</i>)	edible leaves for salads and cooking, among first greens in spring; for beneficial insects		?	favourite	promising	promising	favourite
54	herbaceous		onion perennial or Welsh (<i>Allium fistulosum</i>)	edible leaves for salads and cooking, among first greens in spring; for beneficial insects		?	favourite	promising	promising	favourite
55	herbaceous		oregano (<i>Origanum vulgare</i>)	edible leaves for salads and cooking; leaves for medicine		x	favourite	favourite		
56	herbaceous		purple top white globe turnip (<i>Brassica rapa</i>)	hardy reseeding annual; broadcast seeds grow well on wood chips in part sun		x	favourite			
57	herbaceous		ramp or wood leek (<i>Allium tricoccum</i>)	edible leaves for salads and cooking, among first greens in spring; for beneficial insects		?	favourite	promising	promising	favourite

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58	herbaceous		red Russian kale (<i>Brassica oleracea</i>)	hardy reseeding annual; broadcast seeds grow well on wood chips in part sun		x	favourite			
59	herbaceous		sea kale (<i>Crambe maritima</i>)	edible broccoli-like flowers (seems to prefer full sun)		x	favourite			
60	herbaceous		sedum or orpine (<i>Sedum telephium</i> or <i>S. spectabile</i>)	edible leaves (tolerates shade)		?	favourite			
61	herbaceous		Siberian kale (<i>Brassica napus</i>)	hardy reseeding annual; broadcast seeds grow well on wood chips in part sun		x	favourite			
62	herbaceous		silverweed (<i>Potentilla anserina</i>)	edible leaves and roots (however, spreads quickly by runners)		?	honourable mention	favourite		
63	herbaceous		skirret (<i>Sium sisarum</i>)	edible tuber; flowers for pollinators		x	favourite			favourite
64	herbaceous		Solomon's seal (<i>Polygonatum biflorum</i>)	edible shoots for cooking (tolerates shade)			favourite			favourite
65	herbaceous		St. John's wort (<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>)	leaves and flowers for medicine; for pollinators (short-lived plant)		x	favourite			