

Summary & Resources - Kilrush Food Forest October 2025 OAK Field Day



Cultivating the Commons: Urban Food Forest for Ecological and Community Health

Event Summary

“It’s important for all of Lexington, for the whole continent really, that we take spaces like this and try to restore some ecological function to them.” - Leandro “Nachie” Braga

Participants who joined this OAK Field Day in Northwest Lexington on a gray October afternoon heard Leandro “Nachie” Braga’s description of the importance of Kilrush Food Forest, a three-acre urban greenspace initiative that Nachie and his company, Geomancer Permaculture, have stewarded since 2020. Geomancer and a network of volunteers are employing conservation practices to restore and redesign the riparian corridor with desirable plant communities and wildlife habitat at a gentle, sustainable pace. Nachie introduced the participants to dozens of native and adapted plant species, described permaculture design principles in action and shared the realities of nurturing long-term relationships that protect the environment and nourish people.

Food Forest as Social Ecology

Nachie explained that taking on a project like Kilrush Food Forest is a commitment to being present in the space for many years. This practice allows plant communities to flourish slowly and deliberately and allows for experimentation, trial and error by working within the natural evolution of the forest’s development — hopefully leading to low-maintenance upkeep.

The neighbors living in the community nearby have been intentionally integrated into the journey of Kilrush Food Forest since its inception. Wolf Run Creek flows along the eastern side of the property, connecting it directly to the local watershed. Since volunteers and land stewards have worked to clear out invasive plants like Amur honeysuckle, the view of Wolf Run Creek has opened up, making it an attractive place for kids to come engage with nature and play. Nachie says these kids will often take what they have learned about Geomancer’s work back to their parents, who then become interested in the project.

One neighbor, Reggie, who can see the entire greenspace from his front yard, shared his experience and appreciation of Kilrush's efforts at the Field Day. Seeing the flowering pollinator plantings attract butterflies reminded Reggie of spending time at his grandmother's house when he was a kid, and he reflected on how he no longer sees large numbers of butterflies like he used to see at her house. Geomancer's work is starting to restore the plant and animal diversity that he remembers.

Urban Land as Working Land

The greenway around Kilrush Food Forest is owned by the City of Lexington. It contains underground sanitary sewer lines, above-ground utility poles and borders a major highway. These utilities significantly influence the growth and development of the greenspace. Only certain trees may be planted under the utility lines to accommodate maintenance, and permanent structures cannot be built on the property, which is in a floodplain. In place of picnic tables and shaded structures, the Food Forest uses cut-up tree trunks for benches and climbing structures (and even mushroom cultivation!), and trees provide shade and a noise barrier to foster an engaging environment for kids and the community.

Geomancer partners with multiple key partners as Kilrush develops, including the Lexington Division of Environmental Services and the Fayette County Conservation District. Funded through public water quality and urban tree canopy grants, private donors and personal volunteers' time and sweat, the public Food Forest is not yet eligible to receive federal conservation cost-share from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), despite being a role model of many conservation practices, such as [Riparian Forest](#) and [Herbaceous Buffer](#), [Wildlife Habitat Planting](#), [Invasive Species Removal](#) and [Tree and Shrub Establishment](#). Efforts are underway to register Kilrush as the first publicly-owned farm in Fayette County, which would make it eligible for NRCS cost-share programs.

Rich Soils and a Richness of Plants

As a public space adjacent to people's homes, aesthetics matter at Kilrush Food Forest; charismatic blooms are planted in intentional rows to signal "cues to care." Mulched paths follow previous animal trails and meander from front to back in the Forest's creekside woods. Dead hedges – piles of cut branches and vegetative debris stacked to accelerate decomposition and restore soil health – are shielded from view by large cut logs serving as "architectural features." The mulch and dead hedges contribute to the living soils that Geomancer is trying to re-create at Kilrush Food Forest: fungally-dominated soils that mimic forest conditions and accelerate the shift from the greenways' monoculture of mowed grass lawn. Strawberries and fast-growing native plants like Green-and-gold, along with naturalized species like Plantain, are used as a ground cover to bring photosynthesis and stability to the cleared or mulched soils. By mimicking the systems and design of a natural riparian woodland, this intentional Food Forest design seeks to speed up the process of healing and restoring the successional forest.

Nachie introduced participants to a variety of plants and their roles within the natural community. One of the plants discussed was "Sochan" (*Rudbeckia laciniata*), whose spring greens can be harvested and consumed. Additionally, Nachie highlighted the "Three Cousins," an adaptation of the Three Sisters planting technique, which includes Jerusalem Artichokes, American Groundnut and Wild Mint (*Mentha arvensis*). Blending native species already thriving onsite with plantings of native perennials

and annuals, Geomancer is providing multifunctional benefits to the Forest's neighbors and residents: plant, animal and people alike!

Tool Tips

Nachie provided a practical show-and-tell of many tools that Geomancer Permaculture uses to tend to the flourishing forest, including soil knives (also known as hori hori), pruning snips and snips for cutting erosion control netting and tree tubes. Small loppers, which have gears to make the work easier, are also used. For larger branches, there are larger loppers from [Fiskars](#); however, these are not ideal for precise cuts, as their blades do not bypass the anvil, leading to crushed tissue that can allow more room for disease. Hand saws, particularly the [Silky](#) brand from Japan, are utilized for more careful cuts. Additionally, they use some electric tools, including a battery-powered reciprocating saw, an electric 18-inch chainsaw and a battery-powered string trimmer that has been converted to use a forester blade instead of plastic string. A rogue hoe is effective for getting underneath winter creeper, while a digging iron or "spud bar" provides leverage against heavy trees, stones or other objects.

Reach out!

If you have additional questions about the Field Day at Kilrush Food Forest or would like to learn more about conservation practices and the Natural Resource Conservation Service programs, please reach out to [OAK's Conservation Outreach Coordinator](#). You can also directly contact NRCS by finding your [local NRCS office](#).

Gratitude

OAK is grateful to Nachie Braga for the time and energy he invested in creating this Field Day with OAK, and to Geomancer Permaculture and all the volunteers for the pruning, weeding, spreading of mulch and designing of Kilrush Food Forest. Thanks to Heather Silvanik from the Fayette County Conservation District and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service for supporting the event.

This event was supported by a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Related Resource Links:

Geomancer Permaculture

- [patreon.com/geomancerpermaculture](https://www.patreon.com/geomancerpermaculture)
- social media: [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)
- [youtube.com/@GeomancerPermaculture](https://www.youtube.com/@GeomancerPermaculture)

OAK Resources:

- [Annual Organic Farming Conference](#) - Save the date for OAK's 15th Annual Organic Farming Conference, *Cultivation Connections; Growing Organic Together for 15 Years*, January 30-31,

2026, at Kentucky State University's Harold R. Benson Research and Demonstration Farm in Frankfort, Kentucky.

- [Organic Production Assistance Program](#) - Organic production consultation services provide dedicated technical assistance to Kentucky farmers who are currently using or interested in adopting or expanding organic practices.
- [OAK Transition Program](#) - Organic Transition specialists assist farmers who are interested in transitioning to USDA-certified organic production. Organic Specialists are available for one-on-one consultations, providing a personal level of service and technical assistance on-site, at the farmer's convenience.
- [Join OAK today!](#) The sustainable food and farming network in Kentucky is growing, and together, we can create a thriving local food system. Your support and participation helps OAK deliver educational programming, provide community outreach and enhance market opportunities for growers across Kentucky. Receive discounts on OAK events and other member benefits!
- [Sign up for OAK newsletters](#) - For farmers and consumers, OAK offers a variety of regular communications to stay connected to Kentucky food and farming news, research and events.
- [OAK YouTube](#) - View recordings, snapshots and lessons learned from host farmers in past conference and field day playlists.
- [Suppliers and Farm Resources](#) on OAK's Find-A-Farm Directory.

Native Plant and Soil Health Resources

- [Pollinator-Friendly Native Plant Lists | Xerces Society](#)
- [Invasive Plant Threats - Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet](#)
- [Invasive Species Fact Sheets](#) - Kentucky Invasive Plant Council
- [Native Plant Suppliers & Service Providers](#) - Kentucky Native Plant Society
- [Kentucky's Native Alternatives to Invasive Plants](#) - If looking to replace invasives with other plants, this a great place to start.
Soul Fire Farm's [How Alive Is My Soil?](#)
- [Cornell Soil Health Manual](#) - Cornell University's College of Ag and Life Sciences
- [Building Soil Health in the South](#) - Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF)

Conservation Resources

- [Kentucky Conservation Districts & Fayette County Conservation District](#)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 - USDA [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)-Kentucky](#)
 - [How to Start a Farm: Beginning Farmers and Ranchers](#)
 - Find your county's office in [West Kentucky](#) or [East Kentucky](#)
 - [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)-Kentucky](#)
 - Cost-Share Practices: [Hedgerow Planting](#), [Invasive Species Removal \(Brush Management\)](#), [Tree-Shrub Establishment](#), [Tree Shrub Site Preparation](#), [Tree and Shrub Pruning](#), [Riparian Forest Buffer](#), [Riparian Herbaceous Cover](#), [Conservation Cover](#), [Wildlife Habitat Planting](#)
- [Kentucky Prescribed Fire Council](#)