

Story to Sell the Food Forest Idea in North Bay, Ontario

As the sun set behind the hills of North Bay, Ontario, the town hall filled with eager residents. Among them was Sarah, a dedicated gardener known for her love of the land. Tonight, she was curious about a new concept that promised to revolutionize their way of living—food forests.

The air buzzed with anticipation as Emma, an environmental advocate, stepped to the podium. Her eyes shone with excitement, and her voice carried the promise of transformation. "Good evening, everyone. I'm here to share a vision with you—a vision of sustainable abundance, resilience, and harmony with nature. This is the promise of a food forest."

Intrigued, Sarah leaned forward, her skepticism mingling with curiosity.

Emma began to weave her tale, painting a vivid picture with her words. "Imagine a place where fruit trees, shrubs, herbs, vines, and vegetables grow together, supporting each other just as they do in a natural ecosystem. This isn't just a garden, but a thriving, self-sustaining food forest."

She described various plants suited to North Bay's hardiness zone 4b, such as the resilient Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) and its variety *Corylus americana* var. *rubra*, known for their delicious nuts and hardiness. She also mentioned the hardy American Plum (*Prunus americana*) and the beautiful Daylily (*Hemerocallis* spp.), which adds vibrant color to the garden.

Sarah's mind wandered to her garden, already filled with native plants like *Echinacea purpurea*, known for its beautiful flowers and medicinal properties. Could a food forest be the next step?

Emma continued, introducing other hardy plants suited to North Bay's conditions. "Consider the Chinese Chestnut (*Castanea mollissima*), valued for its sweet nuts, and the versatile Squash (*Cucurbita pepo* var. *pepo*). These plants not only thrive in our climate but also support a diverse ecosystem. Other excellent choices include the nitrogen-fixing Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) and the nutrient-rich Jerusalem Artichoke (*Helianthus tuberosum*)."

She also spoke about herbs like Thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*) and Sage (*Salvia officinalis*), which thrive in North Bay's acidic and thin soils. These herbs not only add flavor to meals but also attract pollinators and beneficial insects.

The idea of a diverse, resilient ecosystem working with nature, not against it, captivated Sarah. Emma then shared a parable that resonated deeply with the audience:

"There once was a gardener who worked for God, trusting in God's provision and recognizing the divine within herself and all of God's creation. She did not dominate the land but respected the free will of herself and others, including her family, friends, and colleagues. She learned to forgive, love, and accept people as they were, speaking the truth yet never forcing it. She knew she was worthy to receive divine revelation and always tested the spirits to ensure they came from God.

As the day came for the gardener to meet her Creator, she did so with love and kindness for all creation in her heart. This is the spirit we must embrace to transform our land into something beautiful and sustainable."

The room was silent, absorbed in the story. Sarah felt a surge of hope. The risks were real, but so were the rewards. Emma's vision of a food forest wasn't just about plants; it was about cultivating a community, respecting nature, and working together with love and kindness.

Emma's voice softened as she made her final plea. "Imagine North Bay as a model of sustainability, drawing visitors and experts, fostering education and innovation. It's a vision we can achieve together, but it starts with a decision—to embrace this new way of thinking, to invest in our land and community."

She concluded with a heartfelt call to action. "Join me in this journey. Let's create a legacy of abundance and resilience for ourselves and future generations. Together, we can make North Bay a beacon of hope and sustainability."

Sarah stood, her heart filled with purpose. The time for change was now. With the support of her neighbors and the guidance of experts like Emma, she embarked on a journey to transform her land into a thriving food forest—a legacy for future generations in North Bay, Ontario.