

## SITE SELECTION

First read the comments under “Ethics.”

Observe. Look around your neighborhood and determine which plots of land are abandoned, unkept urban spaces. Pick a site that isn’t weed-wacked very often, a place that looks like no one cares for it. Observe the progress of the sun across your site. Which corners stay shady? Which portions get filtered sun? (These places will stay moist longer after a rain.) What is the soil like? It will be harder for plants to thrive in heavily compacted soil, or spaces that are overrun with Bermuda grass. Do a little bit of historical research (ask somebody?) to find out whether it is a known toxic site such as a prior gas station – you wouldn’t want to grow your food there. Access: will people be able to return to your chosen spot to harvest the food? For starters, pick sites you pass often in your weekly commute so that you can observe your results and learn from them.

Interact. You can stealthily sneak onto your target site and cultivate and weed a patch of soil. Or not. Results will vary. Observe the results you achieve, and record them on the FVGGLA YahooGroup, so that we all can learn from your experiences.

## WHAT TO DO ABOUT WATER

Your options include:

- Timing: bombing with the rains. veggies should grow well all winter in a non-drought year
- Irrigating: occasionally returning to the site hauling water
- Plant selection: matching plant varieties to site conditions. Try varieties which are labeled “drought tolerant” or were developed for “dry farming”
- Shading: spaces with some afternoon shade should retain more moisture
- Overspray: finding a site where someone’s sprinkler waste waters the space. Caution: avoid industrial greywater/purple pipe
- Grading: planting into a depression in the earth. It will infiltrate more water during a rainstorm and should stay moist longer as soils dry out
- Mulching: see “Soil” elsewhere in this handout

## RESOURCES

How do you make seedballs? basic seedball video  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWvp\\_EoRxy0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWvp_EoRxy0)

FAQ’s about toxins, water, and staying “just this side of the law” are in our Wisdom Database  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FVGGLA/database>

**Environmental Change-Makers**  
**[www.EnviroChangeMakers.org](http://www.EnviroChangeMakers.org)**

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## Edible Seed Bombs

*food gone wild*

### DEFINITIONS

**Feral vegetables** = Vegetables which like our LA cityscape so much that they will naturalize and provide free public food.

**Guerrilla Gardening** = “Gardening public space with or without permission.”-- David Tracey. “The land that is guerrilla gardened is usually abandoned or neglected by its legal owner and the guerrilla gardeners take it over (‘squat’) to grow plants. Guerrilla gardeners believe in re-considering land ownership in order to reclaim land from perceived neglect or misuse and assign a new purpose to it.” -- Wikipedia

**Seed balls** are a delivery method for seeds that help them survive to germination (less chance of being eaten by birds, scattered by wind, etc). After that, the plants are on their own. -- HeavyPetal

### THE MISSION

Inspired by a story of a town in the UK that grew all its own veggies -- and worried by demand at L.A. food pantries and the vast numbers of people in situations of economic insecurity -- we set out to cultivate a supply of free public food in L.A.

The SeedBomb aspect of this project is an experiment with feral vegetables to see if they will naturalize and provide food with next-to-no gardening care.

### DISCLAIMERS

1. The idea of free public food and vegetables gone wild is completely an experiment. We don’t know if it will actually work. Many vegetables seem to naturalize okay in small-scale settings in backyards. This project takes the experiment to a larger scale – just in case it might work.
2. The Guerilla Gardening tradition is to remain anonymous. With regards to offering free public food, there might be considerable wisdom in this policy. Be careful about how you distribute information about your food growing sites. It might be wise to use an intermediary third party such as Fallen Fruit. Harvesters should be cautioned to partake “at their own risk.”
3. We aren’t going to tell you where to put your SeedBombs. We aren’t recommending particular sites, etc. Please be respectful of (or at least clever about) trespassing signs and laws. Remember that we’re striving to cultivate *food*, not cultivate conflict or ill will.

## ETHICS and BEST PRACTICES

Feral Vegetable / Seed Bombing Do's and Don'ts:

### THE DO'S:

- Look for orphaned / abandoned urban land. Ensure that there is access (i.e. no fencing) so that people will be able to harvest the food.
- Try to assure there will be adequate growing conditions. If there is insufficient light and no obvious soil for the plants to anchor themselves, they will eventually perish.
- Ensure the site is not due for imminent construction so that the plants can thrive there for a while. At the same time, regard your guerrilla plot as impermanent – you're gaining what you can from this present growing season, even if your garden gets destroyed in the future.
- Time your seed bombing with the rains. See "Water" elsewhere in this handout.
- Match seed selection to the seasons. Strive for a diversity of plants: vegetables, nitrogen-fixing legumes, pollinator-attracting flowers.
- Allow your plants to set seed. Birds, wind, and nature will plant the next generation of food for you, plus natural selection will assure that the most rugged food plants endure.
- Be stealthy. (Alternatively, ask for permission and respect a "no" answer.) L.A. Guerrilla Gardening recommends: "it's wise to garden at night to avoid any confrontation with authorities." One guerrilla gardener online notes: "It's entirely possible to guerrilla garden in spaces where this 'random act of beautification' will not only be accepted - but applauded."

### THE DON'TS:

- Don't use seedbombs as a form of aggression or vandalism. Don't throw seedbombs at people or windows. Ensure that nothing or nobody will be damaged or harmed by your flying seedbombs.
- Avoid toxic sites. Don't throw feral vegetable seedbombs into oil refineries or old gas stations (ok to put flowers there though!) Don't put feral vegetable seedbombs into areas that are irrigated by purple-piped industrial reclaimed water. Remember you're growing food.
- Is the site protected as a conservation area? Don't throw seedbombs into wildlands. No creekbeds, wetlands, nature parks – we don't want to create kudzu-type runaways. There is plenty of orphaned urban land which can be used instead.

Inspired in part by <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/blog/2011/apr/11/seed-bombs-derelict-land-flowers>

## PUBLICIZING YOUR HARVEST

Vegetation overhanging on public land in Los Angeles becomes shared property. Fallen Fruit collects maps so that people can locate this free public food. [www.FallenFruit.org](http://www.FallenFruit.org)

## RECIPES

### LA Guerrilla Gardener's recipe

5 parts dry red clay\*  
3 parts dry organic compost  
1 part seed\*\*  
1 - 2 parts water

### UrbanFarmOnline's recipe

5 parts dry red clay  
1 part worm castings  
1 part seed\*\*  
"some water"

\* LA Guerrilla Gardeners recommends Echo Ceramics in West LA  
<http://www.echoceramics.com/>

\*\*For "Edible SeedBombs", we recommend that you include ...

- **Vegetable plants** ... What veggies might work? See our database: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FVGGLA/database?method=reportRows&tbl=4>
- **Nitrogen-fixing plants** to build the soil: peas or beans (in season), clover or lupine
- **Beneficial flowers** to attract "good bugs" and pollinating insects, and to please the neighbors.

## PLANT SELECTION

For starters, this is what we're trying out. (If you save this handout to refer back to later, we wrote this for the middle of the So Calif cool season.)

- **Vegetable plants** ... Collards, chard, mustard, frisee, chicories, bulbing fennel, cilantro, parsley, par cel, miner's lettuce
- **Nitrogen-fixing plants** ... assorted peas, clover
- **Beneficial flowers** ... California poppies, alyssium, calendula, blanketflower

*If you have a home vegetable garden, BECOME A SEED-SAVER! Allow your home plants to complete their full life cycle and collect the seed, even if it is of mixed, open pollinated genetics. In this way we can produce a FREE SUPPLY of seed for future seedball projects, plus eventually they will be veggies which are acclimated to our local Los Angeles.*

## BUILDING GREAT SOIL

As you build better soil (by using plenty of live, homemade compost or worm castings; by allowing crop debris to remain and decompose) the soil will retain moisture better. Just like in a carefully-tended home garden, a thick layer of mulch ("quilt") helps to slow evaporation and builds the population of soil organisms. Masanobu Fukuoka used thick layers of straw – what do we have plenty of, that we can use here in the city?