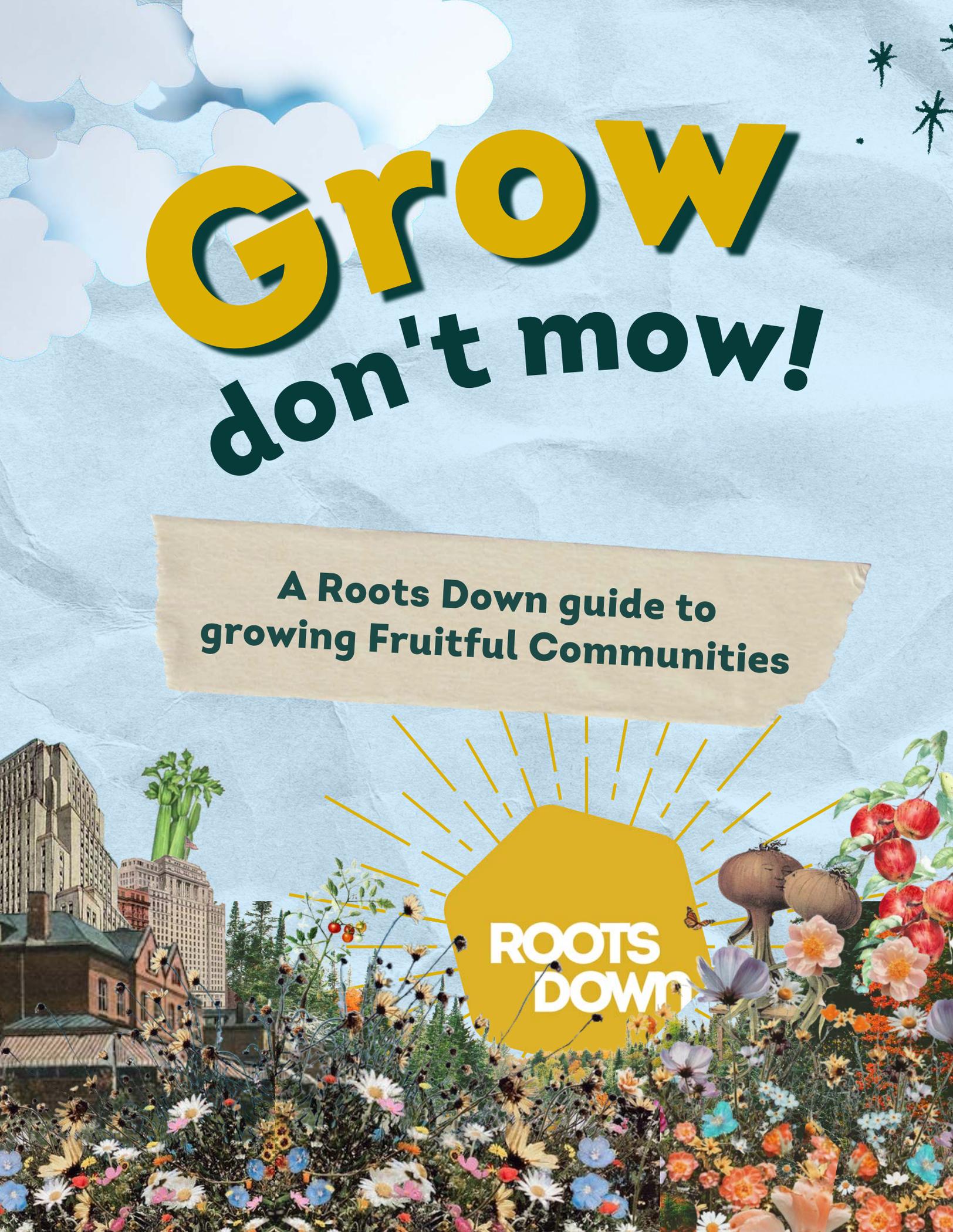


Grow don't mow!

A Roots Down guide to
growing Fruitful Communities



ROOTS
DOWN



Good stuff
inside!

Grow **don't mow!**

**A Roots Down guide to
growing Fruitful Communities**



Copyright © 2022 Roots Down, LLC

Copyright © 2022 Roots Down, LLC.

Published by Roots Down
PO Box 251
Scottsdale, GA 30079

Cover design by Tres Crow
Book design by Tres Crow
Written and edited by Roots Down

First Edition, 2022
First Printing

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form, or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information browsing, storage, or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Publisher's Note:

Although this publication is designed to provide accurate information in regard to the subject matter covered, the publisher and the author assume no responsibility for errors, inaccuracies, omissions, or any other inconsistencies herein. This publication is meant as a source of valuable information for the reader, however it is not meant as a replacement for direct expert assistance. If such level of assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.



www.rootsga.com

What's inside.

The roots of Roots Down	6
The dark side of modern landscaping	9
Productive Urban Landscapes	14
The Fruitful Communities Initiative	20
The future of STEAM education	24
Growing your own Fruitful Community	30
Additional resources	40





What if we put the farm in the city...?

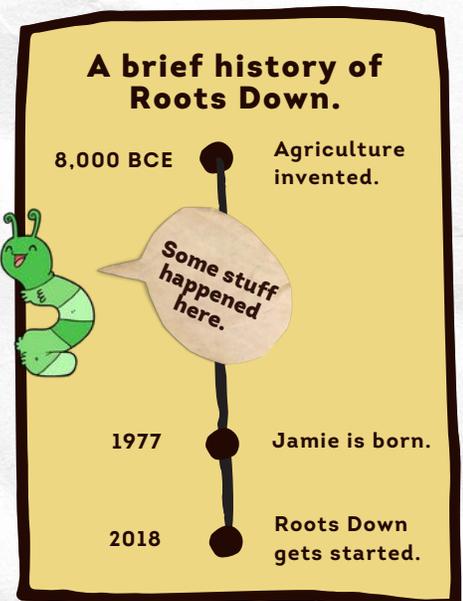
The roots of Roots Down.

A bit of background.

Somewhere around the spring of 2017, I was settling into my new home in Atlanta, unpacking boxes, putting my daughter's new bedroom together, and listening to the sounds of the neighborhood outside my opened windows. It was a bittersweet moment for me, coming back to the city where I'd grown up, starting over again without really knowing what came next.

I'd spent the last 8 years in North Georgia turning 20 acres of badly-abused horse pasture into

a permacultural jewel that grew a wide range of produce for hundreds of families in my community. It was one of the most fulfilling, joyful, and difficult things I've ever done. I fed people, I made friends I'll have forever, and I helped establish community institutions that still stand today. But after nearly a decade of struggling to get ahead, I finally realized what so many small farmers had warned me about, that small scale farming is a complicated and frustrating vocation that all too often leads to broken hearts and broken banks.



“Growing Wolfscratch Farms was one of the most fulfilling things I've ever done.”

- JAMIE ROSENTHAL

You could say I had a little bit of both as I sat in my daughter's new bedroom, unpacking her comforter and looking out the window. The sound of the wind sizzled through the trees, birds chirped somewhere out of view, and I could hear someone talking quietly on the phone as they passed by. There was something reminiscent of my time on the farm in these sounds, the interplay of people and nature, the sounds of the world turning for one more morning. Sunlight and wind and water and birds, all coming together to create the soundtrack of my new neighborhood. I tucked the edges

of the comforter in, and I thought that maybe things here wouldn't be all that different from the farm.

And then the leaf blowers started up.

Leaf blowers of destiny.

At first it was just one, a singular buzzsaw tearing apart the gentle tapestry of nature sound. Then there was another, and then another. And then a riding lawnmower started up down the street, joined soon by a lone edger grinding against the sidewalk. I looked out the



3 REASONS LEAFBLOWERS AIN'T IT.

We get it, gas-powered landscaping equipment is a handy, efficient way to get things done. But there are costs to all this efficiency.

NOISE POLLUTION

Noise from popular models of commercial gas leaf blowers exceeds 100 decibels. A jet plane takeoff or a siren is measured at 120 decibels.

AIR POLLUTION

According to EPA statistics, 33 gasoline lawn mowers would produce as much pollution a car produces all year.

WATER POLLUTION

Landscaping pollutants like pesticides, fertilizers, and yard debris is a key factor in water pollution.

window. Up and down my street were landscapers and neighbors mowing and edging and blowing. Leaves and sticks and trash swirled in a giant tornado of sound and fury. I watched as one intrepid landscaper spent 10 minutes blowing a few leaves from one side of a yard to the other, trying in vain to get the leaves onto a tarp and into the back of their truck.

I was struck by all this effort, all this money, gasoline, chemicals, and time spent removing the very things I'd used as free fertilizer on the farm. Leaves and limbs, bug carcasses and the odd bit of animal poo, these are the foundation of nature's regenerative cycles, free nutrients that just appear every year, as though by magic. Yet, here I was watching so much money and time being spent removing something so beneficial.

It was then that I was struck by a simple idea: what if all our public spaces were like my farm? What if instead of acres and acres of lawn and non-native bushes and shrubs, we had fruit producing perennials, and wildflower meadows? What if our public spaces fed people and animals, and provided space for kids and adults alike to learn in dynamic and fruitful outdoor classrooms? What if the land around our libraries, schools, community centers could be a simple, effective solution to climate change and ecological degradation?

What if we stopped spending so much money on making the planet worse, and instead spent that money growing Fruitful Communities?

