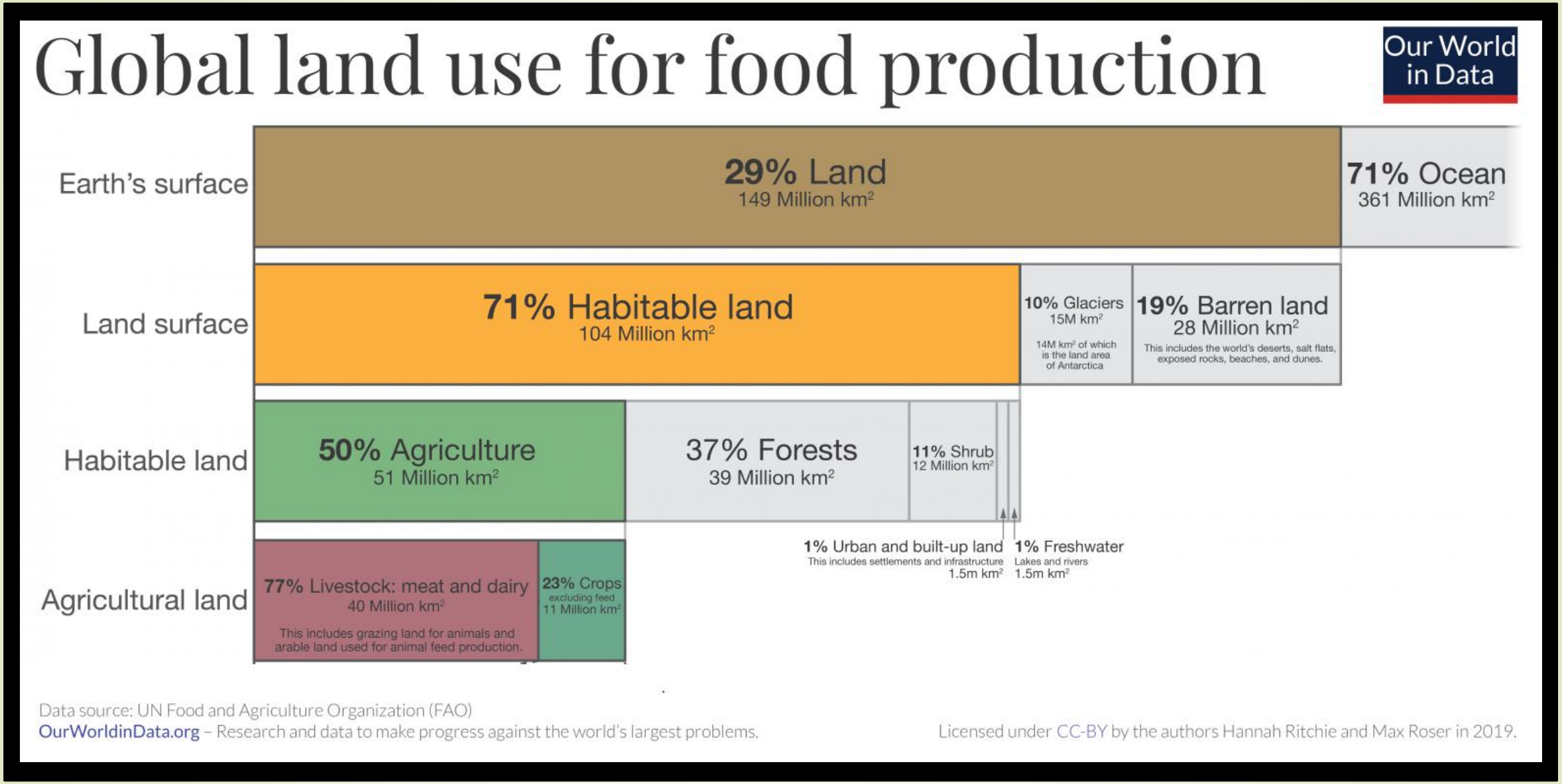
Urban Conservation Initiatives with an Emphasis in Accessibility

Nick Richardson
Environmental Program Coordinator
Arkansas Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Division



Bringing the 50% to the 1%

Grants Involved

- Funded through both State and Federal Grants to Districts
- Federal – Reimbursement provided for two to three years
  - More funds, more regulations
- State – Money is given to districts Quarterly for a year
  - Less funds, less regulations

Urban Garden Expansion Project Buffalo CD

- Funded through NRCS and administration through ADA-NRD
- Constructed a high tunnel (2,160 sq. ft.)
- Daughters of Hope Non-profit
  - Drug rehabilitation













Pediatrics Plus Therapy Farm Faulkner Co CD

- Funded through State Grants to Districts
- Construction of a Greenhouse & Hoophouse
- Farm setting will provide therapy for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Types of Therapy Provided

ABA Therapy

- Applied Behavior Analysis
- Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence (ABC's)

Occupational Therapy

- Helps kids who have a physical, sensory, or cognitive disability

Physical Therapy

- Aims to ease pain and help the individual function

Speech Therapy

- Assess and treat communication problems and speech disorders





Center for Exceptional Adults Conway Co CD

- Funded through State Grants to Districts
- Supplying Equipment and Handicap Accessible Tables
- CCCEA Provides:
  - Speech, Occupational, Physical Therapies
  - Nursing Services
  - Transportation from your home to our facilities
  - Meals and snacks

Supplies

- Wheelchair Accessible Pad for Outdoor Classroom
- Wheelchair Accessible Raised Beds and Seating
- General Gardening Supplies
- DIY





DIY Mason Jar
HUMMINGBIRD
FEEDER











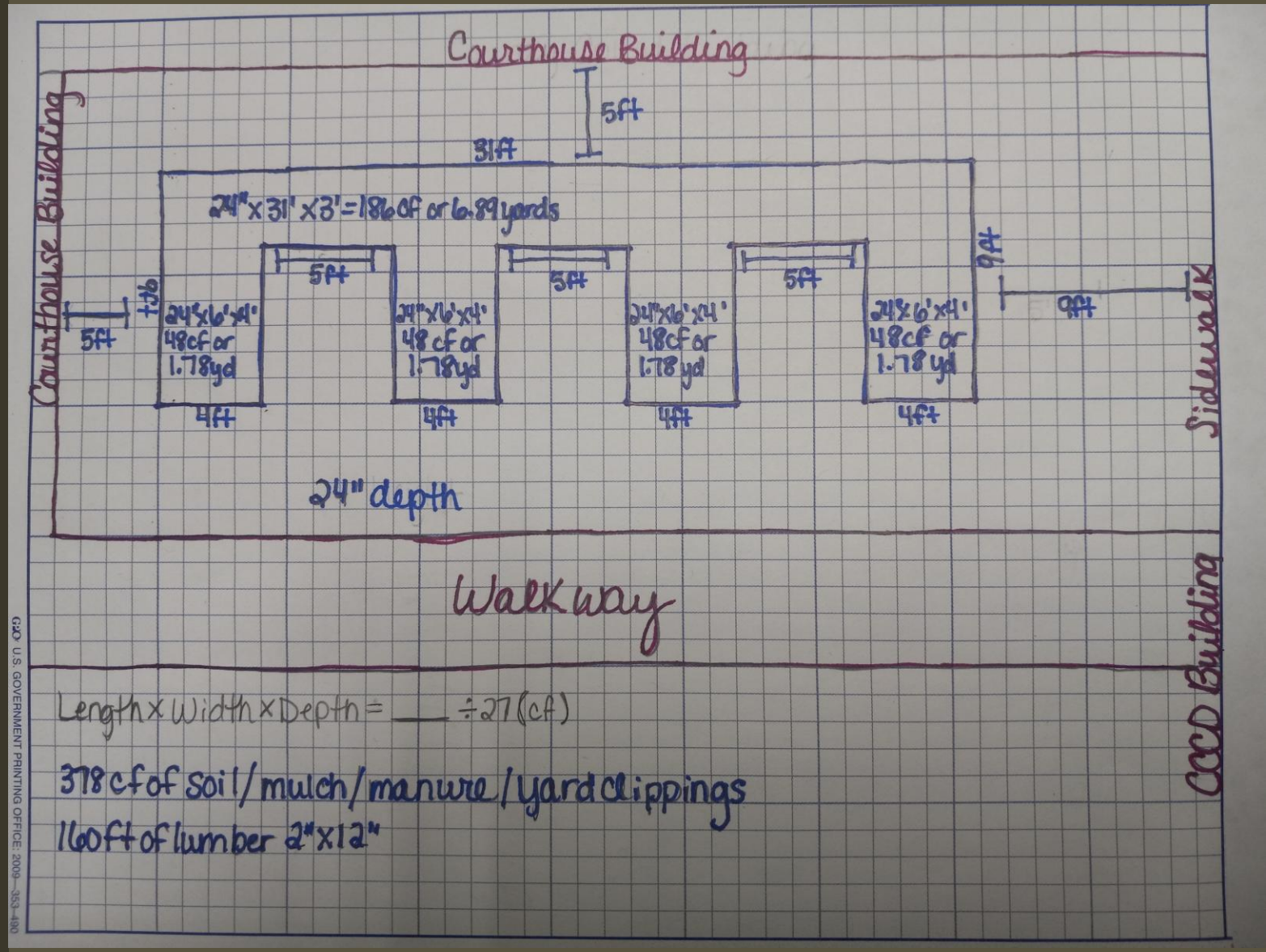


Adult Education Center Crawford Co CD

- Funded through State Grants to Districts
- Plans to provide a wheelchair accessible raised bed garden
- Located next door to the Conservation District

Blueprint

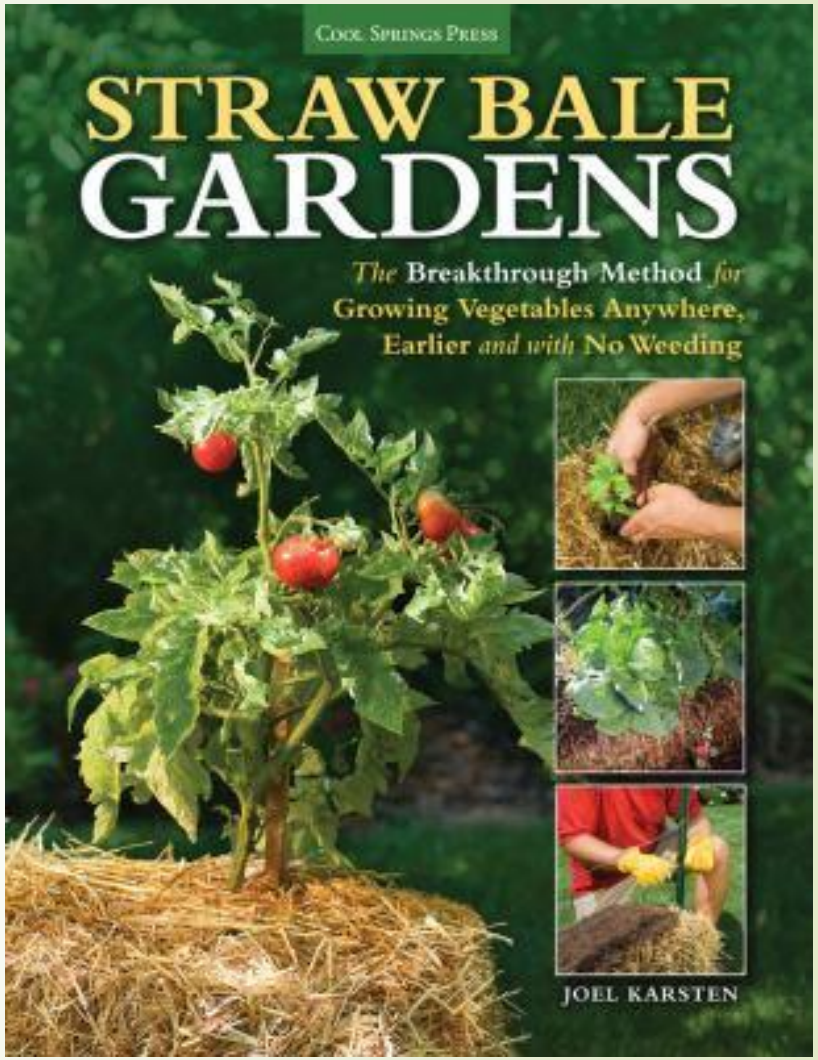
Construction begins November 1st!



Straw Bale Raised Beds

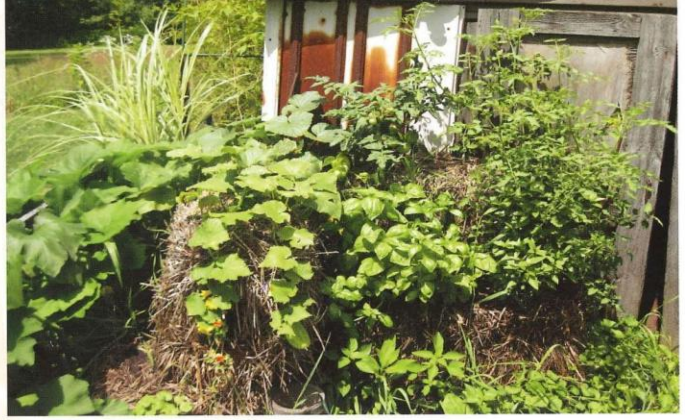
Straw Bale Gardening vs. Traditional Gardening

ATTRIBUTE	STRAW BALE GARDEN	TRADITIONAL SOIL GARDEN	CONTAINER/ RAISED BED GARDEN WITH MIX NOT SOIL
75% less labor	X	-	X (first year only)
Raised height, easy planting	X	-	X
No weeding	X	-	X (first year only)
Very low input/start-up cost	X	X	-
Extends the growing season	X	-	-
Higher germination on seeds	x	-	-
Predictable performance	X	-	X (first year only)
Impossible to overwater	X	-	-
Holds moisture well	X	-	-
Creates new media yearly	X	-	-
Easy to move location	X	-	-
Automated water daily is okay	X	-	X
No crop rotation needed	X	-	-
Can plant top and sides	X	-	-
Creates loads of A+ compost	X	-	-
Prevents disease issues	X	-	-
Prevents insect issues	X	-	-
Prevents rabbits/deer issues	X	-	-
Can be located anywhere	X	-	-
Prevents early season frost	X	-	-
No heavy work, tilling	X	-	-
No tools other than hand trowel	X	-	-
Warmed root zone at planting/seeding	X	-	-
Eliminates soil-borne disease	X	-	X (first year only)



Karsten, Joel. *Straw Bale Gardens: The Breakthrough Method for Growing Vegetables Anywhere, Earlier and with No Weeding*. Cool Springs Press, 2013.

Right: Double stacking bales is definitely possible as demonstrated here. Turning the second layer of bales the opposite direction of the base layer will keep the bales more stable, preventing them from tipping over later in the season. *Photo courtesy of J. J. Lawson, Illinois*



Below: Amelia lives in a converted warehouse with lots of concrete. Her first SBG has only four bales, but she says she will eventually triple its size.



Right: Using a double layer of bales can create two distinct planting "shelves" and make it much easier to plant and harvest without needing to bend over much at all. *Photo courtesy of J. J. Lawson, Illinois*



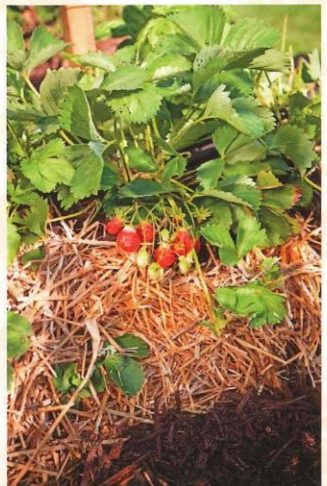


Left: Proper plant spacing is important to maximize production. Once early crops are harvested, most bales can be planted again to produce at least one additional crop each season. With some varieties, more than two crops are possible, but of course this will vary depending on your location and length of season. *Photo courtesy of Sandy, Pittsburg, KS*

Below: Onions and other root crops require a loose and airy "soil," which is exactly what the inside of a straw bale provides. With lots of freshly developing compost inside, the bales have plentiful airspaces and this allows root crops to develop uninhibited. *Photo courtesy of Sandy, Pittsburg, KS*



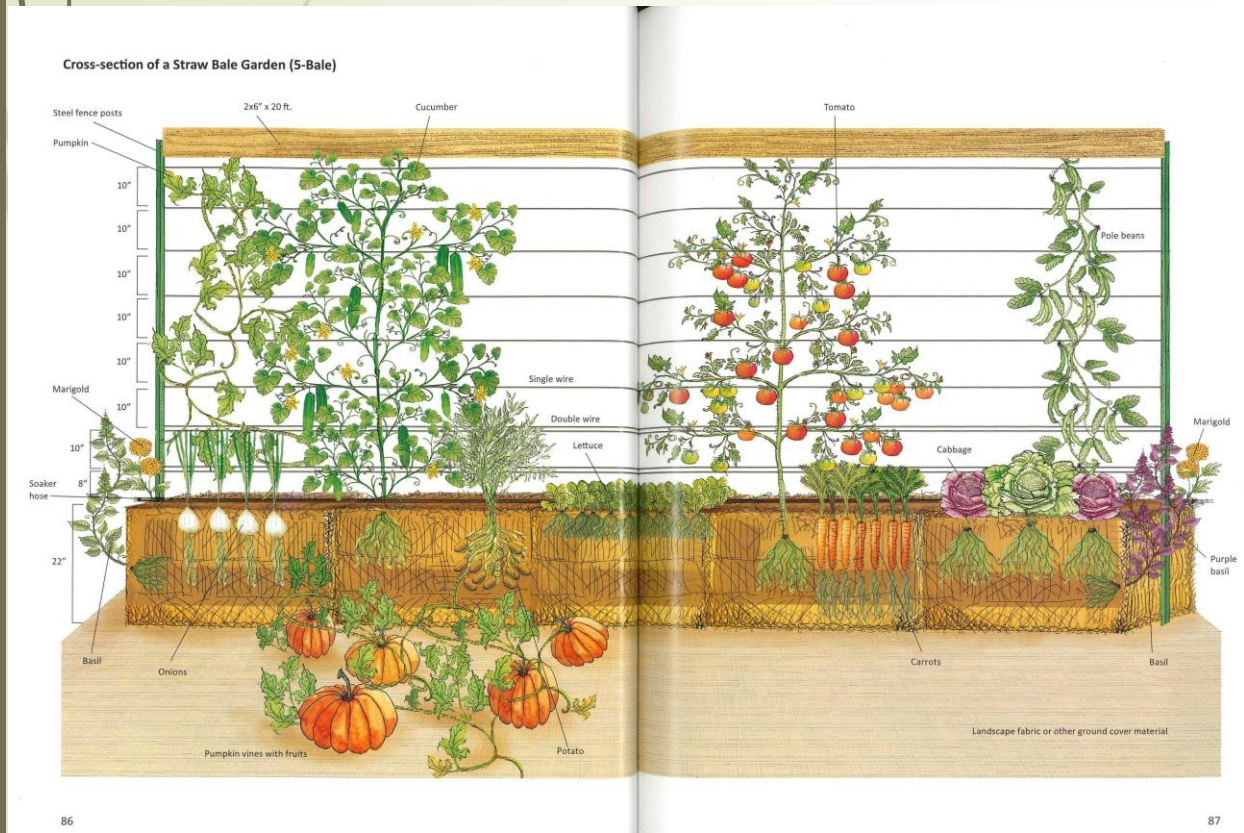


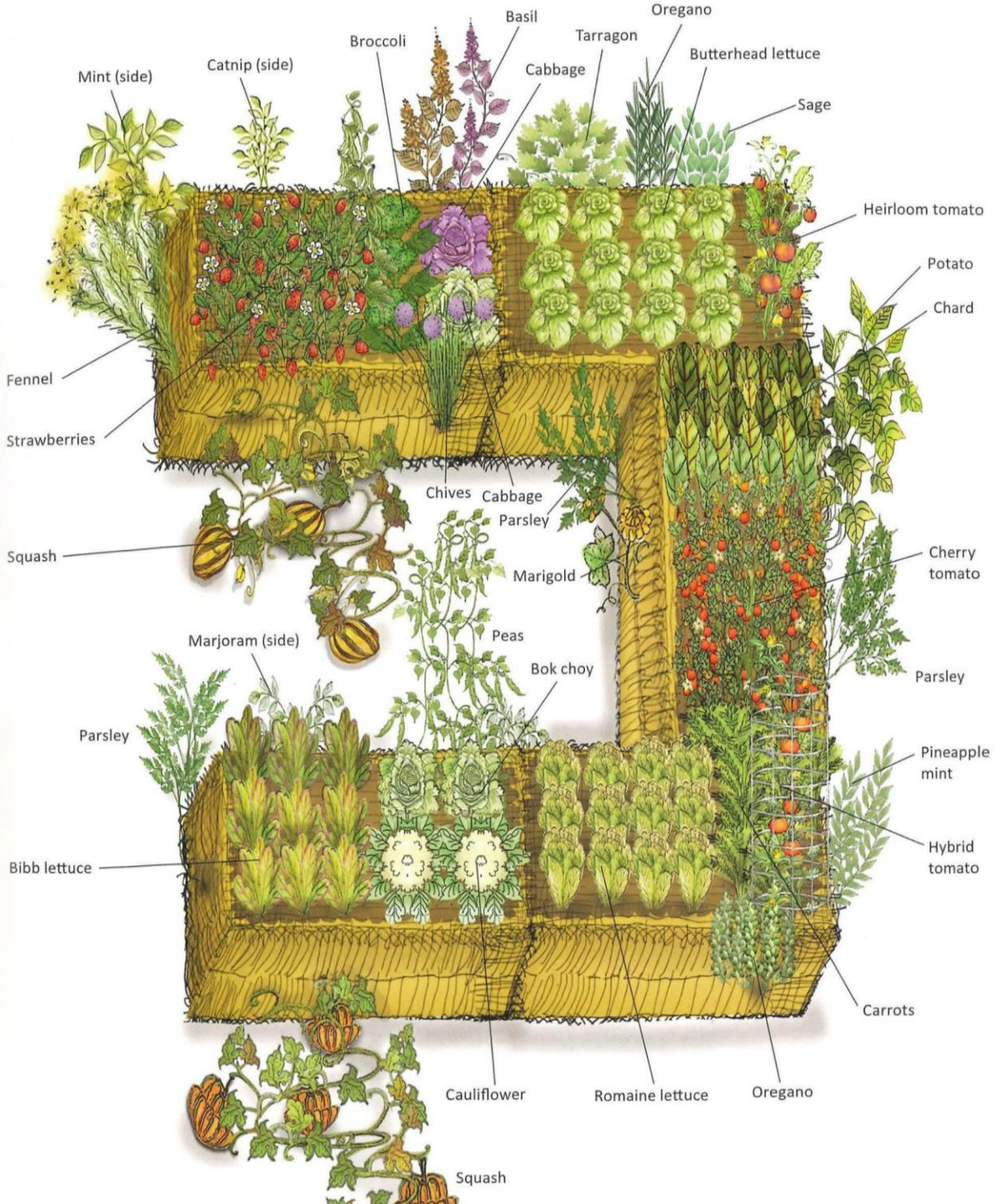


Far left: Young seedlings, such as these onions, will sprout and grow quickly. It is possible that two or more crops of most short season vegetables can be grown consecutively in the same bale. Once harvested, immediate replanting will maximize the useful life of the bales in your Straw Bale Garden. *Photo courtesy of Benita, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan*

Strawberry transplants will cover the entire surface and sides of the bales by early spring, and begin producing berries quickly. The berries are easier to pick because they are up off the ground, and they are not splashed with soil so they are usually clean and ready to eat right out of the garden. Transplant from old bales into freshly conditioned bales in the spring to take advantage of this hardy perennial favorite.

Modular to provide accessibility to all





Questions?

“Accessibility allows us to tap into everyone's potential.”
-Debra Ruh

Nick Richardson
Environmental Program Coordinator
Arkansas Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Division
Phone (501) 231-0458
nicholas.richardson@agriculture.arkansas.gov

NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION