Forest Farming
The cultivation of specialty crops under existing forest canopies.

**BENEFITS**

**Economic**

**INCREASED INCOME GENERATION:** Farming in the woods can be done without major disturbance and provide additional income in forests typically just managed for timber.

**FLEXIBILITY IN MANAGEMENT:** Intensive to minimal, depending on the product and desired market.

**COMPLEMENTS EXISTING PRODUCTION SYSTEMS:** Uses resources that would otherwise be underutilized.

**Ecological**

**LOW IMPACT:** Does not interfere significantly with the ecosystem services forests already provide.

**INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT:** Management of forest understory for production can displace invasive species that often otherwise occupy this area.

**CHALLENGES**

**LONG-TERM CROPS ARE AT RISK OF:**
- Disease outbreaks and pests.
- Soil fertility loss.
- Crop loss due to poaching or weather.
- Shortage of processing facilities.

**MARKET ESTABLISHMENT** is a time intensive and long-term process.

**DETAILED RECORD-KEEPING AND MARKET RESEARCH** is required for selected products.
Frequently Asked Questions

**SITE SELECTION AND PREPARATION?**
Consider slope and aspect, tree cover, soil quality, and understory vegetation when selecting forest farming site and preparing it for a particular crop.

**WHAT CROPS TO GROW?**
A variety of non-timber forest products can be cultivated in the understory of the forest.
- **CULINARY:** mushrooms (shitake, matsuki, oyster), ramps, gooseberry, currant
- **ORNAMENTAL:** club fern, spanish moss, shade-tolerant cut flowers and stems
- **MEDICINAL:** ginseng, goldenseal, elderberry

**FUNDING AND PLANNING ASSISTANCE?**
Connect with the local conservation district and extension offices to learn about federal and state cost-share programs such EQIP, CRP, and CSP. These offices can also provide connections with regional consultants and technical service providers.

**FINDING MARKETS?**
Markets for non-timber forest products include direct to consumer, restaurants, to wholesale depending on the product.
Determine and familiarize yourself with selected markets before selecting and planting product to determine appropriate planting rate.