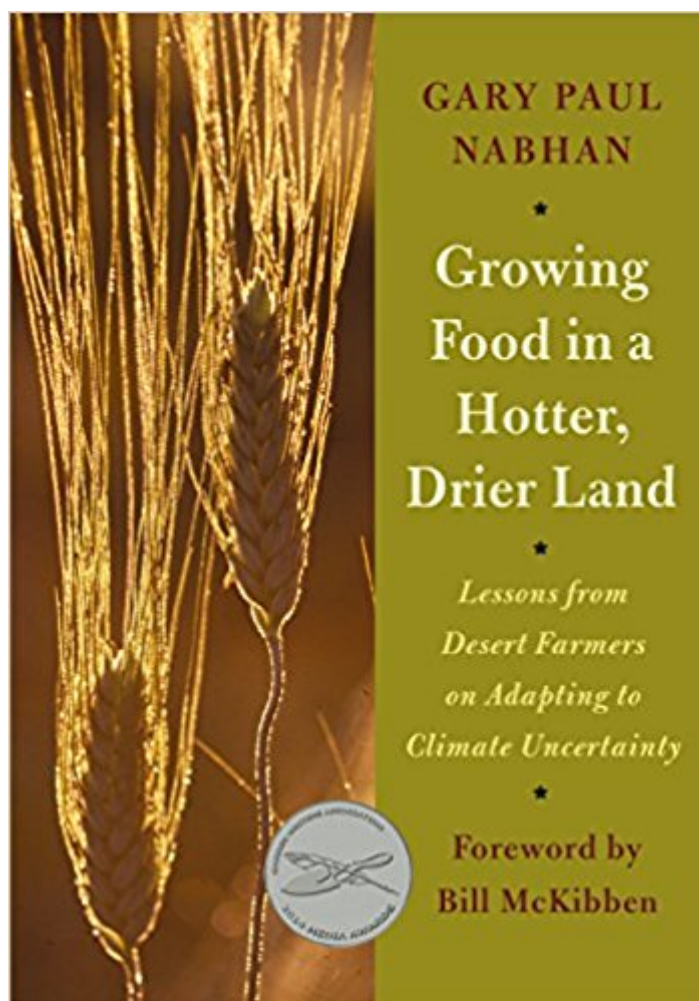


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# Growing Food In A Hotter, Drier Land: Lessons From Desert Farmers On Adapting To Climate Uncertainty



## Synopsis

How to harvest water and nutrients, select drought-tolerant plants, and create natural diversity  
Because climatic uncertainty has now become "the new normal," many farmers, gardeners and orchard-keepers in North America are desperately seeking ways to adapt their food production to become more resilient in the face of such "global weirding." This book draws upon the wisdom and technical knowledge from desert farming traditions all around the world to offer time-tried strategies for: Building greater moisture-holding capacity and nutrients in soils Protecting fields from damaging winds, drought, and floods Harvesting water from uplands to use in rain gardens and terraces filled with perennial crops Delecting fruits, nuts, succulents, and herbaceous perennials that are best suited to warmer, drier climates Gary Paul Nabhan is one of the world's experts on the agricultural traditions of arid lands. For this book he has visited indigenous and traditional farmers in the Gobi Desert, the Arabian Peninsula, the Sahara Desert, and Andalusia, as well as the Sonoran, Chihuahuan, and Painted deserts of North America, to learn firsthand their techniques and designs aimed at reducing heat and drought stress on orchards, fields, and dooryard gardens. This practical book also includes colorful "parables from the field" that exemplify how desert farmers think about increasing the carrying capacity and resilience of the lands and waters they steward. It is replete with detailed descriptions and diagrams of how to implement these desert-adapted practices in your own backyard, orchard, or farm. This unique book is useful not only for farmers and permaculturists in the arid reaches of the Southwest or other desert regions. Its techniques and prophetic vision for achieving food security in the face of climate change may well need to be implemented across most of North America over the next half-century, and are already applicable in most of the semiarid West, Great Plains, and the U.S. Southwest and adjacent regions of Mexico.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Publishers Weekly- Nabhan, an ethnobotanist, cofounder of Native Seeds/SEARCH, and prolific author, draws on his longtime relationships with the land and people of the Southwest U.S., together with wisdom from farmers and gardeners in Egypt, Mexico, and other dry places, to suggest solutions for growing food and developing agricultural resiliency as climate change affects wider swaths of the planet. He discusses using hedge fences (he calls them "fredges") to minimize flood damage; choosing ancient and traditional methods for water management; soil building using local materials; terracing for fertility and erosion control; creating polycultures with perennials and drought-hardy plants; and attracting and supporting native pollinators. This information, which includes detailed instructions and lists of plants and pollinators, will undoubtedly be useful to farmers and gardeners facing more volatile weather patterns. Their spirits may lift as well with the book's somber but hopeful poetic tone, exemplified by Moroccan Sufi mystic and farmer Aziz Bousfiha, who is working to transform deserts into living oases: "It's not just activism I am talking about... I am talking about something larger, deeper: participating in the creation of for that is the... expression of our love." ForeWord Reviews- "Growing Food in a Hotter, Drier Land is Nabhan's instructive and focused how-to that advocates collective participation, place-based solutions, and "mimicry" of "time-tried traditional practices from desert farmers around the world. And it all begins with the understanding that "weather and food go hand in hand," and that their essential symbiosis is in peril. The summer of 2011 was one of the hottest ever recorded in the United States. The severe heat exacerbated an already dry landscape and produced extreme drought the effects of which had such a damaging impact on US agriculture that five hundred food-producing counties were declared disaster areas because they suffered weather-related crop failures. Summer wreaked more devastation in 2012. Nearly three thousand counties were declared disaster areas, while forty thousand new daily records for hot temperatures were reported across the country. By August, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization indicated that droughts across the Americas had caused global food prices to jump six percent in a single month. These scenarios are dreadful, but the practical advice and pragmatic solutions that Nabhan offers engender optimism. He shows how

to reduce heat stress on plants and animals by establishing a "boundary layer" of leafy trees to provide a shade canopy. Nabhan encourages constructing a living fencerow from organic matter to sequester carbon, protect fields from floods and winds, and prevent soil erosion and nutrient runoff. For more than two thousand years, buried pottery pitchers have been used for crop irrigation in dry lands. Because of water scarcity, its practice is being revived, and Nabhan provides step-by-step instructions on how to construct this ancient, yet efficient irrigation system. Nabhan's guide is highly specialized, technical, and insightful. It is doubtful that a general reader would have the patience needed to complete it, but the book is a must-have instruction manual for surviving climate change for desert farmers, orchard growers, crop farmers, ranchers, and backyard gardeners.

"Gary Nabhan's books never fail to inspire and inform me. This book is no exception. After just one read through I've dog-eared, highlighted, and noted countless gems, facts, and stories to which I will return again and again. The pattern of the book makes this easy. Each section begins with a Warm-Up problem, followed by a Parable of people or natural systems addressing the problem. Principles and Premises distilled from the problem and parable, along with Planning and Practice tips then help me work cooperatively with the life around me to formulate solutions unique to my site's conditions and changing climate. Best of all, I feel I'm part of an incredibly diverse, caring community as I do so, thanks to Gary sharing so many engaging examples of different people, cultures, and ecosystems doing likewise. Read this book!"

--Brad Lancaster, author of *Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands and Beyond*, [www.HarvestingRainwater.com](http://www.HarvestingRainwater.com)

"If the 20th century strove to insulate us from the harsh realities of nature (whilst exacerbating its extremes), Gary Nabhan's latest book introduces us to the 21st century's rude reminders that change is here, uncertainty commonplace. With little room for the hand-wringers, Nabhan provides everyone else, from novice gardener to deep ecologist, important food for thought and the practical know-how to address our modern problems with ancient desert wisdom. I couldn't put it down."

--Richard McCarthy, executive director, Slow Food USA

"In a world where climate change is the new normal, Gary Nabhan offers a blueprint for food production. Using desert agriculture as a backdrop, Nabhan is the ideal guide for understanding and addressing the challenges of rising temperatures, depleting water resources, and ever-shifting conditions. It is a cautionary book of hope, full of dry-farming wisdom, to-do lists, and Gary Nabhan's enjoyable combination of insight and humor."

--Dan Imhoff, author of *Food Fight*, *CAFO*, and *Farming with the Wild*

"Drylands are home to 40 percent of the world's people: a figure sure to rise in the coming decades as our world grows more parched. That is why Gary Nabhan's latest book is

indispensable. "Everyone who grows food -- make that, everyone who eats food -- should be grateful he wrote it. An homage to old wisdom and to the latter-day soil magicians who are Nabhan's living muses, it is a rich herbarium of delicious, hardy sustenance and a manual for our future."

--Alan Weisman, author, *The World Without Us* and *Countdown*

"All of Gary Nabhan's books carry us on deep, enchanting journeys to the hearts of people, plants, and cultures across the world. *Growing Food in a Hotter, Drier Land* offers the rich stories and cultural insights we've come to expect, but now, when we badly need it, Gary also tells us explicitly how to use the dryland wisdom he's assembled over a lifetime. Heaped with practical principles, techniques, plant lists, parables, and more, his new book offers important tools for preserving our food and water security on a warmer, stormier planet. I'm inspired and heartened by this timely and important offering from a true desert sage."

--Toby Hemenway, author of *Gaia's Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture*

"In *Growing Food in a Hotter, Drier Land* Gary Paul Nabhan has crafted a cogent treatise blending his own considerable knowledge and experience with the traditional ecological wisdom of indigenous desert farmers, who have been thriving in the face of climate uncertainty for many generations. The hard-won lessons and innovations described in this book are applicable for farmers cultivating in all changing climates, and inspirational for all people who depend on their survival and success. A must-have arrow in the quiver for all pragmatic Thrivalists!"

--Brock Dolman, director, WATER Institute and Permaculture Design Program, Occidental Arts & Ecology Center

"Gary Paul Nabhan offers a necessary guide to the ways of plants, and to managing water wisely in an increasingly unpredictable climate. Past civilizations could have used a book like this. And if we ourselves don't want to become a distant memory, we would do well to heed the hard-won lessons of desert farmers from around the world, and learn the practical earth skills needed to create a permaculture oasis of our own."

--Michael Phillips, author of *The Holistic Orchard* and *The Apple Grower*

"We face an unprecedented future. The scale and speed of the changes bearing down on us as a consequence of climate uncertainty has no analog in history. Fortunately, we have guides like Gary Paul Nabhan to lead us through the crazy labyrinth in which we find ourselves. By looking to age-old practices and taking lessons from nature, Dr. Nabhan builds a compelling case for a type of resilience that matters whether you are a food producer or eater -- which is everyone!"

--Courtney White, founder and creative director, Quivira Coalition

Gary Nabhan is the W.K. Kellogg Endowed Chair in Sustainable Food Systems at the University of Arizona, as well as the permaculture designer and orchard-keeper of Almuniya de los Zopilotes

Experimental Farm in Patagonia, Arizona. Widely acknowledged as a pioneer in the local-food movement and grassroots seed conservation, Nabhan was honored by Utne Reader in 2011 as one of twelve people making the world a better place to live. A recipient of a MacArthur Genius Award, his twenty-four books have been translated into six languages.

Nabhan first squares away on climate change. If you are inclined to disbelieve, or ignore, you need to find another book. This book is about growing food in a hotter dryer land, and Nabhan takes the world view to make his point. He then illustrates several coping strategies, placing emphasis on adaptability; he places emphasis on observation of environment, and adaption to observation. The "High Desert" that Nabhan uses most often to illustrate his coping strategies are those in the Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico; a different "High Desert" than the one I live in, but all the climactic issues he deals with are the same: water, soil, hot dry days and cool nights. A lot of his techniques are based on basic permaculture principles that can be found in other books in greater detail, but this book utilizes a historical/anthropological context to illustrate that this way of doing things actually provided someone with food.

Whatever anyone thinks the cause is, the world is getting hotter, and some of it much dryer. This book is a great companion in this quest to farm for us those of us living in these areas where conventional wisdom no longer works because things ARE changing. The Author draws upon the wisdom of native peoples and forward looking sustainable farmers throughout the world in a fascinating read that incorporates anthropology and ethnobotany with a lot of very good ideas on how to keep food production going in these changing dry climates. Highly recommended.

While geared more to Arid Climes vs temperate, there is valuable information in making your 'foodscape' more drought tolerant. Many knowledgeable, inclusive plant list are throughout the book. This book would be an 'must have' for anyone establishing a permaculture food forrest in the arid SW, and a 'good to know' information source for erratic climate changes possible in the near future.

This text is very well researched and the author certainly knows his subject matter. As someone trying to improve a semi-arid property in south Texas, this text gives practical growing and farming advice gathered from around the world. I like it so much, I bought a second copy for my cousin who is farther along in developing her property. She employs some of the techniques discussed and

illustrated in the text but it has many more wonderful ideas. Buy this book!

This book was fantastic. It was exactly what I expected and included tips, techniques, and references to plants that would do well in the desert. Living in the desert of Arizona this book is a very handy reference for things you can do to help be a better desert gardener. I don't read too many books cover to cover in less than a week but this was one I did, and thoroughly enjoyed. I was in my bed at night with a flashlight reading this book. It is an easy read and I recommend it.

This is not a harangue; this is a primer on what to do now. No judgments, no accusations; simply a series of pathways to survival. Even though much of the detail does not apply to the average reader, but primarily to someone with a fair amount of land and the inclination and energy to use it in the most productive possible way, there are still nuggets of inspiration to be found in every chapter. Aha moments: Everyone can utilize an olla. Everyone can implement the planting patterns where one plant protects and nurtures the others. And for the serious food-producer, the directions are immaculately described. No hazy, unclear descriptions - this is an instruction sheet of the most useful sort. Nabhan's multi-cultural knowledge is of endless value and his experiences with various native agricultures, many of which he has referenced in earlier works, have finally percolated down to this ultra-specific DIY manual.

It's obvious to those of us who spend time lots of time in the outdoor world, that our planet is seeing some radical changes from climate change (you can deny or censor climate change all you want -- it won't change reality). Anyone who has tried to garden and grow food knows it's already a constant battle, and that it's going to be tougher, not easier where weather is even more unpredictable, where extreme weather events are the norm, and where there is not enough--or too much--water. This book is the first I've seen which attempts to think through how to select the plants and crops for an environmentally uncertain era, and tries to learn from human history (not a stranger to figuring out how to adapt to changing weather) on how to adapt to human caused climate change--which is happening, whether or not we are willing to acknowledge it. As someone who has been in a more temperate climate (California), but has seen major, major drought conditions over the last few years, the lessons and techniques Nabhan covers from a more arid climate might give you some ideas and inspiration on what to try even in the face of unrelenting drought, water restrictions, and an uncertain weather environment, and also helps you to maybe understand and perhaps adapt in our uncertain future. Highly recommended for those looking to take action and figure out maybe one way to help

our species (along with all the others we depend on in this world) to find a new way forward in an era of uncertainty.

The book is in brand new shape and all that I expected it to be. Living in the desert with temps often above 100 degrees, this book is a great guide to gardening. I especially liked finding out how people across the world deal with desert conditions and still feed themselves.

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