

# Analog Forestry

## What is Analog Forestry?

Analog Forestry is a system of silviculture, which aims to restore the local biodiversity while providing economic opportunities to small-scale farmers. Inspired by Sri Lanka's tradition of home-gardens it encourages the use of economically viable crops such as tea, spices, fruit and vegetables, as well as ecologically important species. Where Analog forestry differs from other systems is in the planting design, which mimics both the structure of a natural forest (i.e. different canopy layers) and the ecological functions of a natural forest (i.e. watershed management).

Combining local forest biodiversity with organic crop cultivation has a number of advantages. Using ecologically sustainable farming practices:

- encourages high biodiversity
- produces clean water and soil
- gives watershed protection
- conserves soil.

While the first few years of converting a system to Analog forestry can be intensive, the long-term economic and biodiversity gains make this a sustainable system. Although crops give lower yields than in more intensive farming practices, their diversity provides economic stability. For example, if one crop fails or market prices fall for one commodity, the other crops can still be sold to provide a stable income. Organic farming techniques also require less expenditure on external inputs such as chemical fertilisers, as there is a higher resilience against plagues and diseases.

The practical value of this system is demonstrated in over 25 years of research that is being translated into community projects across the world.



*An Analog Forest home-garden*

**Silviculture** is the art and science of controlling the establishment, growth, composition, health, and quality of forests to meet diverse needs and values of the many landowners, societies and cultures over the parts of the globe that are covered by dry land.

## The history of Analog Forestry

Over 30 years ago, a group of environmentalists from the NeoSynthesis Research Centre (NSRC), developed an agricultural method which would encourage native biodiversity to flourish. This system provided an alternative to monocrops which were being widely promoted for “reforestation” purposes.

Led by Sri Lankan Systems Ecologist Dr. Ranil Senanayake, (present Chairman of Rainforest Rescue International), NSRC first applied this system on an abandoned tea state in the Sri Lankan hills, successfully restoring the ecosystem and its functions as well as the estate's income generation potential.

The name Analog Forestry was coined in 1987, and in April 1994 it was accepted as a methodology integrating the protection of biodiversity within the context of sound landscape management by scientific experts at the Open-ended Intergovernmental Meeting of Scientific Experts on Biological Diversity (sponsored by the UN) in Mexico City.

The International Analog Forestry Network (IFAN), based in Costa Rica, was established in 1996 as a worldwide forum for Analog Forestry practitioners.

## Forest Garden Certification (FGP)

The FGP inspection system began in Sri Lanka as a method of evaluating the effectiveness of Analog Forestry. The inspection service certifies products 'beyond organic'. Not only do products need to be organic in origin, they also need to comply with social, biodiversity, landscape and carbon criteria, ensuring all FGP producers are responsible and effective in restoring their ecosystems.

