

Welcome

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Welcome to the Software Gardening Almanac, an open-source handbook of applied guidance and tools for sustainable software development and maintenance.

Inspiration

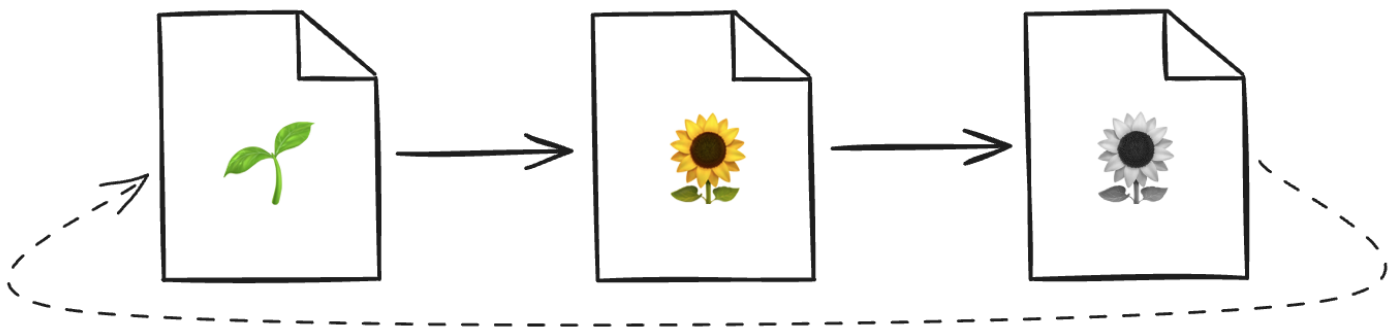


Fig. 1 Software is created, grows, and decays over time.

Software experiences development cycles, which accumulate errors over time. However, these cycles are not well understood nor are they explicitly cultivated with the impacts of time in mind. Why does software grow quickly only to decay just as fast? How do software bugs seem to appear in unlikely scenarios?

These cycles follow patterns from life: software is created, grows, decays, and so on (sometimes in surprising or seemingly unpredictable ways). Software is also connected within a complex system of relationships (similar to the complex ecology of a garden). The Software Gardening Almanac posits

we can understand these software lifecycle patterns and complex relationships in order to build tools which sustain or maintain their development long-term.

*“The ‘planetary garden’ is a means of considering ecology as the integration of humanity – the gardeners – into its smallest spaces. Its guiding philosophy is based on the principle of the ‘garden in motion’: do the most **for**, the minimum **against**.” - Gilles Clément*

The content within the Software Gardening Almanac is inspired by ecological systems (for example, as in [planetary gardening](#)). We also are galvanized by the [scientific method](#), and [almanacs](#) (or earlier [menologia rustica](#)) in documenting, expecting, and optimizing how we plan for time-based changes in agriculture (among other practices and traditions).

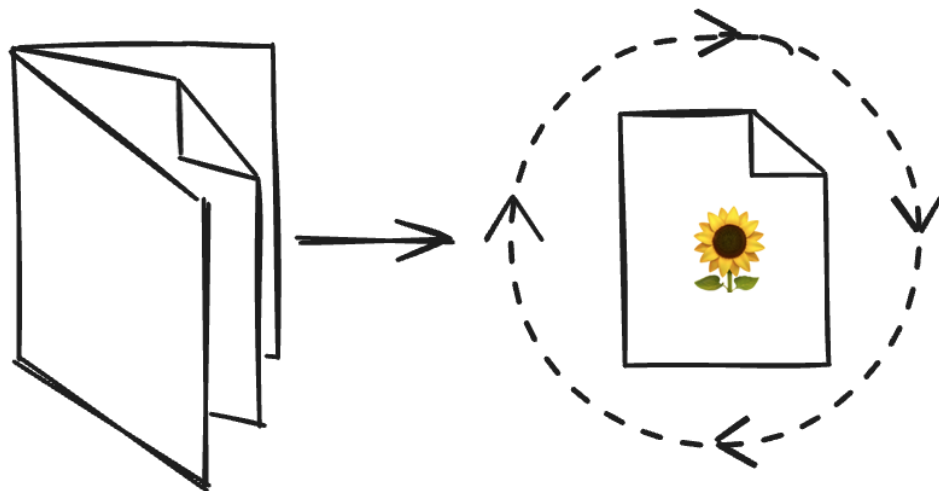


Fig. 2 Almanacs help us understand and influence the impacts of time on the things we grow.

The Software Gardening Almanac helps share knowledge on how to cultivate change in order to nurture software (and software practitioners) for long periods of time. We aspire to define, practice, and continually improve a craft of *software gardening* to nourish existing or yet-to-be software projects and embrace a more resilient future.

Motivation



Fig. 3 We depend on a delicate network of software which changes over time.

(Image source: [‘Dependency’ comic by Randall Munroe, XKCD](#))

Our world is surrounded by systems of software which enable and enhance life. These systems are both invisible and sometimes brittle, breaking in surprising ways (for example, beneath uneven pressures as in the above XKCD comic). At the same time, [loose coupling](#) of these software systems also forms the basis of innovation through multidimensional, [emergent](#) growth patterns. We seek to embrace these software systems which are innately in motion, embracing diversity without destroying it to perpetuate discovery and enhance future life.

“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.” - Arthur Ashe

We suggest reading or using this content however it best makes sense to a reader. Just as with gardening, sometimes the best thing to do is jump in! We structure each section in a modular fashion, providing insights with cited prerequisites. We provide links and other reference materials for further reading where beneficial. Please let us know how we can improve by [opening GitHub issues](#) or [creating new discussion board posts](#) (see our [contributing.md](#) guide for more information)!

Who's this for?

"We'll share stories from the heart. All are welcome here." - Alexandra Penfold

The Software Gardening Almanac is designed for developers of any kind. When we say *developers* here we mean anyone engaging in pursuing their vision towards a goal using software (including scientists, engineers, project leads, managers, etc). The content will engage readers with pragmatic ideas, keeping the barrier to entry low.

Garden Lattice



Fig. 4 The garden lattice facilitates growth on our software gardening journeys. (Image source: [GL1](#)).

“To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.” - Audrey Hepburn

We enter the book through a garden lattice, both an acknowledgement and forward recognition of people who cultivate software. The garden lattice is a celebration of our individual vibrancy and connection to the world around us. “Here you will give your gifts and meet your responsibilities.” [GL2](#) It also is a place to view our collective fates; as we grow an understanding emerges that we must commit ourselves toward a sustainable future through tending the garden. This sustainability is undeniably coupled to our natural relationships, persisted even in the software realm.

Early roots from Ada Lovelace’s work on an analytical engine algorithm in 1842 provide a glimpse of the natural world’s influence on software development: “... the Analytical Engine weaves algebraical patterns just as the Jacquard-loom weaves flowers and leaves.” [GL3](#) Many years later, software development remains an effort of intertwining beauty and function to enhance well-being through a growing system, or lattice, of interconnected parts built upon layers of personal and technical advances.

Lattices, reminiscent of living structures built with willow or bamboo, emerge as a weaved foundation, both flexible and systematically resilient, protecting and inspiring new growth. “The willow submits to the wind and prospers until one day it is many willows - a wall against the wind.” [GL4](#). These lattices also signify our collective friendship and interdependence. They echo the sentiment of “Be like bamboo. The higher you grow, the deeper you bow,” (a Chinese proverb) embodying strength through flexibility and unity. This concept mirrors the organic growth seen in software gardens, where a system of interweaved latticework supports the development of intricate and resilient structures.

The lattice also guards against both direct and indirect challenges we face on our journey as software gardeners. These encumbrances can “overheat” our growth potential, leading us to early burnout or burn-down of gardens. The lattice helps us as a carbon sequester, mitigating the excess heat caused by an imbalance in emissions, similar to bamboo garden forests [GL5](#). Our individual experiences and personal network consume these difficulties to further grow the lattice through acts of harmonization (such as collaboration or apprenticeship). We care for these experiences together on the lattice because “all flourishing is mutual.” [GL2](#).

[\[GL1\]](#) Benjamin Gimmel. Round window with lattice. 2005. URL:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rundes_Fenster_mit_Gitter.jpg (visited on 2024-05-17).

[\[GL2\]\(1,2\)](#) Robin Wall Kimmerer. *Braiding sweetgrass: indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed Editions, Minneapolis, Minn, first paperback edition edition,

2013. ISBN 978-1-57131-356-0.

[GL3] J. Fuegi and J. Francis. Lovelace & babbage and the creation of the 1843 'notes'. *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing*, 25(4):16–26, October 2003. URL: <http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/1253887/> (visited on 2024-05-10), [doi:10.1109/MAHC.2003.1253887](https://doi.org/10.1109/MAHC.2003.1253887).

[GL4] Frank Herbert and Brian Herbert. *Dune*. The Dune chronicles. Ace, New York, ace premium edition edition, 2010. ISBN 978-0-441-17271-9.

[GL5] Arun Jyoti Nath, Rattan Lal, and Ashesh Kumar Das. Managing woody bamboos for carbon farming and carbon trading. *Global Ecology and Conservation*, 3:654–663, January 2015. URL: <https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S2351989415000281> (visited on 2024-05-12), [doi:10.1016/j.gecco.2015.03.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2015.03.002).

Software Forest



Fig. 5 The software forest is multi-layered like a forest garden. (Image source: [SF1](#)).

The software forest is a multidimensional garden, enriched by connections and minimal, iterative changes. Both the practice and artifacts of software development can seem daunting, like an unfamiliar forest full of mystery and surprises. However, through software gardening, we see these forests as opportunities for balanced cultivation.

“Called Three-Dimensional Forestry or Forest Farming, ... the three ‘dimensions’ of [Toyohiko Kagawa’s] 3-D system were the trees as conservers of the soil and suppliers of food and the livestock which benefited from them.” [SF2](#), [SF3](#)

Forest gardening offers innovations from an ecological cultivation perspective by caring for trees, understory vegetation, soil, and other environmental factors. Forest gardens take time to create because their slow-growing nature requires patience and careful, long-term nurturing. Software forests are also created gradually, “... starting with the existing, living, breathing system, and working outward, a step at a time, in such a way as to not undermine the system’s viability.” [SF4](#) Nourishing the system in this way helps us practice *primum non nocere* (“first, do no harm”) to the garden and components within, conserving energy for necessary adaptations.

Dense networks of relationships surround software forest gardens in the form of software environments. Some of these environments are portable, similar to [Wardian cases](#) that provide loosely coupled habitats for software organisms (for example, through environment managers). Others are exhibited through abstract relationships as [nurse logs](#), [Hügelkultur](#), or [mycorrhizal](#)-like associations which redistribute energy among the entirety of a software region.

As software gardeners we must consider how energy is transferred to various portions of the forest. Adventitious code, which “volunteers” by accident of growth, may create scenarios of energy waste in the form of cognitive or performance misalignment. All waste in the forest is food [SF5](#), therefore we must imagine and craft new homes for wasted energy through appropriate means. This chaos of this soft-scaping (curating the software garden towards a goal) is in constant flux, tugging on our capacities as student and teacher of the garden to encourage growth and avoid harm.

“What gardens demand of us is lifelong learning.” [SF6](#) We discover and are discovered within the software garden. As software forest gardens grow, they demonstrate emergent properties which are well suited for practices such as evolutionary architecture, object-orientated design, and coupling analysis. These assist software gardeners as a shed of multi-dimensional concepts that must be employed to truly achieve effective multi-layered software garden maintenance.

- [SF1] Graham Burnett. Forest garden diagram to replace the one that currently exists on the article. 2006. URL: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Forgard2-003.gif> (visited on 2024-05-17).
- [SF2] Robert A. de J. Hart. *Forest gardening: cultivating an edible landscape*. Chelsea Green Pub. Co, White River Junction, Vt, 1996. ISBN 978-0-930031-84-8.
- [SF3] Kagawa, T. and S. Fujisaki. Rittai nogyo no riron to jissen (theory and practice of three-dimensional structural farming). *Tokyo, Japan: Nihonhyoronsya*, 1935.
- [SF4] Brian Foote and Joseph Yoder. Big ball of mud. *Pattern languages of program design*, 4:654–692, 1997.
- [SF5] William McDonough. Waste equals food: our future and the making of things. *Awakening—The Upside of Y2k, The Printed Word, Spokane*, 1998.
- [SF6] Viviane Stappmanns, Mateo Kries, Vitra Design Museum, and Wüstenrot Stiftung, editors. *Garden futures: designing with nature*. Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, 2023. ISBN 978-3-945852-53-8.

Verdant Sundial



Fig. 6 The verdant sundial casts shadows of past and future intention observed in the present.

(Image source: [VS1](#)).

“The present is the ever moving shadow that divides yesterday from tomorrow. In that lies hope.”

- Frank Lloyd Wright

The software garden is intertwined in a story of time which is exhibited like a shadow on a moss-covered sundial. Time is observed indirectly through a kind of software archeology in past-tense material artifacts (files) and present-tense operation (procedures). These artifacts act as shadows of our prior creative intentions where procedures become the living present materialized promise of those intentions. “This brings an uncanny sense of living in a state where the future is a dimension of our present reality.” [VS2](#) The future is elusive but present in software artifacts, similar to rings of a tree that depict the promise of continued stability or hope of change.

These software tree rings are vessels of temporal data which offer a unique insight into growth patterns. We can study these patterns like dendronchronology: “Peel away the hard, rough bark and there is a living document, history recorded in rings of wood cells.” [VS3](#) This peeling helps us understand the chronological nature of software and how it evolves. It also shares patterns of temporal pulsing - not all times of the software garden are the same.

These software pulses give visibility into distinct growing or receding patterns. Some code exhibits annual behavior, requiring continual replanting efforts each season. Others are perennials, undergoing seasonal change perpetuated by periods of vibrancy and dormancy. Seasons of software promote differing patterns among these. Some systems may prepare for winter (for instance, during resource scarcity, or periods of high performance stress) through adaptable conservation only to fervently bloom during their spring.

Seasonal chronology in software benefits also from an awareness of kairos, the opportune timing of our actions amidst time. As we gain experience in software gardens we begin to anticipate seasonal change which helps us project preparatory change. Each software gardening moment amidst this cascade of season includes a series of options of varying kairological fitness. Assessing these moments of their fit within patterns helps us gain wisdom as we contemplate time in software gardens; like annual flowers, how do we anticipate and accept the limited lifecycle of some software? Like mighty trees, how do we build software to last 100 years or more?

[\[VS1\]](#) Elfward. Garden sundial in an epping garden. 2015. URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sundial_2916_HDR.jpg (visited on 2024-05-18).

[\[VS2\]](#) Timothy Morton. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2013. ISBN 9780816689231.

[\[VS3\]](#) Carolyn Gramling. ‘tree story’ explores what tree rings can tell us about the past. *Science News*, June 2020. Accessed: 2024-05-18. URL: <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/tree-story-book-explores-what-tree-rings-can-tell-us-about-past>.

Garden Circle

The garden circle is a section of the Software Garden Almanac associated with contributions, planning, and internal maintenance of the project.

Contributing

First of all, thank you for contributing to the Software Gardening Almanac! 🎉 100 🌱 We're so grateful for the kindness of your effort applied to grow this project into the best that it can be.

This document contains guidelines on how to most effectively contribute to this project.

If you would like clarifications, please feel free to ask any questions or for help. We suggest asking for help from GitHub where you may need it (for example, in a GitHub issue or a pull request) by "[at \(@\) mentioning](#)" a Software Gardening Almanac maintainer (for example, `@username`).

Code of conduct

Our [Code of Conduct \(CoC\) policy](#) (located [here](#)) governs this project. By participating in this project, we expect you to uphold this code. Please report unacceptable behavior by following the procedures listed under the [CoC Enforcement section](#).

Security

Please see our [Security policy](#) (located [here](#)) for more information on security practices and recommendations associated with this project.

Quick links

- Documentation: [🔗 software-gardening/almanac](#)
- Issue tracker: [🔗 software-gardening/almanac#issues](#)

Process

Reporting bugs or suggesting enhancements

We're deeply committed to a smooth and intuitive user experience which helps people benefit from the content found within this project. This commitment requires a good relationship and open

communication with our users.

We encourage you to file a [GitHub issue](#) to report bugs or propose enhancements to improve the Software Gardening Almanac.

First, figure out if your idea is already implemented by reading existing issues or pull requests! Check the issues ([🔗 software-gardening/almanac#issues](#)) and pull requests ([🔗 software-gardening/almanac](#)) to see if someone else has already documented or began implementation of your idea. If you do find your idea in an existing issue, please comment on the existing issue noting that you are also interested in the functionality. If you do not find your idea, please open a new issue and document why it would be helpful for your particular use case.

Please also provide the following specifics:

- The version of the Software Gardening Almanac you're referencing.
- Specific error messages or how the issue exhibits itself.
- Operating system (e.g. MacOS, Windows, etc.)
- Device type (e.g. laptop, phone, etc.)
- Any examples of similar capabilities

Your first code contribution

Contributing code for the first time can be a daunting task. However, in our community, we strive to be as welcoming as possible to newcomers, while ensuring sustainable software development practices.

The first thing to figure out is specifically what you're going to contribute! We describe all future work as individual [GitHub issues](#). For first time contributors we have specifically labeled as [good first issue](#).

If you want to contribute code that we haven't already outlined, please start a discussion in a new issue before writing any code. A discussion will clarify the new code and reduce merge time. Plus, it's possible your contribution belongs in a different code base, and we do not want to waste your time (or ours)!

Pull requests

After you've decided to contribute code and have written it up, please file a pull request. We specifically follow a [forked pull request model](#). Please create a fork of Software Gardening Almanac

repository, clone the fork, and then create a new, feature-specific branch. Once you make the necessary changes on this branch, you should file a pull request to incorporate your changes into the main The Software Gardening Almanac repository.

The content and description of your pull request are directly related to the speed at which we are able to review, approve, and merge your contribution into The Software Gardening Almanac. To ensure an efficient review process please perform the following steps:

1. Follow all instructions in the [pull request template](#)
2. Triple check that your pull request is adding *one* specific feature. Small, bite-sized pull requests move so much faster than large pull requests.
3. After submitting your pull request, ensure that your contribution passes all status checks (e.g. passes all tests)

We require pull request review and approval by at least one project maintainer in order to merge. We will do our best to review the code additions in as soon as we can. Ensuring that you follow all steps above will increase our speed and ability to review. We will check for accuracy, style, code coverage, and scope.

Git commit messages

For all commit messages, please use a short phrase that describes the specific change. For example, “Add feature to check normalization method string” is much preferred to “change code”. When appropriate, reference issues (via  plus number) .

Development

Overview

We write and develop the Software Gardening Almanac in [Python](#) through [Jupyter Book](#) with related environments managed by Python [Poetry](#). We use [Node](#) and [NPM](#) dependencies to assist development activities (such as performing linting checks or other capabilities). We use [GitHub actions](#) for [CI/CD](#) procedures such as automated tests.

Getting started

To enable local development, perform the following steps.

1. [Install Python](#) (suggested: use `pyenv` for managing Python versions)
2. [Install Poetry](#)
3. [Install Poetry environment](#): `poetry install`
4. [Install Node](#) (suggested: use `nvm` for managing Node versions)
5. [Install Node environment](#): `npm install`
6. [Install Vale dependencies](#): `poetry run vale sync`

Development Tasks

We use [Poe the Poet](#) to define common development tasks, which simplifies repeated commands. We include Poe the Poet as a Python Poetry `dev` group dependency, which users access through the Poetry environment. Please see the `pyproject.toml` file's `[tool.poe.tasks]` table for a list of available tasks.

For example:

```
# example of how Poe the Poet commands may be used.
poetry run poe <task_name>

# example of a task which runs jupyter-book build for the project
poetry run poe build-book
```

Linting

[pre-commit](#) automatically checks all work added to this repository. We implement these checks using [GitHub Actions](#). Pre-commit can work alongside your local [git with git-hooks](#). After [installing pre-commit](#) within your development environment, the following command performs the same checks:

```
% pre-commit run --all-files
```

Automated CI/CD with GitHub Actions

We use [GitHub Actions](#) to help perform automated [CI/CD](#) as part of this project. GitHub Actions involves defining [workflows](#) through [YAML files](#). These workflows include one or more [jobs](#) which are collections of individual processes (or steps) which run as part of a job. We define GitHub Actions work under the `.github` directory. We suggest the use of `act` to help test GitHub Actions work during development.

Attribution

We sourced portions of this contribution guide from `pyctyominer`. Big thanks go to the developers and contributors of that repository.

Garden Map

Our garden map is where you can learn about what features we're working on, what stage they're in, and when we expect to bring them to you. The content here follows that of a [technical roadmap](#) (providing strategic visibility on implementation details and timelines).

Ethos

We intend for the garden map to provide useful tools for us to efficiently create and maintain the Software Gardening Almanac. We practice keeping the garden map as “petal-light” as possible through built-in tools, automation, and an avoidance of [analysis paralysis](#) where possible.

We'd love your input

We welcome your input on the garden map and elements found within it! Please see the [contributing](#) guide for more information on how to participate in this process.

Active garden map(s)

The following are active garden maps for the Software Gardening Almanac. Please see below for a further description of these projects.

- [2024 BSSw Fellowship Milestones](#): this project communicates activities associated with the 2024 [BSSw Fellowship](#) associated with the Software Gardening Almanac.

Sections

You can explore the garden map with different views:

- **“Canopy-view” development visibility**: We track new, existing, and previous work at a high-level using organization-wide [GitHub Projects](#).
- **“Ground-level” development visibility**: We track repository-specific work using [GitHub issues](#) and a GitHub Project field called “status”, which we associate with each issue (indicated as “Todo”, “In progress”, “Paused”, or “Done”).
- **Major milestones**: We track major milestones using common [GitHub issues labels](#) across all repositories through their associated issues.

Visualizations

It can be helpful to visualize the garden map using data plots or other images. We use [GitHub Projects insights](#) to assist with automated creation and updates to garden map activity. Please see this [project insights page](#) for an example of these (using the insights button within any GitHub Projects for viewing others).

Acknowledgments

We drew inspiration for this content from the [GitHub public roadmap](#). Big thanks to the original works found there.