

## Foodscaping: Cultivating Beauty and Bounty

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**F**ood scaping, or edible landscaping, is the contemporary approach of blending edible plants seamlessly into decorative landscapes. This practice involves replacing purely ornamental plants with food-producing ones, offering a landscape that is not only visually appealing but also yields fruits, vegetables, and beautiful flowers. By investing water, fertilizer, and time, edible landscaping provides a multifaceted garden that combines functionality and aesthetics. Many edible plants boast vibrant fruits and foliage, making them equally captivating as traditional ornamental choices.



**Definition:** Edible landscaping is the use of food-producing plants in the residential landscape. It combines fruit and nut trees, berry bushes, vegetables, herbs, edible flowers, along with ornamental plants into aesthetically pleasing designs. These designs can adopt any garden style and may include anywhere from 1 to 100 percent edible specimens.

### Benefits:

- **Sustainability:** Edible landscaping promotes sustainability by encouraging the cultivation of local, organic produce, reducing the carbon footprint associated with food transportation.
- **Biodiversity:** Growing a variety of edible plants enhances biodiversity, attracting beneficial insects, birds, and other wildlife to the garden, creating a balanced ecosystem.
- **Health Benefits:** Consuming fresh, homegrown produce can improve overall health and nutrition, as it is free from harmful pesticides and chemicals often found in commercially grown crops.
- **Educational Value:** Edible landscapes serve as educational tools, teaching individuals, especially children, about the origins of food, gardening techniques, and the importance of nature conservation.
- **Community Engagement:** Sharing surplus harvest with neighbors, friends, or local food banks fosters a sense of community and cooperation among residents.
- **Water Conservation:** Many edible plants are drought-resistant, aiding in water conservation efforts and promoting responsible water usage in gardening.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Growing your own food can lead to significant savings on grocery bills, making edible landscaping a financially prudent choice in the long run.
- **Emotional Well-being:** Gardening and interacting with nature have been linked to reduced stress, anxiety, and depression, enhancing emotional well-being and quality of life.

- **Customization:** Edible landscaping allows for customization based on individual preferences, dietary needs, and available space, providing a tailored gardening experience.
- **Food Security:** By cultivating a diverse range of edible plants, communities can enhance local food security, especially in times of economic uncertainty or disruptions in the food supply chain
- **Garden Therapy:** Gardening, including edible landscaping, is known to provide therapeutic benefits. It can reduce stress, improve mood, and promote relaxation.

### Inputs

Edible plants, like ornamental plants, require maintenance. Reduce maintenance requirements by planting the "right plant in the right place." In other words, be sure to match a plant's growing requirements with your yard's conditions. When growing vegetables, consider the season as well, since they only grow at specific times of the year. All plants require some pruning, fertilizer, and water, as well as monitoring for pest problems. Take special care to select pesticides and fertilizers that are appropriate and safe on plants to be consumed.

### The scope of food landscaping

- **Cultural Significance:** Edible landscaping can be a way to preserve and celebrate cultural heritage through the cultivation of traditional and heirloom varieties of edible plants.
- **Seasonal Variety:** The scope of edible landscaping allows for year-round harvesting by selecting plants that thrive in different seasons, ensuring a continuous supply of fresh food.
- **Heritage Plants:** Growing heritage or heirloom plants in edible landscapes can help conserve biodiversity by preserving old, rare, and unique plant varieties.
- **Food Waste Reduction:** Harvesting what you need when you need it can reduce food waste, as you can pick only what you plan to consume.
- **Eco-friendly Landscaping:** Edible landscaping promotes eco-friendly practices by using organic, chemical-free methods and reducing the carbon footprint associated with transporting food long distances.
- **Innovation and Experimentation:** The scope of edible landscaping encourages innovation in planting and growing techniques, as gardeners experiment with new methods and plant combinations.
- **Agricultural Education:** Edible landscapes in schools, colleges, and public spaces can be valuable tools for teaching about agriculture, sustainability, and the environment.
- **Culinary Creativity:** Edible landscapes can inspire culinary creativity by encouraging individuals to explore new recipes and cooking techniques using the homegrown produce.
- **Carbon Sequestration:** Trees and perennial plants within edible landscapes can help sequester carbon, contributing to climate change mitigation.
- **Local Food Partnerships:** The scope of edible landscaping extends to partnerships with local food banks and charitable organizations, helping to provide fresh produce to those in need.

### Use of edible plants as ornamental garden feature

In this type of landscaping design there is use of vegetables, fruits, flowers, nuts, herbs as a feature of landscaping design. These plants are used to create borders, fencing, ground cover, pergola, *etc* in the landscape. Edible landscaping is a practical integration of food plants within an ornamental or decorative setting. It is a combination of beauty and utility. Countless edible plants can be used as different feature in the garden. Garden feature along with example of some of the edible plants are given under this heading.

## Borders

- Leek - The edible part of leek is a bundle of leaf sheath. Their fantastic foliage makes them an ideal vegetable to grow as background or filler in flower borders. Leeks is rich in folate, vitamin C, vitamin E, iron, potassium, copper and vitamin B.
- Kale- It is one of the top ornamental vegetable picks because of its variety and versatility. The leaves of ornamental kale is edible. They're often used as garnish on plates in place of parsley. In the garden, ornamental kale is used as a front-of-the-border plant.
- Hollyhock – The *Althea rosea*, an ornamental plant, features vibrant flowers ranging from orange to dark red. Its young leaves and flower buds are edible raw or cooked, and its roots yield nutritious starch. The flower petals are used for tea, and decoctions serve as astringents and anti-inflammatory agents. *Althea* flowers and roots are utilized in treatments related to the uterus and kidney inflammation.
- Dog flower - The *Anthriscum majus*, a winter season annual, produces striking flowers in shades of yellow, orange, red, and maroon. These flowers are rich in minerals and dietary fiber. Chemically, they contain kaempferol glycosides, quercetin, cyanidin, and pelargonidin glycosides. Extracts from these flowers possess potent antioxidant properties.
- Salvia - Common sage, also known as culinary sage, features flowers in lavender, pink, purple, and white hues. It's popular as an ornamental plant in gardens. Its leaves are used in folk medicine for various health benefits, including digestive and sedative properties. There's a potential link between sage and natural dementia treatment based on traditional uses.
- Annual chrysanthemum - it is a winter season annual flower grown for its ornamental bicolor yellow and white flowers. It is botanically known as *Chrysanthemum coronarium*. The leaves of this plant are used as edible greens especially in Asian dishes. Their flowers are also edible as row.
- Lavender – It is winter season annual and it bears blue colour flowers. The essential oil from this plant is used in aromatherapy. This flower is also a good selection for planting in therapeutic garden dementia specific garden and herbal garden. Its oil has strong fragrance

## Edible Ground cover

- **Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*)** –
- Nasturtium plants are famous for their vibrant yellow, orange, and red flowers. Their round leaves are not only edible but also delicious, rich in vitamin C, anthocyanin, and polyphenol. They boost the immune system and help with coughs, sore throats, colds, and infections (Jakubczyk et al., 2018).
- **Creeping rosemary** – Rosemary, a popular culinary and medicinal herb, serves as a drought-tolerant ground cover, ideal for xeriscaping and arid regions. Its fragrant leaves are used in treatments related to the cardiovascular system, central nervous system, liver, genitourinary and respiratory systems, and reproductive system (Begum et al., 2013).
- **Sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*)** – It is one of the important ground covers used in landscaping. Its leaves are also edible. Its leaves are rich in carotene, vitamin B, iron, calcium, zinc, and protein; and as a crop, sweet potato is more tolerant of pests.
- **Creeping thyme** – It is a great culinary herbaceous plant. Creeping variety of thyme makes a beautiful fragrant ground cover that can tolerate light foot traffic also. This plant has antioxidant, anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory and spasmolytic properties.

## Edible pergola, Arch, Trellis, arbour and porch area:

Ornamental and edible plants having climbing growth habit can be used to make decorative and functional pergola, arch, trellis, arbour in the garden. Scented climbing rose is one of the

best options for porch area of home garden. It will provide fragrance, beauty as well as edible rose petal and hips to the gardener.

- **Grapes** - It is woody perennial vine. It contains powerful antioxidant known as polyphenols. These are thought to have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. It contains vitamin A and B, and they are high in water content. Grapevines are ideal for creating some of the important garden feature like arch, pergola, trellis, cover arbour (Strik, 1989) and green fence.
- **Climbing rose** - All parts of roses, including leaves, buds, petals, and hips, are edible and add flavor to salads, desserts, smoothies, syrups, and teas. They are rich in vitamins A, C, riboflavin, niacin, and minerals such as calcium, phosphorous, iron, and potassium (Das and Nanda, 2015). Climbing roses are excellent for covering pergolas, trellises, fences, arbors, and arches. They can also be used to create beautiful garden gates. Fragrant rose climbers are ideal for planting in porch areas at home.

**Flower bed and hanging basket:** Flower crops which are mostly grown as beautiful flower bed in the garden but also have edible flowers are; *Viola tricolor*, *Tropaeolum majus*, *Tagetes patula*, *Calendula officinalis*, *Centaurea cyanus*, *Phlox paniculata* (Rop et al., 2012). These flower crop can be grown as focal point in edible landscaping. Among these flower crops, *Viola tricolor*, *Tropaeolum majus* and *Tagetes patula* can be grown in handling basket.

**Hedge and edge planting:** Boundary or fencing formed by planting of shrub or tree in row is termed as hedge. Shrubs having ornamental as well as edible use and can be grown as hedge in garden are: hibiscus, *Jasminum sambac*, citrus, pomegranate, guava, blue berry, rosemary, lemon, coffee, tea and rose. Most of the fruit tree bears ornamental flowers, leaves as well as fruit and can be planted as tall hedge or alongside the pathway in garden.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, edible landscaping, also known as "foodscaping," seamlessly integrates the aesthetic appeal of ornamental landscapes with the practicality of growing food. This innovative approach to gardening provides a myriad of advantages, including the enjoyment of fresh, homegrown produce, encouragement of healthier eating habits, and a stronger connection with nature. Edible landscaping allows for the incorporation of diverse edible plants, ranging from herbs and vegetables to fruit trees and flowering plants, enhancing gardens with vibrant colors, delightful flavors, and functional benefits.