

## The Edible Front Yard Garden

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When one thinks of an edible garden, the first thought that likely comes to mind is of a vegetable garden, or perhaps a vegetable garden/fruit orchard combination. The edible garden, however, is neither of these. Its concept centers on the idea of growing small amounts of fruits and vegetables in strategic areas tucked within an existing ornamental garden. For those who don't have time to commit to a full-fledged vegetable garden, who have limited growing space, or who live in neighborhoods where homeowners' association deed restrictions prohibit home vegetable gardens, the concept of the Edible Front Yard Garden can be quite attractive!



*Turmeric Flower*

Ornamental gardens are a mainstay of most neighborhoods. Typically, these gardens are designed to add an established beauty that visually softens the exterior walls of our homes and hardscape features such as sidewalks, driveways and mailbox areas. Plantings used are typically of varying scales, shapes and colors. Adding a few delicious and structurally interesting vegetable plants and appropriately-sized fruit trees can enhance both the beauty and the functionality of the gardens already gracing your front yard.

A visit to our demonstration Edible Front Yard Garden will give you some useful ideas as you begin to plan your own – on display are an array of vegetable and herb plants, many seasonal and some perennial, all interspersed with amongst ornamentals. Our garden currently features a number of unique plants that are mostly of Asian variety – such as turmeric, Santa Rosa Weeping Plum (both perennials) and Amaranth Chinese Spinach (an annual). Our garden trees include some that are tropical, such as Papaya, so an idea can be had of how such trees might look in your garden. If you are interested in growing delicious strawberries, please take note of the slim growing



*Strawberry Plant*

troughs we have attached to a free-standing fence panel. Strawberries grown in these “raised containers” will get plenty of sun, can be easily watered and easily harvested!

To create an edible garden it is important to begin with an assessment of your potential vegetable growing areas. Which areas receive direct sunlight, and for how many hours of the day? Which areas provide partial shade and which provide shelter from the wind? Availability of water and drainage also need to be considered, as does the season of the year. In our hot and humid climate, vegetables grow best and are the most productive in the spring and fall – insects are fewer and the mild temperatures are conducive to optimal vegetable growth, health and production.



*Carrot Tops*

Let’s consider the spring garden – spring potatoes, carrots, radishes and spring onions can all be tucked into ornamental garden areas where there is loose and well-drained garden soil, ample sunlight and water. Lettuces, spinach, strawberries, eggplant and bush green beans are among possible choices, too. Growing your own spring herbs such as cilantro, dill, lemon balm, basil and garlic chives will provide you with a season of fresh fragrance and flavor.

In the fall, consider colorful cabbages, cauliflower and broccoli. These plants like the cooler fall temperatures, are structurally interesting and are packed with nutrition! Also to be consider are Swiss chard, kale and fennel. And then, there are edible flowers such as pansies! All of these seasonal plants can be used as discrete additions to your ornamental garden – tuck a few plants here and there, in optimal growing areas, and see how much beauty and nutrition they can offer. (It should be noted that some plants, such as cabbage, need lots of room to grow.)

For a perennial vegetable plant, consider the globe artichoke. If you have the space, it can be a visually dynamic addition to your garden. Its leaf structure is large, upright and rather spiky. When the artichoke



*Globe Artichoke*

(which is a huge flower bud) is left on the plant and allowed to open it produces a large and attractive thistle-like bloom. Rosemary is a fragrant perennial herb that is routinely used in landscapes. (A growing factor to consider is that rosemary does prefer a dryer soil than most herbs.)

Trees to consider for your edible garden might include citrus, pomegranate and loquat. If properly protected, success can be had growing a tropical tree such as mango – just know that it will need protection from a winter freeze.

We invite you to visit to our garden several times over the course of year to get a better idea of how we use seasonal plants. When you come, please look for a labeled kiosk where a flyer listing the plants we have used is available for you to take. Check out our website, too. You will find more information about our Edible Front Yard Garden under “Demonstration Gardens.”