



Urban Harvest

How to Work Vegetables into Your Front Yard Landscape

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The Meredith Community Garden features vegetables, edible flowers and others plants arranged in a cottage garden style.

I am often approached by people who want to grow vegetables but lack the required sun ingredient in their backyards, and have an abundance of sun in their front yards.

This is often a major challenge since no one wants an unsightly landscaped front yard, and in many cases civic clubs and subdivisions have strict restrictions on the appearance of front yard landscapes. A 10-by-4-foot vegetable bed smack dab in the middle of a beautifully landscaped front yard would likely bring thoughts from neighbors of "what are these people doing to



The Levy Park Community Garden exemplifies the beauty of veggies and other edibles

our neighborhood?" and "this is really unsightly, I need to report these people."

Maybe someday as we all have a better appreciation of locally grown nutritious food, we will view front yard vegetable gardens as beautiful and desired, and the people who are growing these gardens as the heroes of American society. Until that day, another solution is needed.

Selecting 'presentable' plants



Pictured: From top, Swiss chard, cardoon with its deeply dissected foliage, 'Red Giant' mustard; and pink larkspur and kale.

I have grown vegetables in all parts of my yard including the front. The key is to consider vegetables as elements of the landscape when developing the design. Think about color, texture, size and every other aspect of the vegetable just as if it were a typical beautiful landscape plant. With this technique, vegetables and herbs easily become mainstays of a well-received and even envied landscape.

If your yard is to be landscaped by a landscape designer, be active in the design and find pictures in seed catalogs of the herbs and vegetables you would like, for landscape designers may have little experience or knowledge with these plants. And leafing through the seed catalogs will be a lot of fun for you.

Some examples of vegetables and herbs that easily fold into home landscapes are dill, parsley, basil, lettuce, chard, kale, carrots, bulb fennel and beets. Each has its own landscape characteristics and value:

::Dill with its tall majestic feathery stance, can serve well as a thickly planted background feature that holds the shorter features together.

::Swiss chard, with its red, yellow, pink and white stems mixed with crinkly 2' tall leaves makes an outstanding mid-level feature, and is often seen in neighborhood median street plantings as the feature plant.

::Parsley and **carrots** with their short feathery and delicate green leaves can be the ground cover feature.

::Beets are very versatile in that some varieties have tall thick dark green leaves, while other varieties have short brilliant red leaves.

:: Even **nasturtiums**, **pansies** and **violas**, all edible flowers, can be part of your edible landscape. The flowers of these plants, and even the leaves of nasturtiums can be mixed into salads.

In order to maintain the beauty of the landscape, harvesting the edible plants requires some care. Regular picking of a few outside leaves of lettuce, chard, dill, kale and others will not be noticed and will stimulate more desirable leaf growth producing a season long landscape.

A little well thought-out designing can easily integrate these vegetables and herbs into a pristine landscape when considered in the original design, and even when working with an existing landscape.

Be the neighborhood pioneer and hero in leading a movement of locally grown food in every yard. Be proud of your effort and the catalyst for your neighbors. Work with your civic club, the neighborhood garden club and your neighbors to create designs that are acceptable and admired. Your imagination and creativity are powerful friends in making your front yard an edible landscape heaven.

This column is produced by Urban Harvest. For more information about gardening classes, farmers markets, community gardens and school & youth gardening programs, visit www.urbanharvest.org.



Nasturtiums and ornamental kale surround the base of an elegant urn of pink geraniums and variegated ivy.