

Edible Landscaping

Edible Landscaping (“foodscaping”) is the practice of integrating edible plants into ornamental landscapes and provides fresh food for your family. Please check out the General Vegetable Gardening Tip for additional information.

Regulations and Policies to Consider

1. Water Use

- a. Allocation - edible landscaping could be affected by restrictions on outdoor watering.
- b. Greywater – it is advised not to use greywater on vegetable gardens.
- c. Water collection and irrigation systems – are good way to conserve water.

2. Land Use

- a. Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CCR) –
- b. Check with Home Owner’s Associations (HOA) if applicable.
- c. Ventura County Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance (amended effective July 5, 2024).
- d. Pollinator-friendly landscaping is encouraged - which can include edible plants.

3. Safety

- a. Spread of pests (e.g., Asian Citrus Psyllid, Queensland Fruit Fly).
- b. Pesticide use - it’s important to be aware of what plants are present and follow label directions carefully.

Edible Landscape vs. Traditional Landscape

The choice often comes down to personal priorities, lifestyle, and local context – below are items to consider.

1. Pros of edible landscaping vs traditional landscaping:

- a. Grow your own food and possible cost savings on groceries
- b. Educational opportunities
- c. Aesthetic value, landscape beauty
- d. Unique landscape - stand out from traditional ornamental gardens

2. Cons of edible landscaping vs. traditional landscaping:

- a. Maintenance – more care and time required – and potential mess from fallen fruit.
- b. Seasonal changes may create less attractive garden during certain seasons
- c. Pest management – edibles can attract more pests and need to be addressed more timely
- d. Regulations

Landscaping for Aesthetics

1. **Style/Theme** – Work to a consistent garden style/theme (native, Mediterranean, Japanese, woodland, cottage, formal gardens, ...).
2. **Interest** – Winding paths and borders offer different perspectives.
3. **Accent** – A fruit tree can make a great focal point, and groupings of potted plants.
4. **Scale/Proportion** – Plant low-growing plants in front, with taller plants in back.
5. **Vertical Gardening** – decorative trellises and arbors can add height and a backdrop to the garden.
6. **Balance** – Use symmetry and asymmetry to your advantage.
7. **Texture** – Fine textures call attention to bold, coarse surfaces - vary texture to create interest.
8. **Color** – Different shades of green - color contrast can be dramatic - edible flowers can add a splash of color.
9. **Natural** – Group plants that grow together naturally (Hydro-zoning) - group in clumps.
10. **Repetition** – Plant in 3’s and 5’s. Plant in mass.
11. **Simplicity** – Avoid planting more than you can maintain - start small - unify the garden with a few key plants.

Plant Classifications to Consider

List foods you like & use in cooking – consider yield and aesthetics.

1. **Herbaceous** – consider basil, parsley, chives, oregano, sage, cilantro, or dill.
2. **Vegetables** – consider size, shape, color, flower, fruit, and season.
3. **Flowers** – hundreds to consider – here are a few - hibiscus, lavender, marigold, nasturtium.
4. **Citrus** – consider size – dwarf (6-8ft), semi-dwarf (15ft), and full size (20+ft) – little pruning.
5. **Fruit trees** – roots spread 2-3 times the canopy width, pruning required, standard vs. dwarf.

Basic Care: QR code will take you to the Soil to Sprouts slide deck on the Ventura County Master Gardener website

- **Seeds or Transplant** – Transplants produce earlier harvest – look for multiple plants in each container - separate by soaking.
- **Mulch the Soil Surface** – Apply a 3-4-inch layer of organic mulch.
- **Watering** – water deep - overhead watering can lead to diseases. Water in morning. Observe plants – may be droopy in the evening – look again in the morning.
- **Support** - trellis, stake, or cage.
- **Fertilizer** – Use a General Purpose (10-10-10) fertilizer. High nitrogen fertilizer will increase green growth – not fruit.
- **Using Raised Beds or Containers?** – use potting soil or blend of compost/topsoil/vermiculite.



Learn more about the Ventura County Master Gardener using this QR to visit the website.

