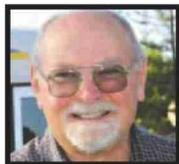


WHAT'S GROWING ON

Edible landscape is good for table, world



Lee Miller

Edible landscaping is good for a pandemic. During this stay-at-home time due to the COVID-19 pandemic, an edible landscape provides a good activity that can yield some food for your table. Lawn is the most commonly grown crop in America, but, unfortunately, it is not edible except to livestock. That was the original reason English estates had lawns to feed the animal lawnmowers such as goats and sheep. Lawns are now grown without such utilitarian purpose other than to promote lawnmower sales and perhaps to provide dog and kid play areas.

If you have children at home, doing an edible landscape is a good way to teach some skills and knowledge about how food is produced. So many children grow up with little knowledge of

See MILLER, B2

nature these days. And, if you are a parent without gardening experience it will be a healthful learning experience for you, too.

Homegrown food saves trips to the supermarket and cuts into the CO₂ going into the atmosphere from that trip and the transporting of food from far away to your local grocer. One garden may not make much of

an impact, but if more people grow food at home, it will help. Besides, you can feel good about your efforts, and you will know what chemicals, if any, are sprayed on your food.

It also is part of the gardening experience to learn how to compost and turn kitchen and garden wastes into a useful product to use to enhance your landscape instead of sending them off to a landfill where they can cause methane, a greenhouse gas release that is worse than CO₂. As one who has grown edible landscapes for more than 55 years, I would not know how to live differently. Even when I lived on a small city lot many years ago, I grew a few vegetables and had a compost pile.

Here are some of the basics to count on to be successful.

- Plentiful sunshine on your garden site, about 6 to 8 hours, is a must for growing most herbs, vegetables and fruits.

- Access to water for irrigation is important, and the best way to irrigate efficiently in our water-scarce California is to use a drip irrigation system. Check around at agricultural supply stores or online for information and drip materials at reasonable prices.

- It is good to learn what kind of soil you have because that will affect fertilizing, soil conditioning with compost and irrigation schedules. If

you have sandy soil that readily drains then irrigation and fertilizing can be done more frequently. Adding compost to sandy soil will help with water retention as well as help provide nutrients. On the other hand, heavy clay soils tend to be more fertile and hold moisture longer and need less frequent watering. They may not drain as well and will benefit by adding compost to break up the tight soil structure that characterizes clay soils and hampers drainage.

- Another thing to consider is the style of gardening that you wish to embark upon. It is possible to garden with raised beds, row gardening, placing edibles among ornamentals or gardening in containers to list a few approaches. You can even do a front yard edible garden where edibles blend in with ornamentals (<https://www.sunset.com/garden/garden-basics/7-edible-garden-ideas#edible-plants-in-disguise>).

I have a native plant front yard, but it easily accommodates attractive herbs like rosemary. Front yards can be planted to figs, citrus, pomegranates or persimmons or other fruit trees. You just need to be careful in the selection of trees that are of appropriate size — dwarfs are good and aesthetically appealing. But remember, in planting fruit trees, it is important



that they are not planted where fruit can fall on walkways or driveways.

For some ideas on an edible landscape, check out the images at <https://www.pinterest.com/prudent/edible-landscaping/> and <https://www.tenthacrefarm.com/see-how-easily-you-can-create-an-edible-landscape/>

The edible landscape idea was pioneered in California by Rosalind Creasy, whose 1982 book entitled “Edible

Landscaping” was reprinted in 2010. Check out a review and sources for the book at <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/7356490-edible-landscaping>. If you want to follow an expert’s advice, this book is a great place to start.

Another source of information is the Sacramento Master Gardener’s website on edible gardening: http://sacmg.ucanr.edu/Edible_Landscaping/.

It is never too late to

start an edible landscape, but it is a good idea to start with a small area and increase efforts over time as skills and knowledge increase. Happy edible gardening.

If you have a gardening related question you can contact the UC Master Gardeners at 209-953-6112. More information can be found on our website: http://sjmastergardeners.ucanr.edu/CONTACT_US/



Tomatoes, peppers and zucchini are some of the vegetables to enjoy from the summer garden. [COURTESY OF LEE MILLER]