

Edible Landscaping



What's edible landscaping?

Edible landscaping is incorporating plants you can eat into your yard and gardens. Any landscaping can be edible if you add in fruits, vegetables, and herbs! They can function as groundcovers, shrubs, trees, annuals, and perennials.



Site Considerations

Edible landscaping can be incorporated into most landscapes but consider the following before planting:

- **Planting Site Conditions:** Consider conditions needed for planted edibles to thrive such as hardiness zone, soil, and sunlight.
- **Pests:** Some plants, like fruit trees, need a lot of research to learn about common pest issues and how to manage them.
- **Location for Planting:** Edible plants are more accessible when planted closer to you. However, avoid planting next to roads, sidewalks, and old buildings that may introduce harmful chemicals to the soil and plants. Take a soil test through the University of Maine Soil Lab to check for lead and other heavy metals and wash your produce before eating. Also avoid planting shrubs or trees over your septic tank and leach field or sewer line as their roots can damage your system and lead to a costly replacement.
- **Available Space and Use of Yard:** Consider how much yard space to use to determine types and quantity of edible plants. Use sheet mulching as a safe way to convert areas of yard from lawn to edible plants.
- **Edible Plant Selection:** Plants vary in how quickly they grow and produce edible fruit, with some requiring multiple plants for cross pollination and years of growing before edible fruit is available. Planting a variety of edible plants may be the most rewarding.

Ways to Incorporate Edible Landscaping

In Planters: Ideal for small yards, large paved areas, or poor soil quality. Make sure you use planter-friendly varieties of your plants.

In Designated Gardens: Use sheet mulching to section off a portion of your yard to transition into gardens or raised beds. Build paths into larger gardens so you can reach all your plants for easy harvesting!

Throughout the Yard: Include edible plants as part of your landscape beds, as shrubs along the edge of your yard, or in a vegetative buffer to add an aesthetic while providing additional benefits such as erosion control and habitat. As trees or shrubs need replacing, swap them for edible ones.

