



# FOODSCAPING: THE EDIBLE LANDSCAPE

TEXAS A&M  
**AGRI**LIFE  
RESEARCH | EXTENSION





# The Edible Landscape

**E**dible landscapes put us back in touch with the land we live on, the people around us, and the food we eat.

Maybe you're interested in incorporating edible plants into your existing landscape or planning on designing a new section of your yard for both beauty and function. By utilizing the most effective water efficient methods, you can work within your city's watering guidelines and grow some of your own food. No matter who you are, there is a style of edible gardening to meet your needs, suit your taste, and capture your imagination.

## A Shift in Perception

While it was once common practice to maintain a yard consisting primarily of turfgrass (managed to be both labor and resource intensive), many people are opting to transition a portion of their landscape into vegetable, fruit, or nut production. The latest studies report that as many as 35% of American households are now growing at least some of their own food - the largest numbers in more than a decade. Why mow it, when you can grow it?



## Planning and Design

Just like any other addition to your property, it is important to put some thought into the design of your edible garden or landscape in order to give you the best chance for success. Plant your food with an eye for the overall beauty of the landscape in mind.

### Defining Style

**Naturalistic** - meandering lines flow organically through the landscape, reminiscent of the lines one might see in nature.

**Structured** - clean, precisely manicured lines divide landscape sections geometrically, giving the space an architectural sensibility.

Choose a design to complement or contrast the style of your house to make your garden welcoming and interesting to the eye.

### Consider

- Structure
- Movement
- Layering heights
- Color contrast
- Evergreens



### Location: Right Plant, Right Place

Select the best possible location for each plant taking into account these factors:

#### Size

Be mindful of the mature height and width of your edible plant material, allowing room to grow and proper spacing for airflow.

#### Light

Do the fruits, vegetables, or herbs you want to grow require full sun, or can they

handle growing in areas shaded by your home, fence, or existing plants in the landscape?

#### Water

Plant the water first! Whether you're growing a few veggies in pots, or incorporating edible berries, shrubs, or trees into your landscape, it is important to think about water before you place any plants or seeds in the ground. Some edible plants might require a little more water than our native and adapted,

strictly ornamental plants. Others do quite well with minimal irrigation. Whatever you're growing, it is important that available water resources are used as efficiently as possible.

Drip irrigation or multi-stream rotors are great technologies for reducing water lost to evaporation, and can be retrofitted to an existing irrigation system. Soaker hoses and/or hand watering work great, too, for

**Continued**



## Continued from page 1

certain situations. Whatever the watering plan is for your edible landscape project, be sure to pair it with a ½" topdressing of quality compost and 2"- 4" of mulch to increase the effectiveness of the water in the root zone!

### Soil

Proper soil preparation and maintenance is key to a successful edible landscape, especially considering the challenges of the heavy clay, alkaline soils commonly seen in parts of Texas. We recommend starting out with a simple and inexpensive soil test from <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu>. Not only will it help you decide which fertilizers you might need to add and in what amounts, but it might also prevent you from adding too much fertilizer or nutrients you don't need, saving you money and preventing runoff into nearby bodies of water.



## Soil kit online

Soiltesting.tamu.edu is your one-stop shop for everything you need to get your soil sample submitted to Texas A&M AgriLife scientists for testing.

## Web Resources



Visit [tinyurl.com/aggievegselector](http://tinyurl.com/aggievegselector) to help you figure out which vegetables work best in your garden.

## What to Grow

It's always best to focus on what you or your friends and family like to eat. You might even be able to save a little money and reduce your grocery bill. Other people like to experiment with edible plants that serve multiple purposes. Many plants are both edible and highly ornamental with varying colors and textures of foliage, showy fruits, and different bloom times for year-round appeal.

### Consider

- Edible flowers
- Edible tree crops
- Edible shrubs
- Herbaceous fruits and vegetables
- Herbs

### Getting Started Pre-Existing Bed

- Remove undesirable, struggling, or high maintenance plants
- Replace with well-adapted edibles

### Starting from Scratch

- Remove existing vegetation
- Add soil amendments
- Install Irrigation
- Install hardscape
- Plant
- Mulch



# Edible Plants for North Texas Landscapes

## Showy Annual Vegetables

Vegetables are usually characterized into two groups: cool season and warm season. Try utilizing cool season cabbages, kales, lettuces, or other showy greens as cool season borders in the landscape. Warm season fruiting vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant can be showcased for their bright colored fruits when temperatures warm up. Vining vegetables add both vertical height and textural interest along with color. Refer to seed packets and plant tags for specific planting dates, or go to the Aggie Horticulture Planting Guide: [tinyurl.com/aggieplantingguide](https://tinyurl.com/aggieplantingguide).

- Beans
- Beets
- Cabbage
- Eggplant
- Kale
- Lettuce
- Peppers
- Sweet Potato
- Swiss Chard
- Tomatoes
- Okra

## Perennial Vegetables

Once perennials are planted, they come back year after year, making the best use of natural resources. These vegetables are not only beautiful and tasty, but also require very little supplemental irrigation.

- Artichoke
- Asparagus
- Radicchio
- Sorrel
- Sunchoke (Jerusalem artichokes)
- Walking Onions, Garlic, Chives

## Shrubs

Just like their ornamental counterparts, edible bushes and shrubs should be planted in spring or fall. It is a good rule of thumb to avoid planting during the heat and water stresses of summer.

- Bay Laurel
- Blackberries
- Clove currants
- Elderberry
- Goji berries
- Nanking Cherry
- Silverberry

## Tree Crops

Container grown trees are best planted in fall going into dormancy. Bare root trees are best purchased and planted before March or before the buds start to swell. Although edible tree crops can be planted at other times, it is best to avoid planting in the heat of the Texas summer.

- Apples
- Asian Pear
- Figs
- Jujubes
- Mulberry
- Peaches
- Pecans, Walnuts
- Persimmons
- Plums
- Pomegranates

## Citrus (protect from frost)

- Kumquat ('Marumi', 'Meiwa')
- Satsuma ('Orange frost', 'Artic frost')
- Loquats

## Herbs

Many culinary herbs provide ornamental value, as well. Perennial herbs, like rosemary, oregano, and mint, are evergreen to semi-evergreen, while basil, cilantro, and dill can easily reseed.

- Basil
- Cilantro
- Culinary Sage
- Dill
- Mint
- Oregano
- Pineapple Sage
- Rosemary
- Thyme
- Mexican Tarragon

## Edible Flowers

For those wishing to expand their edible palate, some flowers have delicious and interesting flavors. Consider, for example, the cucumber-like borage or spicy pepper-like nasturtiums. **Not all flowers are edible, so make sure that it is before tasting it.**

- Borage
- Cornflower
- Daylily
- Dianthus
- Lavender
- Nasturtiums
- Squash
- Viola spp.

**Always refer to the botanical name when verifying whether a plant is safe to eat.**