

Edible Landscapes

One of the most rewarding gardening passions is to grow your own edibles such as berries, fruits, vegetables and herbs. To gardeners not much is more satisfying than literally “enjoying the fruits” of your gardening efforts! A plethora of great edibles can be grown by PNW gardeners in our mild maritime climate. Here are a few basic ideas to get your gardening juices flowing and help you achieve success.

1. Consider utilizing many berries as shrubs in your landscape. Many newer blueberries are attractive and tidy growers – varieties like Bountiful Blue, Sunshine Blue, Jellybean and Pick Icing. Even traditional highbush types are good taller shrubs and make wonderful hedges or barriers that you can eat. Look at Evergreen Huckleberries – a sweet native that thrives in sun or shade and has tasty dark berries. Check out Lingonberries – they make a wonderful low border shrub/groundcover. Even larger growing berries like Honeyberries or Goji berries make fun and attractive shrubs anywhere in a sunny location. Now when you are out weeding in the yard you can grab snack from time to time!

2. Container growing is always fun. Whether you are out of room in the yard or want to try something new in a pot, there are many plants that will thrive in containers. Everyone has pots sitting around right? Use a good organic potting soil, or for acid lovers like Blueberries an acidic planting mix, or even our raised bed mix for herbs or veggies. Feed them regularly with an organic granular or liquid and watch the watering in the summer months. It is easy to control many edibles in containers. Try Raspberry Shortcake – a great dwarf thornless raspberry for pots. Lots of fun Blueberries as well. Strawberries are easy in larger “pocket” planters or strawberry pots. Try potatoes in an old garbage can or large pot. Tomatoes. Peppers. Herbs. Just about anything can be grown in attractive frost proof pots outdoors.

3. Hanging baskets offer another way to grow some fun edibles. Tomatoes make wonderful hanging plants in hot summer months. Strawberries can easily be grown in them as well. Even some fun new Blueberries are coming out for fall 2020/spring 2021 that are trailing as well. Use a good organic potting mix, feed regularly with an organic liquid food like Grow! Or Bloom! From Espoma Organics, watch the water in the summer and you could be eating your baskets as well!

4. Have a small yard? Or want to maximize your spaces? Look at your fences – many edibles can be grown along them. Kiwi vines make a wonderful vining plant for sunny locations. Both fuzzy and hardy grape type kiwis are easy and rewarding. Look for the great new self-fertile fuzzy kiwi – ‘Sweet N Solo’ – or lots of good hardy grape kiwi varieties including the new ‘Kiwi Magic’. Speaking of grapes – there is a wide range of good seedless table grapes that be grown on structures as well - a fence, an arbor – just about anywhere there is sun and some support.

Another great use of sunny fence lines or other walls, where a more lateral growth habit is required are espalier form fruit trees. Apples, Pears and Asian Pears can be bought in this tiered form and grown as shorter, flat and wider specimens than typical fruit trees. They come with multiple varieties on one plant, eliminating the need for more than one variety for cross-pollination. Espaliers give a wonderful crops each season and can be controlled to grow in a tidy manner laterally.

For other fruit tree options, consider planting columnar apples from the urban apple series. There are a few varieties and all produce tasty apples. These grow up by not too far out resulting in a tree that does not eat up to much space in smaller locations. They can also be grown in large pots as well on decks or patios. Be sure to have two varieties for proper cross-pollination.

5. Consider building raised beds to contain other running type berries like raspberries or brambles. Sometimes these are tough to contain in a single row, but by building up beds and putting barriers around them, their spread can be controlled. You can utilize both June and everbearing raspberries, and a wide range of blackberries, marion blackberries, boysenberries and other brambles. Search out the thornless varieties – same great berries but no more bleeding while picking!

Raised beds make a great location for all kinds of other edibles, allowing you to have great soil above ground while maximizing drainage. Vegetables and herbs thrive in these spots. Really any of the berries mentioned above do well in raised beds.

6. Rotate your vegetable crops through three seasons. In our mild climate, gardeners can typically plant early cool season veggies in March like Peas, Carrots, Beets, Cabbage, Broccoli, Lettuce, Spinach and many others. These produce in cool spring weather and are ready to eat in late spring/early summer. At that point the temperatures are up and now it is time to plant warm season veggies like Tomatoes, Peppers, Cucumbers, Zucchini, Eggplant and others. Consider even starting some of these summer veggies in pots earlier to get them larger before transplanting, or purchase larger plants to get ahead. These thrive in hot summers and are ready to harvest late summer into early fall. In late August-early September, cool season can once again be planted for fall to early winter harvest period. If you watch early frosts, even protect some on occasion, you will be rewarded with nice crops well into fall each year.

With some planning, you can turn your yard into an attractive landscape that utilizes many edibles for nearly year around nourishment. Remember to go green and use organic products – especially with edibles. Time to start growing and eating your own!