



Edible landscape serves dual purpose

Making your yard look good can be a lot of work, so why not reap the benefits of a double-duty landscape? Landscaping with shrubs that provide fruit is a great way to go.

Designing an edible landscape follows the same design principles of any ornamental planting, which is creating structure and balance. Large edible shrubs can be used to create a backdrop. Consider something like an elderberry shrub. It can be grown to large sizes and has fine-textured foliage that's useful in supporting an accent. The Black Lace Elderberry features beautiful, colored foliage, which provides visual interest.

Edible shrubs also work well in mass plantings. Sand plums naturally form clumps and can make very attractive masses. Blueberry bushes also do well when planted in masses. Plant several feet apart and over time they'll grow into a beautiful hedge.

When selecting fruits for various landscape purposes, consider ornamental traits as well as fruit quality. Many plant producers are selecting fruits for aesthetic qualities in addition to flavor or yield. The Bountiful Blue™ Blueberry has white bell-like flowers in spring followed by sweet berries. The foliage has an incredible blue sheen that holds through the heat of summer and turns a brilliant maroon in fall.

Shrubs also can provide winter interest to the edible garden. The woody stems of the flowering quince and sand plum hold throughout the winter months. The quince bears flowers in late winter around the same time forsythia blooms. Sand plums have lovely red stems that add a little color to the winter landscape. Some edible shrubs can be used as a focal point in the landscape. The Headly Red cultivar of sand plum is non-clumping and has striking red foliage. It makes quite a statement in the landscape. A rose bush makes a great accent plant because the petals can be used to make flavorful syrup that can be used in desserts. Roses also produce edible fruits called rose hips, which are a common ingredient of herbal teas, as well as used in jams, pies and syrups.

Pomegranate is a marginally hardy shrub that, when given the proper microclimate, can grow into a beautiful specimen. We are growing Angel Red® Pomegranate which is hardy to zone 7 and can reach a mature height of 10 feet. It produces large red fruits in early autumn following beautiful orange-red summer flowers. You can prune pomegranates to shape them and create a very dramatic focal point in the garden.

Edible doesn't mean just the fruit. There are some shrubs that produce edible flowers. Who doesn't love the fragrance that lilacs bring to the spring garden? Fragrance often is associated

with flavor. Lilac flowers are used to flavor drinking water and petals are added to green salads. Lilac blossoms are also candied and used to decorate desserts.

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