



## The Beautiful Edible Garden: Design A Stylish Outdoor Space Using Vegetables, Fruits, and Herbs

By Leslie Bennett, Stefani Bittner

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**Learn how to artfully incorporate organic vegetables, fruits, and herbs into an attractive garden design with this stylish, beautifully photographed guide.**

We've all seen the vegetable garden overflowing with corn, tomatoes, and zucchini that looks good for a short time, but then quickly turns straggly and unattractive (usually right before friends show up for a backyard barbecue). If you want to grow food but you don't want your yard to look like a farm, what can you do? *The Beautiful Edible Garden* shares how to not only grow organic fruits and vegetables, but also make your garden a place of year-round beauty that is appealing, enjoyable, and fits your personal style. Written by a landscape design team that specializes in artfully blending edibles and ornamentals together, *The Beautiful Edible Garden* shows that it's possible for gardeners of all levels to reap the best of both worlds. Featuring a fresh approach to garden design, glorious photographs, and ideas for a range of spaces—from large yards to tiny patios—this guide is perfect for anyone who wants a gorgeous *and* productive garden.

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- Sales Rank: #231583 in eBooks
- Published on: 2013-02-26
- Released on: 2013-02-26
- Format: Kindle eBook

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"*The Beautiful Edible Garden* combines aesthetic sensibility and literally down-to-earth pragmatism with insight and ingenuity. Who knew that a plot full of weeds and scrubby trees could so readily be transformed into a garden of earthly delights just a few steps away from the kitchen, and just a few more easy and thoughtful steps away from an arrangement for the dining room? Whether your yard is big or small, out back or in front, or limited to a few containers on a balcony, you can "pursue food production and beauty together" - Joanna Brichetto, *Book Pages*

"*The Beautiful Edible Garden* combines several different tactics for encouraging readers to create gardens they can quite literally eat ... My favorite (and clearly dog-eared) discovery were these persimmon trees.... Another tactic utilized by authors Bittner and Bennett is the introduction of gorgeous flower arrangements and displays by Studio Choo. Full of (you guessed it!) edible components, the arrangements are simply divine and inspired me to get outside, break out the clippers and get to arranging again." -- Amy Renea, *A Nest for All Seasons*

"A newly published book by authors who live in the San Francisco Bay Area reminded me that plenty of food-producing plants have beautiful, luxuriant foliage -- and flowers -- to contribute beauty. If you don't have room to plant and grow a real crop, then why not plant a border of leaf lettuces or curly parsley plants; place chard or mustard in the middle of an ornamental bed?" -- *Dallas Morning News*

"Now, the best advice from this design duo has been folded into a book that provides a good primer for making your vegetable garden as beautiful as it is productive. *The Beautiful Edible Garden* focuses on how to implement simple principles of basic garden design for success at both growing the food you want for your table and enjoying the aesthetic pleasures of bringing it there." -- Cheryl Koehler, *Edible East Bay*

"A fresh, modern approach to edible landscaping, Stefani and Leslie's creative ideas and beautiful designs are inspiration for novice and master gardeners alike."

—Rosalind Creasy, author of *Edible Landscaping*

"This thoughtful, refreshing design guide deserves a spot on every gardener's bookshelf! Filled with real-life examples, the book definitively shows that growing food and creating beautiful, livable outdoor spaces are not mutually exclusive. Reading *The Beautiful Edible Garden* is akin to working alongside Leslie and Stefani in your garden—their practical, friendly advice provides an easy-to-follow framework for transforming average yards into functional, productive, and above all, lovely gardens."

—Willi Galloway, author of *Grow Cook Eat: A Food Lover's Guide to Vegetable Gardening*

#### About the Author

LESLIE BENNETT and STEFANI BITTNER are co-founders of Star Apple Edible + Fine Gardening, a San Francisco Bay Area landscape design firm focusing on aesthetic edible gardening. At Star Apple, they bring together ecologically sound landscape design principles and small-scale urban agriculture, working with both ornamental and edible plants to create integrated landscapes. Visit [www.StarAppleEdibleGardens.com](http://www.StarAppleEdibleGardens.com).

## Introduction

Welcome to the beautiful edible garden.

This is a book about edible garden design. It is also a heartfelt invitation to join us in the practice of gardening. For us, gardening is a way to connect with the land, our community, and, perhaps most importantly, ourselves. It is also an opportunity to create and to be inspired. When you pursue food production and beauty together, you form meaningful spaces that have the power to both ground and uplift.

This book features ideas and projects that we have developed as Star Apple Edible + Fine Gardening, our San Francisco Bay Area–based edible landscape design service. Our approach is to redefine the plant palette to utilize edible and ornamental plants throughout your garden in a way that is both beautiful and productive. You can put this information to use in creating a space that includes vegetables, fruits, herbs, flowers, and other ornamental plants. We outline how to start, providing design principles and step-by-step guidance for a range of spaces, from front yards and backyards to smaller areas like decks, porches, and side yards, and even container gardens and window boxes.

We recommend that you read the first two chapters thoroughly and then refer back to them as needed as you work through your garden design. If you want to start with designing a garden for the backyard or a narrow side yard instead of the front yard, it's fine to jump between chapters three, four, and five according to your needs. Use chapter six as a reference in planting and maintaining your edible garden throughout the year.

For further inspiration, we've included photographs and sidebars throughout the book from our book partners, Jill Rizzo, Alethea Harampolis, and David Fenton. Photographers David and Jill capture the simple, intangible beauty of the garden and its harvests. At their floral design business, Studio Choo, Jill and Alethea highlight the beauty of the natural world in unexpected floral designs. Their sidebars include instructions for simple ways to utilize edible and ornamental plants from your garden as creative arrangements in your home.

This book is meant to provide general concepts for designing a garden that incorporates edible plants, so we do not include sowing times or specific vegetable- or fruit-planting guidelines because these differ depending upon the climate zone you live in. Instead, we encourage you to use this book along with a vegetable- and fruit-growing guide that covers those specifics. Where we can, we offer multiple plant choices to fit most climate conditions and garden styles so that you can select plants from our suggestions as well as search for other plants on your own.

Once your eyes are open to this new way of thinking about edible plants, you'll start to see the potential for beauty and food production everywhere you look. Most important, have fun and enjoy the transformation that is about to take place in your garden.

—Stefani and Leslie

## Principle #1: Balance

We are all searching for it, aren't we? So it's not surprising that our gardens need balance, too. Balance is the first, and most important, design principle that you should keep in mind when designing your garden. When people say a garden has "a good flow" or "a good feel" about it, they are talking about the garden's balance. Balance is achieved by the grouping and repetition of like elements within a space.

You can give your own garden a balanced look by grouping plants and arranging hardscape materials so that elements of structure, color, texture, and quantity are repeated in a purposeful manner throughout your landscape. An annual-vegetable bed that is incorporated into an overall garden design using these techniques will not look messy or out of place. Instead, there will be a seamless transition between edible and ornamental areas of the garden and a sense that everything belongs exactly where it is.

## Hardscape Materials

An important element to be balanced is your hardscaping materials, such as the natural stone or wood used for patios, decks, paths, and steps, among other elements. Well-designed landscapes complement a home's architecture. When choosing hardscaping materials to use in your yard, look to your home's exterior and repeat a material used in its construction. You can choose another one or two materials to repeat throughout your garden, but try not to use too many different materials; adding more may result in a jumbled, imbalanced look. For example, if you are using metal edging as a border for your planting beds, you could also use metal trellises or arbors within the planting beds. Similarly, natural quarry stone-edged planting beds are wonderful combined with similarly colored decomposed-granite pathways, as both share the same hues and stonelike appearance. If you are building steps in this same garden, repeat the stone again for a cohesive look.

## Height

Hardscaping and plants can be used together to provide a sense of balance through your garden. If you have an impressive tall tree on one side of your garden, it will look best if you place a second, or even a third, vertical element, such as a tall vegetable trellis or patio arbor, in another area of the garden. If all the tall elements are grouped together on one side of the garden, that part of the garden will feel overloaded and heavy. Instead, distribute the points of vertical interest across the landscape; they help keep the eye moving through the garden and establish a sense of balance. Similarly, a solid wall in one part of your garden might be echoed and balanced by a low hedge of dense, evergreen plant material; this helps distribute visual weight throughout the entire area and avoids a feeling of imbalance.

## Color

Color plays such a big role in the look and feel of a garden that its importance cannot be overlooked. The colors you use should enhance the design and balance of your garden—not throw it into chaos. Choose your colors purposefully; you'll be happier with the results if you choose just three or four colors and stick to them. These colors should be repeated throughout the garden to establish a cohesive look.

Keep in mind that a plant's color is not limited to its fruit or flower color. The leaf color, also known as foliage, of both ornamental and edible plants can supply color to your garden, too. Actually, more often than not, it is foliage color that makes the bigger visual impact in a garden. The color burgundy, for example, can be found in the foliage of ornamental shrubs, like burgundy loropetalum, Japanese maple, and purple smoke bush, and also in the flowers and fruits of edible plants such as the pomegranate tree, the stems of 'Ruby Red' chard, or the leaf color of 'Bull's Blood' beets. In winter, the bare branches and trunks of the deciduous blueberry and Japanese maple are both tinged with coral and red tones. But don't forget shades of green, especially plants with white-and-green-variegated or chartreuse-colored leaves, which are great for lightening up a shady planting area.

You can make almost any color combination work well, as long as you stick to a few colors to establish your theme and use other colors selectively. One combination of colors that's versatile in a garden is a base of yellow, purple, and gray, with dashes of red or orange as accent colors. You can use a mix of edibles and ornamental plants such as 'Moonshine' yarrow, lavender, and pineapple guava to establish your main theme. Then use the fruit and flowers of currants, salvia, red sunflowers, and pomegranate for seasonal red accents. Similarly, white, green, burgundy, and silver make for a beautiful base; choose any additional bright color as an accent.

Used in this way, color helps create a balanced and cohesive look among your planting beds. In an integrated edible, ornamental garden that includes many different elements, color is an especially helpful tool for achieving balance across your landscape.

## Texture and Shape

Plant leaves can be big or small, lush or fine, fuzzy or glossy, rounded or spiny. Mixing different leaf sizes, shapes, and textures helps add subtle depth and visual interest to a garden. Repeating texture and shape in ornamental and edible plants is also an excellent way to create balance throughout your landscape. A good example is the long, narrow leaves of phormiums and leeks. The grassy fronds of each plant reference and play off each other, and can establish a similar textural feel in two different parts of a garden.

Rhubarb, a perennial, adds great texture to any garden. Its large, rounded leaves (which are poisonous and thus not edible; only the leaf stems are edible) not only contrast wonderfully with narrow, spikier grasses, but they also repeat the rounded edges of the foliage of many fruit trees, such as fig—but at a lower planting height. Dramatic gunnera or other large-leafed subtropical foliage are ornamental plantings that mimic the shape of the rhubarb leaf and bring in a contrasting texture for visual interest and balance.

In linking ornamental and edible parts of your garden, repeat textures from the landscape in your vegetable beds and in the transitional planting beds that surround them. The broad, fuzzy leaves of ‘Berggarten’ sage, planted among your edibles, can be mimicked elsewhere in your landscape with ornamental, low-growing lamb’s ears.

## Quantity

How you group your edible and ornamental plants is an important design decision. As described above, plantings of a certain height, density, color, or texture in one part of the garden should be paralleled or at least referenced by a similar planting in another part of the garden. If you design a garden bed so that larger numbers of the same plant are grouped with each other, they will have a stronger visual impact than if they are planted separately. This technique is referred to as mass plantings.

Grouped together en masse, smaller, less substantial plants can become a real visual presence in the garden and can help establish balance. For example, as long as the planting is massed enough, the grassy texture of small garden chives can be balanced against a much larger ornamental grass placed in another part of the garden. While one red lettuce would go unnoticed, a large clump of them is significant enough to provide visual balance against a larger tree or shrub with burgundy foliage, like a red Japanese maple.

Unless you are highlighting a special focal-point plant (see page 54) or are planting vegetables in your annual-vegetable planting bed, you should avoid planting a single plant (often referred to by garden designers as a “onesie”) on its own. Too many single plants placed on their own throughout the garden leads to a choppy look that feels haphazard and unbalanced.

## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

#### Debbie Davis:

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Spent a free a chance to be fun activity to try and do! A lot of people spent their spare time with their family, or their particular friends. Usually they accomplishing activity like watching television, likely to beach, or picnic within the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Do you want to something different to fill your current free time/ holiday? Could possibly be reading a book is usually option to fill your free of charge time/ holiday. The first thing you ask may be what kinds of e-book that you should read. If you want to test look for book, may be the book untitled The Beautiful Edible Garden: Design A Stylish Outdoor Space Using Vegetables, Fruits, and Herbs can be excellent book to read. May be it might be best activity to you.

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