

Grow a delicious landscape

Replace a strictly ornamental plant with one that is edible, or try incorporating annual and perennial herbs and vegetables into an already existing landscape

By John Bruce



The delicate, onion-like flavor of chives compliments salads, fish and soups while the purple flowers lend a lovely garnish.

Once gardens were planted out of sight for aesthetics, but the resurgence of a trend to use edible plants as ornamentals is reshaping the face of gardening. Planting produce in front yards and along walkways adds convenience and accessibility.

Simply put, edible landscaping puts food-producing ornamental plants in the home landscape. Most edible plants need well-drained soil and a minimum of six hours in full sun daily, but some tolerate partial shade. Make sure you pick the proper location.

Nasturtium, Jerusalem artichokes, Swiss chard, chives and daylilies are a few examples of commonly grown ornamental plants that double for attractive landscapes and the dinner table.

Here are four examples of tasty landscaping plants and recipes:

Often described as a plant to deter squash bugs, beetles and aphids, nasturtium is an annual or perennial flowering plant. Its attractive, edible flowers and leaves are eaten in salads and dressings.

Nasturtium Salad Dressing

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| 1 cup mayonnaise | ¼ teaspoon dry mustard |
| 2 tablespoons lemon juice | 4 nasturtiums flowers |
| 2 tablespoons honey | Nasturtium leaves |
| 1 tablespoon salad oil | Pinch curry powder |

Place all ingredients in blender for 45 seconds. Makes 1½ cups.

Fresh, young chard can be used raw in salads. Mature chard is typically sautéed. Bitterness in the leaves and stalks fades with cooking. Its refined flavor is more delicate than spinach.

Sautéed Swiss Chard

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| 1 bunch Swiss chard | 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce |
| 3 tablespoons virgin olive oil | Salt and pepper |
| 3 cloves garlic, minced | |

Wash chard and remove stems. In a skillet, sauté garlic in olive oil. When garlic turns golden, add Swiss chard and sauté until wilted. Add tomato sauce and simmer 10 minutes. Salt and pepper to taste.

The violet blossoms of chives add a splash of color to any landscape. Chopped chive leaves are a delicate condiment for soups and other dishes, and the round tufted flowers are used as garnishes whole and broken apart in salads, cooked vegetables and casseroles. Regular picking encourages repeat blooms.

Asiago-Chive Biscuits

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| 2 cups biscuit mix | ¾ cup grated Asiago cheese |
| ⅔ cup 2 percent or skim milk | ½ cup finely chopped fresh chives |
| ¼ cup melted butter | |

Toss ingredients in a large bowl. Turn out onto a floured surface. Roll to 1-inch thick. Cut into 12 squares. Space apart on a cookie sheet and bake at 400 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes.

Not to be confused with true lilies, daylilies grow from tuberous, fleshy roots rather than bulbs. Daylilies have been eaten for centuries in Asia where they originated. The tuber-like roots can be eaten raw or added to salads, soups and stews. The flavor is similar to asparagus. The buds and blossoms are the sweetest parts. Raw or boiled, stir-fried or steamed, they can be eaten with other vegetables. With their savory taste and gelatinous consistency, the blossoms add a flowery zest to soups and vegetable dishes.

Stuffed Daylilies

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| 1 cup diced cooked chicken | ¼ cup diced celery |
| ¼ cup mayonnaise | ½ teaspoon lemon zest |
| 1 3-ounce package cream cheese (softened) | 2 teaspoons ranch dressing |

Mix well. Fills approximately 8 large or 12 small daylily blossoms.

John Bruce is a professional writer who gardens in Columbia, S.C.