



Think outside the box: l to r, onions, peanuts and potatoes (Photos courtesy of Brie Arthur)

THE FOODSCAPE REVOLUTION

By Brie Arthur

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"Garden to Table" is the best way to describe my passion of Foodscaping. The idea is simple: add purpose to landscapes in developed areas such as suburban neighborhoods, office parks, school campuses and retirement communities. With an education in design, an enthusiasm for ornamental horticulture, and a hunger for local, organically raised produce I see potential to grow food in every cultivated space. From simple crops like garlic to low maintenance cover crops and grains, open mulch space is an opportunity waiting to happen!

Foodscaping isn't new in fact, this strategy for planting food crops in convenient locations goes back centuries! From cottage gardens and French potage to the edible landscapes described by Rosalind Creasy, Foodscaping is just a modern term for a logical and easy way to grow meaningful amounts of food.

Start by thinking "outside the box." Lumber encased beds are NOT the only way to grow food. In fact, raised beds are generally the cause for the "no food in the front yard" mantra of suburban HOA restrictive covenants. Boxed beds can also cause decreased production due to over planting. This also can lead to insect and disease problems. Additionally this method of containing edibles limits available square footage and creates monocultures. Did you know that only four plant families make up the lions share of the edibles grown home gardeners?



L to r, edibles growing among ornaments: Arugula, basil and dwarf peppers.

Top 4 plant families for grown edibles:

- Amaranthaceae- beats, quinoa, spinach and Swiss chard
- Brassicaceae- cool season crops such a broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and kale
- Fabaceae- beans, peas and peanuts
- Solanaceae- warm season crops like eggplant, peppers, potatoes and tomatoes

By incorporating popular annual crops like tomatoes, peppers, kale and chard into the landscape you will add brilliant colors and textures that blend beauty and abundant harvest. The ornamental plants offer the biological diversity to attract beneficial insects. Focus on developing the sunniest areas of your landscape, as most edibles prefer bright exposure.

You can start Foodscaping by planting bed edges- you will be amazed by how much square footage is available. Bed edges are a great place to grow low maintenance plants such as garlic, arugula, lettuce, basil and peanuts. This location is easy to access for watering and harvesting and really makes a visual impact. I had a professor in college explain that any combination of plants could make sense with a tidy edge. That advice continues to inspire me as I look for strategies to increase local food production.

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Beautiful borders: L to r, garlic and lettuce

My top picks for bed edge plantings include traditional southern agricultural crops like peanuts to hardy greens that self sow such as Arugula. Many edibles are effective at deterring grazing mammals so consider plants like Garlic which will help ward off moles and voles or 'Micrette' Basil which has a strong, bitter flavor that bunnies hate! Most importantly, be creative in your plantings and change them seasonally to they look beautiful year round.

*I never say any plant is mammal resistant, but here are a few plants that can help reduce browsing damage from deer, rabbits, moles and voles.

Cool season edge: Arugula, Garlic, Lettuce, Onions, Potatoes

- Arugula- bitter flavor deters rabbits and
- Garlic- smelly bulb deters moles and voles deer
- Lettuce- direct seeded and easy to harvest weekly
- Onion- smelly bulb deters moles and voles.