



CREATING A GARDEN-LANDSCAPE FUSION

Foodscaping combines edible and ornamental pairings for a unique component with health and economic benefits.

By Brie Arthur

The “foodscape revolution” is all about making the most of the square footage you cultivate. From large traditional landscapes to lots with limits, every area of open mulch space is a chance to grow something that can provide your customers and their families with nourishment while maintaining the aesthetic quality of the existing landscape.

Offering everyone an authentic “Yard to Table” experience is the best way to describe my passion for creating foodscapes across the country. Suburban neighborhoods, office parks, school campuses and retirement communities all present opportunities to incorporate edibles in existing landscapes.

I am not suggesting that everyone convert their properties into mini farms. Rather, foodscaping is simply the integration of edibles alongside favorite ornamental trees, shrubs and perennials. It is a design strategy that enhances the landscape by creating a unique seasonal component with a multitude of health and economic benefits.

I began my first foodscape 12 years ago when I purchased a home in the sprawling suburbs of Raleigh, North Carolina.

As a single woman and first-time homebuyer, money was really tight — both for buying groceries and managing the property. I had to be creative and maximize the investments I made, which is what led me to growing some of my own food.

I started by planting in the sunny foundation landscape near my front door, an area that I

walked past everyday so it was really convenient. The neighborhood homeowner association (HOA) had strict rules about planting vegetables, and I was worried that I would be fined, so I tucked my favorite plants like lettuce, broccoli and peppers around the approved shrubs hiding them as best I could.

Much to my surprise, as I was harvesting and sharing produce with neighbors, I was awarded “Yard of the Year” inspiring curiosity and determination to promote the benefits of foodscaping.

This experience led me to become more engaged with my HOA and others in the surrounding community. Many homeowners believe property values will go down with a rogue farmer on the cul-de-sac, hence the many restrictive HOA covenants.

It is important to recognize that landscapes provide a maintenance and aesthetic function that has been widely accepted by society. It is also important to familiarize yourself with these guidelines, so you can be the professional your customers come to for help guiding them.

Many communities have an 80/20 rule — meaning 80 percent of the lot is designated for grass and 20 percent for landscape features. The main factor for HOA restrictions revolves around the common practice of removing large amounts of grass to install lumber encased boxes. This approach presents several challenges, including a disruption of the infrastructure and long-term

maintenance problems. It also limits the amount of square footage you can grow in and often becomes overgrown with weeds.

Instead, evaluate the open space within your landscape and discover the vast potential that foodscaping offers.

Foodscaping Tips

Grass is not the enemy.

Organically managed turf plays an important role as a permeable surface that helps absorb and slow water flow ultimately helping clean storm water. It is an effective groundcover, handles foot traffic and the maintenance regimen (a.k.a. mowing) is generally understood.



This series — Fresh Perspectives — provides tips from Generations X, Y and Z. Brie Arthur is a member of GPN's 40 Under 40 Class of 2016. For more information, visit www.gpnmag.com/40-under-40.



Think outside of the box.

Start to think “outside of the box.” Lumber encased beds are not required to grow your favorite fruits and veggies. In fact, boxed beds offer limited amounts of space reducing potential harvests.

The average foundation landscape (the bed surrounding any home) offers the square footage equivalent to 45 4-by-8-foot raised beds (32 square feet). Additionally, boxed beds can lead to decreased production due to overplanting monocultures, which enable insects and disease to wreak havoc.

Biological diversity is important.

Did you know only four plant families make up the lion’s share of the edibles grown by American home gardeners?

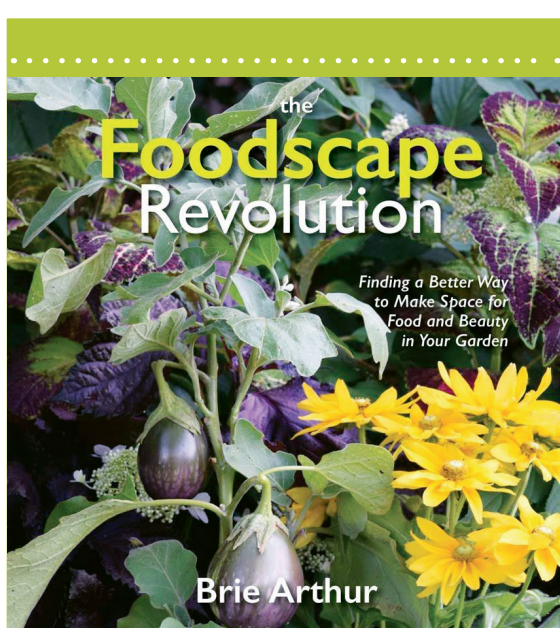
- **Amaranthaceae:** beets, quinoa, spinach and Swiss chard
- **Brassicaceae:** cool season crops such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and kale
- **Fabaceae:** beans, peas and peanuts
- **Solanaceae:** warm season crops like eggplant, peppers, potatoes and tomatoes

Foodscaping is a hobby for the entire family.

Growing food is a wonderful way to spend time with the family. Start small and learn how to efficiently manage the land you are cultivating with the time and attention you can devote. Grow easy crops like garlic, peanuts and potatoes as bed edges.

Time is of the essence.

Life changes and there may be seasons when people simply don’t have time to plant edibles.



Foodscape visionary Brie Arthur looks at underutilized garden spaces around homes or in the landscaped common areas of planned communities and sees places where food can be grown, not in isolated patches, but inter-planted with ornamental varieties for year-round beauty. This is a new way of looking at public and private spaces, where aesthetics and function operate together to benefit individuals and entire communities.

In “The Foodscape Revolution,” Arthur presents her status-quo-shaking plan to reinvent the common landscape. In this book, you’ll learn which edible and ornamental pairings work best to increase biodiversity, how to situate beds to best utilize natural water and light resources, and most importantly, how to begin an enriched gardening lifestyle that is beneficial, sustainable and empowering. “The Foodscape Revolution” has full-color photos, simple projects and tips for harvesting and preparing the bounty you or your customers grow.



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That is OK! In the foodscaping model you can simply leave the open space empty and the ornamental trees, shrubs and flowers remain.

All About the Fusion

Landscapes that present nutritional, ecological and aesthetic value meet the needs of the modern day American. We are all approaching the landscape with a renewed sensibility for environment and have a desire to make the most of less square footage.

Foodscaping offers a “garden-landscape fusion” with fresh tomatoes alongside the boxwood hedge and a groundcover of fresh strawberries adjacent to the Knock Out roses.

Organic growing techniques are combined with traditional maintenance practices of mulching and edging to keep your landscape looking clean and tidy. Beds are designed in a way to best utilize the natural resources of water flow and light while seasonal crops are rotated to enhance the ornamentals.

A biologically diverse range of plants is selected to increase populations of beneficial pollinators and wildlife. Foodscapes are living ecosystems that meet the aesthetic needs of the general population while serving a greater purpose for the environment and the kitchen.

The essence of a foodscape comes from the supplemental produce that engages people in a unique capacity: a ripe tomato hanging within a Limelight hydrangea, peppers planted throughout ornamental grasses or brilliant greens of lettuce and arugula as a groundcover under cherries, redbuds and dogwoods.

These unexpected combinations serve to enhance the experience of the passerby while raising awareness of how food grows.

By adding fruit and nut trees to your landscape, you will gain yearly harvests while creating shade. Herbaceous perennials such as asparagus and strawberries supply seasonal bounty and textural contrast. Herbs like oregano, rosemary and thyme are low-maintenance plants that add high culinary impact. The inclusion of flashy annual crops like tomatoes, peppers, kale and chard will add brilliant colors that blend beauty and abundant harvest.

As a professional horticulturist I strive to meet the needs of a growing population and focus on ways to extend horticultural relevance in the American society. I am proud to see plants being recognized for all of the attributes they represent: beauty, ecology, health, wellness, nutrition and lifestyle.

Foodscaping is a design technique that embraces the heritage of home gardening while developing a new level of sophistication for modern day living. Join the revolution and harness the sun, soil and irrigation systems of common landscapes to start growing food for your family and helping your customers do the same. **LGR**

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