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Herb And Vegetable Gardens Are Lanscapes Too!

By Rudolf Freidlander

Most people think of landscaping as rocks carefully placed, manicured lawns, and large trees

scattered about a property. However, a garden can make a very attractive addition to any landscape. Whether it is an herb garden or whether it is a vegetable garden, these features can be just as beautiful as any other landscape element, and provide added benefits as well. Well maintained vegetable and herb gardens also provide other benefits: they are a source of food and can be a source of very pleasing smells.

An herb garden is one of the most common types of edible landscape. This is because they are very easy to grow, very tolerant of a variety of climates and conditions, and because they grow rapidly. Additionally, herbs are more than just tasty. Many of them look very nice, with attractively shaped leaves and different shades of green that can add a subtle beauty to the landscape. Not only that, but herbs often smell nice. They can surround your home with a pleasing perfume that exudes a true sense of "home."

Many people plant parsley, rosemary, and thyme in their herb gardens, but there are other herbs that can be planted as well. Cilantro is a little milder than parsley, and it has a different look. Mint is another herb that many people do not think to plant, as is lavender. Both of these herbs look different, and they both give off very nice scents. Another herb with a very attractive smell is Roman chamomile. Even though some of these herbs may be less frequently used, it is possible to find plenty of recipes that use them, and lavender and chamomile are noted for their usefulness in providing an atmosphere of calm. So even the scents can be of use. Simple bring them into the house and enjoy the feelings that accompany the smell.

Vegetable gardens are other edible landscaping devices that can look very attractive. They, too, can be planted in a variety of climates, and can be grown in a variety of soils. There are some plants that grow only in certain regions, but your basic garden fare can be grown almost anywhere. Just the look of green plants has been shown to be soothing, and when you grow your own food, it adds another dimension of satisfied feelings associated with self-confidence and accomplishment. Every vegetable has its own look to it, and so it is possible to enjoy a variety of different looks by carefully choosing the plants that you grow. However, you should choose, first and foremost, plants that you will eat. If you

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are not going to eat much squash, avoid planting it. But there are plenty of vegetables that have very attractive looking plants and even flowers. Peas have cute little flowers and send up beautiful curly vines. And there are many species of pepper that look beautiful after the fruit has arrived, with their yellow, greens, and reds.

When you use herb and vegetable gardens as part of the landscape, there is no need to plant them all together in one place. Spread them around the yard. Use tomato plants and squash plants (including pumpkins) can be used as accents. Herbs make excellent ground cover. Most vegetables and herbs can be grown very successfully in containers. You can make a very attractive landscape design if you use flower boxes for your herbs, and if you use quaint old antique washtubs for things like beans. Pretty sticks can be decorated to emerge from decorative tins for your peas.

The great thing about growing vegetable and herb gardens as part of your landscape is the fact that they are edible. They do not cost very much to plant, and they can save you even more money down

the road when you buy less produce at the grocery store. Additionally, if you have too much you can always bottle or freeze it for later. Many people use the excess plants from their gardens as gifts to their neighbors or family members. There is no reason to relegate herb and vegetable gardens to some hidden corner of the property, or even to garden in a conventional way, with large plots. You can add distinction to your yard by using the unique and inexpensive method of landscaping with herbs and vegetables.

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Planning Your Herb Garden The Right Way

By Mary Hanna

This article is dedicated to planning a successful herb garden. If you have planted herb gardens in previous years this will help to revamp and refresh one already have.

Go to your Garden Center and see what herbs are available and suitable for your area. This is important if you are planning an outside herb garden. If you are planning an inside herb garden, since you control the atmosphere, you can choose whatever you like.

My suggestion here would be to select a theme for your herb garden. You can plant them for cooking

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herbs, cosmetic herbs, medicinal herbs or fragrance herbs use. Be realistic about your plants. Check your whole property to find the right spot. Look for sun or shade, type of soil, and how well the spot drains. These are all very import for picking the best place for your herb garden.

Once you have accomplished the above, pick your sunniest spot because herbs need a lot of sun (a good four top six hours daily). Be sure that the herb garden site is level and sheltered from wind. If your soil is a bit heavy ad lots of compost when preparing your site which will make the soil looser and help with drainage and texture.

Try to keep the herb garden close to the house to facilitate in picking the harvest and checking for troubles. If you can't find a suitable sunny spot plant them in a garden container that you can move around to follow the sun. (This movement is a bit time consuming but it pay off in the end).

Look at the rest of your gardens. Are they formal or informal? You will want your herb garden to complement your house and garden. Look in books or magazine to get some inspiration. If you are creating a formal herb garden you will need to plant in straight lines and geometric shapes framing them with low hedges and paths. A fountain, bench or topiary shrubs are almost always used as the main focal point. Arrange the layout around a central axis. Then plant one kind of herb in each block, go for bold color and texture. Be warned a formal garden is labor intensive and will be expensive.

In an informal herb garden you can plant more flowing, curved beds and walkways. Add flowers and shrubs for a really exciting look. This type of herb garden requires less initial work and will be easier and cheaper to maintain.

Now it's time to decide on which herbs to plant. The easy way is to make a list of the ones that follow your theme. Make up your wish list in three columns. Column one is the absolutely must have plants, Column two will be the ones that would be nice to have and Column three is oh well, not necessary. If you're just starting out do between 5–10 herbs, (depending on your space). This makes the herb gardening more manageable.

Know which herb plants or annual or perennial, and make a note of them so you won't forget. A small spiral notebook is a good place to make comments on the care of each of your herbs. Situate each plant according to height for maximum enjoyment of your herb garden.

Lastly keep them well fed and give them lots of love and you will a beautiful herb garden that is multi–purpose. You get to plant the herb garden, watch it flourish, and then you get to harvest it for

whatever your purpose was: Culinary, Medicinal, Fragrance or Cosmetic.

Happy Planting!

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