

Landscaping with Fruits and Vegetables

Written by Judy English, certified WSU Clallam County Master Gardener.

Just imagine the pink and white blossoms of an apple orchard signaling the arrival of spring and supplying the fruit for a festive apple press in the fall; or a vegetable garden complete with a scarecrow that replaces your thirsty lawn; or container-grown blueberries just outside your door providing a sweet-tart juicy treat in summer and striking colors in the fall.

Intermixing fruit or vegetables into your landscape can increase food production or jazz up a 'standard' landscape. In some cases, adding these can modify the environment for the benefit of neighboring plants.

For established garden areas, trellised scarlet runner beans planted on the sunny or windy side of shade-loving or more delicate plants give protection to these neighboring plants while adding blossom color and the rugged look of long, rough bean pods. Sweet corn increases interest in an annual bed by adding height, movement, texture and a rustling sound. Left in place after harvest, the corn stalks become decorations for the Thanksgiving holiday. A south-facing wall could provide adequate heat to successfully grow an espaliered pomegranate or fig tree. In all of these scenarios you increase food production and add interest to your outdoor environment.

Fruits and vegetables can be planted directly into an existing bed or 'inserted' by using container planting. The latter is particularly useful if you want the 'inserted' plant to be of a particular size before adding it to the landscape or just want to temporarily vary the focal interest or add seasonal color. Of course, the site will need to provide the necessary conditions for the plant such as the right sun exposure or soil type.

There are many annuals, perennials and trees from which to choose. Be bold in your selections. To help you get started, here are a few suggestions of fruits and vegetables with ornamental quality that are suitable to the Olympic Peninsula.

<u>Plant</u>	<u>Attributes</u>
Apple tree	(P) = Perennial Pink or white flowers, fall fruit
Artichoke	Height, spiky texture (P)
Asparagus	Height, fernlike texture, movement (P)
Runner bean	Red, white or peach blossoms; height; long pods
Blueberry	Spring flowers, summer fruit, striking fall color (P)
Cardoon	Similar to artichoke
Corn	Height, rustling sound, "country" personality
Kale	Ruffled stiff texture, color in varieties like

	‘Russian Red’
Lettuce	Multitude of colors and textures
Nasturtium	Shapely leaves, colorful and edible flowers
Okra	Hibiscus-like flower (needs heat to mature)
Top-setting onion	Knobby texture, movement
Radish	Texture, color and border height
Rhubarb	Large leaves, leaf and stem color (P)
Summer squash	Edible yellow flowers, large leaves
Swiss chard	Red, orange and yellow stems; red-veined leaves
Sun Gold tomato	Height, golden-orange fruit clusters
Winter squash	Flowers, large leaves and crazy-shaped produce

Browse through a seed or plant catalogue for more ideas. Visit your local nursery to see the color, texture and movement of the plants they have on hand. In addition to your own creativity, take advantage of the expertise of local nursery personnel.

Get more out of your garden! Include double duty fruits and vegetables in your landscape.