



TREEPEOPLE

sustainable solutions

growing greener city

october 2011

edibles

out-of-the-box

plant of the month

fun workshops



## The Edible Landscape



*"Autumn is right around the corner, and I love sitting outside and watching the beautiful changes that take place in nature. It inspires me to make changes in my own life – such as making healthy eating a habit. When I choose to eat organic fruits and vegetables, my body thanks me with a surge of energy, health and vitality. And although I'm often subjected to excessive compliments on my glowing skin, it's a side effect I'm happy to live with."*

— Dyana Ortelli, Actor



It's that time of year, when we notice the changing colors of the leaves with all the beautiful reds and golds; and feel the cool, crisp, fall weather. NOT! Here in L.A. our seasonal distinction is a bit more subtle.

Our weather is typically more sunny and nice all year long. It is because of this that we often try to grow plants that are just not appropriate for our climate. Traditional turf, annuals and vegetable gardens use almost three times as much water as native plants. So, the question is, if you're going to grow something that uses that much water, shouldn't it really add value to your life?

For example, if your grass yard is just something that uses water and resources, and takes money and time for upkeep, maybe it's time for it to give back. Planting an edible landscape is an incredible way to not only celebrate the seasons, but to make sure that the resources you're putting into your landscape are paying you back.

### 1. Will my yard look like a farm?

No, not unless you want it to. For a successful landscape design, mix in edibles with other plants. Add natives and low-water use plants in higher parts of the garden. Place veggies lower where the water flows and collects. Add easy-to-grow edible flowers like nasturtiums and herbs like rosemary and basil for a quaint cottage look. Distinctive veggies, like artichokes, will add pizzazz to a modern aesthetic.

### 2. Won't I still be using lots of water?

Yes, but you have to eat something. It takes a lot of water to grow food, but by using your yard more wisely you'll be taking the water you normally use to support a green carpet of turf and using it for something you need. Also, you'll be off-

setting lots of other resources used in getting food from the farm to your plate. It doesn't get more local than this. Plus, it's a great conversation starter for neighbors.

### 3. How can I still save water?

With careful planning, you can use less water for your garden than your yard used. Drip irrigation systems allow water to be emitted uniformly and slowly at the plant location so that essentially all of the water is placed in the root zone. Of course, mulch is the best thing for ensuring water conservation and healthy plants in your garden. Crop selection and knowing when and how to water can all help make sure that every drop counts!

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TreePeople's Sustainable Solutions Program is dedicated to landscape transformation - turning yards into functional landscapes that are beautiful and sustainable. Our monthly guides and checklists detail an easy, step-by-step process, helping us all create a healthy urban forest where water is valued, air is clean, soil is healthy and trees are thriving.

Next Month: Vote Native!

## Linda's List

Linda Eremita, TreePeople's Senior ISA Certified Arborist, has the following suggestions for your October gardening fun:

### Climate Appropriate Plant of the Month

Little leaf sage, Cherry sage, Baby sage (*Salvia microphylla*)

A 3' tall and 4-5' wide, evergreen shrub. This small shrub is native to Arizona, New Mexico and down to southern Mexico. Flowers ranging from pink to red appear in early summer through the fall. 'Hot Lips' is a very popular red and white cultivar. This sage is very drought tolerant and not as woody as some sages. Cut it back in late winter to encourage new growth in spring.



### Upcoming Workshops

- November 12, 2011 - Community Sustainability Workshop

Go to [www.treepeople.org](http://www.treepeople.org) to register

## Out-of-Box

### Community Gardening

So you're in an apartment, or the landlord for the house you rent is not keen on your ripping up the lawn and putting in rows of corn? No worries, consider joining a local community garden. Community gardens allow you to grow the wonderful crops you crave and while you're doing so, you can meet other fellow gardeners.

If you don't want to go it alone, then get a few of your buddies together and all share the plot. You can have all the fun and a bit less work and spend some meaningful times with family and friends. The Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust has a great guide to community gardens on their website. Check out <http://www.lanlt.org/media/LANLT-community-garden-guide.pdf> to find one near you.

Any extra veggies will gladly be accepted at local food banks. Go to [www.feedingamerica.org](http://www.feedingamerica.org) to find places to donate fresh produce.

Can't quite swing the above this fall? Then round up some friends and go to one of the many local apple orchards. Picking local, delicious apples is a great way to enjoy our amazing autumn here in LA!

### 4. What's good to grow?

The things you like to eat! Grow for the season and choose plants that are lovely to look at. Nothing is prettier than the bright leaf stems of beets or chard. In fact, mixing up the seeds for "rainbow" chard is a very popular choice. Or grow things that are a bit pricey at the market such as, asparagus, bok choy, endive, water cress and leeks. Families: children who never willingly eat green veggies have been known to happily chow down kale chips, and snack on freshly picked spinach if they've helped to grow it themselves.

### 5. What do I do if there is extra food?

Yes, you will likely have extras. Which is ironic considering that your grass lawn took so much and gave nothing in return. Now you have this abundance... a harvest... that is so plentiful, you'll need to find it a home - share with others!

So, why not enjoy the fruits of your labors? Change out your lawn and annual plants for a fun and healthy landscape. You, your friends, co-workers and food banks will all be grateful for your bountiful gifts and that's really what this season is all about!

## Perennial Edible Ideas

### • Vegetables

artichoke, sorrel, radicchio, asparagus, onion, garlic, leeks, chives

### • Herbs

lemon verbena, thyme, rosemary, sage, oregano, lemon grass

## Flower Power!

What's nicer than the idea of being out in the garden and growing lovely edible flowers? Many flowers are not only pretty, but can be added to salads, used as a garnish or splashed into a cocktail. While other parts of the country are getting ready for a cold autumn with falling leaves, why not enjoy these last few warm days with a little fanciful flower fun!

Check out this website for ideas: <http://homecooking.about.com/library/weekly/blflowers.htm> Our favorite is the California native redbud (*Cercis Canadensis*). Plant this beautiful tree now and come spring, you can use the crystallized blossoms to decorate petite cookies and cakes... yum!