

VEGGIE GARDEN



Our Veggie Garden is planted in about the same space as a decent sized back yard. But we have used several techniques of edible gardening so you can determine what type of garden will work best for your yard. There is something for everyone here, optimizing space, using exiting structures, beneficial companion planting, protection from critters, and even a bit of whimsy. The Veggie Garden was planted to demonstrate how gardening can provide food for your household or for a community. Although primarily maintained by The Garden's staff and volunteers, many outside groups participate in its upkeep, learning skills for growing their own gardens, such as our "Growing Gardeners" program. The beauty of this Veggie Garden is that it not only provides food but a uniquely beautiful spot to rest while visiting The Garden. If you want to learn how to plant an edible garden, ask our experts for help. We are always happy to teach you how to create and care for this special type of garden.

Watch for Seasonal Treats!



There is a time-line to edible gardening, so our Garden staff and volunteers do all the harvesting. But keep an eye on the lemonade stand located inside, and get some "carry out." When we have abundant harvests, especially late spring and early summer, we leave some here for visitors to take home and enjoy. Our plants are organically grown and safe for your family. We typically have extra oranges, lemons, pomegranates, and sometimes strawberries, and fennel. Ask our staff if you'd like to help harvest something when its time and take it home with you to enjoy!

VEGGIE GARDEN (continued) Raised Planters



Open Raised Planter: Raised planters are a great way to make space for an edible garden. Using a raised planter helps reduce maintenance time and effort and can conserve water. TIP: Some plants shouldn't grow next to each other. For example, peas thrive next to beans, carrots, corn, cucumbers, radishes and turnips, but not near garlic or onions. On the other hand, squash does well near anything. Check a companion planting chart or ask our experts before planting. When this photo was taken, this planter had rhubarb, pineapple sage, basil, red bell pepper, and strawberries. Edging the planter is society garlic.



PVC & Metal Mesh Raised Planter: As much as we may love having birds and other critters in our garden, they can easily devour many of the crops we grow, so we have to protect them. For crops that grow tall, like tomatoes for instance, this covering is perfect. Built from PVC framework and metal mesh siding, you can keep an eye on your crops, but the birds and other critters can't harvest them before you do! The side pieces have a clip at the top and hooks at the bottom to remove them easily for access. This planter has beans, tomatoes and celery crops. By the way, birds make a quick treat of tomatoes.



Hinged Access Raised Planter: Another way to protect your crops is with a frame work covered with chicken wire and sitting atop the planter. To gain easy access, this one has been built with a hinged door. Typically we plant crops in this planter that are harvested frequently for the dinner table. In this case, we have a variety of tomatoes and some squash. The advantage to his planter over the one above is that it's easy to water right through the covering. Chicken wire has large enough holes and it's on an angle, so water flows through easily. It still keeps out birds and ground critters like rabbits, squirrels and rodents.

VEGGIE GARDEN (continued) Containers



Scaled Down Garden: When you have limited space, you can still grow herbs and other small crops. In our Veggie Garden, we use this stacked container for medical plants like wheat grass and mint. This is a great way to grow small plants to use as additives for teas or flavorings for dishes. Good drainage is required to protect from over-watering. But it takes up very little space—about 3'x3' is all that's needed. And if the sun exposure is not quite right, it's fairly easy to relocate it to a better spot. Also, if you have to protect it from frost, it won't require much in the way of covering. Also perfect for a fun, kid-sized



Whimsical Plantings: Container gardening needn't be boring. Have some whimsical fun with your garden by using interesting containers to add to your garden's design. In the photo on the left a hearty crop of strawberries is spilling out of an old rustic wheelbarrow. We have seen edible gardens grown in boots, tool boxes, cinder blocks, bird baths, and more. Be creative and have fun with it! The photo below shows medium sized plants grown in halved wine barrels and arranged along a fence. That makes the fence more interesting and the plants have plenty of room to grow.



VEGGIE GARDEN (continued) Other Strategies & Structures



Companion Planting: As mentioned earlier, some plants make good companions and some don't. There are some low-laying crops that are not only okay to plant near a tree's root system, but are actually beneficial. That is, they help the tree grow even healthier and will produce more fruit. They companion plants help control weeds, maintain soil moisture, and in some cases resists pests. Companion plants act as living mulch and eventually break down enrich the soil. The added benefit to some companion plants is attracting pollinators. Now what tree wouldn't like a neighbor like that?



Fence Lines: Food crops can make a nice border accent along a fence and the fence can protect the plants from too much wind, and control the amount of direct sun exposure they get if you have a fence that provides ground shade at the right time of day. Most food crops need 6-8 hours of direct sun per day, but not all of them can handle the heat during the late summer months in San Diego's east county. Fennel, seen here, grows to a nice height (about 2-3ft) to dress up a fence. Of course, it won't be growing year round, so you may want to alternate winter and summer crops along a fence.



Climbing Structures: Many edible plants have a vining growth habit and thrive on structures they can wind around. Beans are notorious climbers and can add some interest to your yard as well as a tasty treat. This bean tunnel is constructed from several arches staked into the ground. Over time, the beans will cover most of the arches and provide a fun tunnel to stroll through. Now if you have enough space, you can create several bean tunnels and end up with your own hamster-like "habit-trail" for people! What a conversation piece in your yard! And you'd be harvesting enough beans to enjoy all season long.

VEGGIE GARDEN (continued) Room to Grow



Leafy Greens: Edible plants have different growth habits and space needs. Some (like beans), like to vine and climb, some (like squash), sprawl and spread, while others (like leafy greens), grow upright. Select crops you enjoy eating, then plant them where there is room to grow. This artichoke has an upright, leafy growth habit and nearly fills the 4'x4' raised planter. It doesn't leave room for any other crop in this planter. TIP: Some types of squash are bushier and others like to vine. Check with our experts to find out which type is best for your edible garden. Not enough ground space? Squash can be grown vertically using a trellis!



Fruit Trees: Fruit trees need about 20ft wide to grow to full size and bear the best fruit. They also reach about 20ft tall on average, so make sure you have the space and a perfect place for this gem in your edible garden. "Topping" citrus trees keeps fruit at a reachable height for picking. Fruit trees provide excellent shade for your yard as well as cool the ground to protect plants that need a break from the heat. And they're perfect to relax under during summer months. Citrus trees, like this orange tree, also provide the perfect fruit for a refreshing summer drink, to add to summer salads, or eat right off the tree.



Seasonal Shade: Remember that fruit trees are seasonal and will not be filled in with leaves year round. However, during their growth season they are a beautiful addition to any garden. This pomegranate tree fills in nicely every spring through summer and provides a shady spot to sit and rest from the heat of the summer. It also serves as a featured accent tree to the Veggie Garden. As its fruit ripens, the tree is covered with deep red pomegranates, in contrast to its rich, green foliage. And pomegranates are very nutritious, too. They provide antioxidants and make a colorful addition to summer salads.