

# Intro to Edible Landscaping

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**Part 1: Know what you have already. Many plants in your existing landscape may be great edibles and you never noticed them or didn't know they were edible! Here are some examples:**

Common Name (Botanical name):	Notes:
Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale)	Whole plant edible. My favorite part is the flowers. Highly nutritious.
Hosta (Hosta spp.)	Leaves, flowers and green seed pods edible. Spring shoots are excellent cooked like asparagus. Leaves get tough shortly after unfurling from shoot.
Kousa Dogwood (Cornus kousa)	Edible fruit. Oddly textured and variable in flavor from tree to tree. Needs experimentation.
Clover (Trifolium spp.)	Leaves and flowers edible. Leaves are a bit on the tough side, but I find the flowers of red clover to be quite palatable. Kids like to suck the nectar from individual florets.
Milkweed (Asclepias syriaca)	Edible shoots, flowers, young pods. Needs to be cooked. Read up on details before eating, but easy to collect and delicious. Host plant for Monarch butterfly caterpillars. Native species!
Violets (Viola spp.)	Edible leaves and flowers. The flowers add some great color to salads. Several native species!
Ornamental Crab apples, Pears, Plums and Cherries.	Most of these ornamental fruit are edible, if the flavor is good they can be good additions to fruit sauces and jellies. These trees can also have better fruit varieties grafted on them. Come to the MOFGA seed and scion exchange in March for free classes and materials.
Oaks (Quercus spp.)	With a little home processing acorns can be a delicious and highly nutritious staple food. Provides huge wildlife benefits. More info <a href="#">HERE</a> and in this <a href="#">PODCAST</a> . Native species and powerhouse of wildlife habitat.
Japanese Knotweed (Fallopia japonica)	Highly invasive (so please don't plant or move it), but if it's already there you might as well use it! Spring shoots are edible and can be good in many dishes. Roots are medicinal and there are some interesting developments in using this plant to make holistic sprays for protecting plants from disease and insect damage.

**Part 2: Grow things you will actually eat. It doesn't matter how much edible plant material you can grow in your landscape if no one wants to eat it. So when considering what plants to add to your landscape start with things you know you like to eat and go from there. Trying new things is important, but a first try can hopefully come from someone else's garden. Other considerations could be emergency food (when preferred foods are not available anything edible will do) and animal foods (growing food for your domestic animals provides many more options to have an edible landscape).**

**Part 3: Choose a style for your landscape that fits your needs. Edible landscapes can range from naturalized to highly formal and everything in between. Every style choice has an effect on what materials are needed, how much maintenance will be needed and the aesthetics of the landscape. Generally speaking the more formal the style the more work and offsite materials are needed.**

**Part 4: Species ideas. This list focuses on perennial plants that require minimum special attention and have maximum production / food value and are at the same time aesthetically pleasing. Not all species will be suitable for every site. Most of these plants are available from Edgewood Nursery, I will note other local suppliers when possible.**

**Trees and Shrubs - ☼= Species that may require special care †=Native species**

<b>Common Name:</b>	<b>Botanical name:</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
<b>Peaches</b> ☼	<b>Prunus persica</b>	Small Tree. Probably not suitable for the colder parts of Maine, but in most of Maine select cultivars will bear most years and ripen in plenty of time. Once you have a had a tree ripened peach you may never accept a store bought monstrosity. Fedco trees has several good options. Self-fruitful. Available at most nurseries. Brown rot is a issue.
<b>American Persimmon</b> (†)	<b>Diospyros virginiana</b>	Not suitable for colder areas of Maine and would like a hot micro-climate anywhere in Maine. Grafted early ripening cultivars are best in Maine. Choose self-fertile cultivars or plant a male pollinator. Disease and insect resistant native trees with dark green beautiful foliage bear soft sweet fruit resembling a small tomato. Some cultivars will hold their fruit after the leaves fall, which makes a beautiful and tasty display. I recommend "Meader". Large tree, but can be kept small with pruning. Protect graft union 1st/ winter.
<b>Mulberries</b>	<b>Morus spp.</b>	Very productive trees bear fruit somewhat like a seedless blackberry. Choose named cultivars for best flavor. "Illinois Everbearing" is the standard cultivar for cold climates. Leaves are also edible. "Gerald Dwarf" is a good choice for a dwarf variety.
<b>American Plum</b> ☼ †	<b>Prunus americana</b>	This small suckering tree produces a huge amount of white flowers in spring and is a excellent pollinator for hybrid plums. The fruit is small but delicious and is typically pretty disease resistant, especially to brown rot, which can be a real problem in other plums. Suckers can be pruned off, or better yet, grafted onto creating a multi cultivar or even multi species thicket, grafts on suckers often are very vigorous & bear fruit in 3 years. 2 are needed for cross pollination. Available at most nurseries.
<b>Paw Paw</b> (†)	<b>Asimina triloba</b>	Like persimmon, prefers a hot micro-climate. Early ripening genetics (grafted or seedling) would be best. North America's largest native fruit, looks and tastes somewhat like a mango (although flavor is variable and doesn't really taste like any other temperate fruit), but the texture is more similar to a avocado. Very insect, disease and DEER resistant trees with a nice tropical look. Young trees need protection from sun scorch. Medium trees, which can be kept small with pruning. 2 are needed for cross pollination.
<b>Hazel</b> ☼ †	<b>Corylus spp.</b>	Hazels are a high value crop that is productive and VERY quick to fruit (3 years is not unusual), for American hazels the main problem is processing the nuts in a reasonable way, for hybrids squirrel predation seems to be a big problem. Comes in shrub or tree form. 2 are needed for cross pollination.
<b>Chestnuts</b> ☼ †	<b>Castanea spp.</b>	Chestnut species can rival any species for its ability to produce a staple food, relatively easy to collect and process with high starch nut has a similar nutrient profile to corn. Pure American trees are prone to early death by disease, pure Chinese tend toward breakage in early snows, Japanese hybrids seem to be the way to go, with a wide variety of types available to fit almost any need. Large trees, 2 are needed for cross pollination.
<b>High Bush Blueberries</b> †	<b>Vaccinium corymbosum</b>	These native fruit are familiar and fairly easy to grow. Their main challenge is their need for acidic soil. Pine needles and oak leaves will NOT make your soil acidic, if your PH is too high you need to amend your soil with sulfur. They like lots of water, but can do OK without it. If you don't have acid soil and don't want amend for PH plant Haskaps / Honeyberries ( <i>Lonicera caerulea</i> ) instead. Available at most nurseries.
<b>Raspberries and Black Raspberries</b> †	<b>Rubus spp.</b>	These cane fruit tend to spread, so they make a good plant to fill in odd corners and such. They don't require much maintenance, but do produce best with annual attention. The easiest management strategy is to plant somewhere that you can mow around them to control the suckers. Available at most nurseries.
<b>Goumi</b>	<b>Elaeagnus multiflora</b>	This nitrogen fixing shrub is a cousin of the Autumn Olive, but with larger, sweeter fruit that ripens in summer rather than fall. Multi-stemmed form with silvery leaves and almost metallic golden bark on new growth. While Autumn Olive can very invasive in some areas, Goumi doesn't seem to spread by seed in New England.
<b>Elderberries</b> †	<b>Sambucus spp.</b>	These elegant multi-stemmed shrubs have beautiful blooms in early summer changing into bunches of black berries in fall. Many varieties available, including purple leaved and variegated cultivars. The berries make excellent jams and syrups and are a well respected anti-viral. Available at most nurseries. 2 are needed for cross pollination.
<b>American Basswood</b> †	<b>(Tilia americana)</b>	A native tree with good spring leaf production and a myriad of other uses including flowers used in medicinal teas and fibrous inner bark used for making cordage and chair seats and fruit that can be used to make a chocolaty drink.
<b>Yellowhorn</b>	<b>Xanthoceras sorbifolium</b>	Small, often shrubby tree with finely cut pinnate foliage beautiful white flowers with red centers. Edible high-fat nuts that taste like macadamia nuts. Semi-self fertile, plant 2 for better nut production.
<b>Cornelian Cherries</b>	<b>Cornus mas</b>	Actually a edible fruited Dogwood. This species only vaguely resembles a cherry, but has none of the problems of a cherry. Little to no pest or disease issues, easy to harvest by shaking onto a tarp. Easy to processing using a food mill. Plant 2 cultivars for cross pollination. Fedco and/or Sy's trees are good local sources.

### Herbaceous Plants :

<b>Common Name:</b>	<b>Botanical name:</b>	<b>Notes:</b>
<b>Sea Kale</b>	<b><i>Crambe maritima</i></b>	Edible shoots, leaves, buds and green seed pods. Leaves are much like collard greens, seed pods taste like peas. Flowers heavily scented like honey. Very pretty. Fedco carries seeds.
<b>Hablitzia</b>	<b><i>Hablitzia tamnoides</i></b>	My personal favorite vegetable. Highly productive vine grows in part-shade to full sun, producing edible shoots and leaves over a long season. Delicate leaves taste somewhat like spinach, but with a milder flavor. Fresh or cooked. Fedco carries seeds.
<b>Turkish Rocket</b>	<b><i>Bunias orientalis</i></b>	Vigorous perennial with edible flower buds that taste much like Broccoli-Raab, leaves are also edible, but not so good as the buds. Whatever buds you don't harvest turn into large sprays of bright yellow flowers that attract beneficial syrphid flies. Can be spready, eat all the flowers to avoid self-seeding. Do not abandon.
<b>Sorrel</b>	<b><i>Rumex acetosa</i></b>	Garden sorrel is long season perennial leaf crop with a distinctive sour lemony flavor. Easy to grow. Choose a non-flowering cultivar for longest productive season. A close relative Bloody Dock is not as good to eat, but is more ornamental.
<b>Dystaenia</b>	<b><i>Dystaenia takesimana</i></b>	Vigorous perennial leaf crop that tastes a lot like celery. Rather long season, coming up as the snow melts it is available to harvest when almost nothing else is and then continues to produce through the summer with another big flush of growth in early fall. The leaves are highly nutritious with more total digestible nutrients than alfalfa. In mid-summer it starts blooming with large white umbels that are very attractive to many beneficial insects, especially wasps.
<b>Mouse Garlic</b>	<b><i>Alium angulosum</i></b>	This is one of my all time favorite alliums. Similar in habit to garlic chives, but I like the flavor better and prefer the light purple blooms. Densely clumping perennial, need nearly no care once established and can be harvested pretty frequently without setting the plant back much. <i>Allium cernuum</i> is a similar, near native species.
<b>Lovage / Scots Lovage †</b>	<b><i>Levisticum officinale / Ligusticum scoticum</i></b>	This once common perennial is quite pretty, along with being very attractive to many beneficial insects and a highly flavorful addition to soups, stir fries and other savory dishes. Use in moderation, its flavor can overwhelm more subtle flavors. The native species <i>L.scoticum</i> is smaller with a more mild flavor, closer to Parsley.
<b>Stinging Nettles/ Wood Nettle †</b>	<b><i>Urtica dioica / Laportea canadensis</i></b>	While you might not think of a plant covered in tiny hypodermic needles full of irritating acid being good to eat, it actually is. The early spring leaves are the best, but anytime before the the plant blooms you can harvest leaves to eat, make tea or dry for later use. Cooking or drying deactivates the sting and very young plants don't have the sting to begin with. One of the most nutrient dense foods around. Spreads by rhizome, harvest heavily and do not abandon.
<b>Good King Henry</b>	<b><i>Blitum bonus-henricus</i></b>	Classic British perennial veggie. Leaves are best cooked and somewhat resemble spinach. Flower buds and seeds are also edible and tasty. Produces a lot in full sun and good soil, but does fine in weak soil and/or part shade.
<b>Wild Bergamot †</b>	<b><i>Monarda fistulosa</i></b>	All the <i>Monarda</i> species are wonderful: beautiful, attractive to pollinators and tasty as a tea or infused vinegar... but this one is my favorite. They are smaller and less aggressive than some of other species and are native to this area. They occasionally suffer from powdery mildew.
<b>Sochan / Cut-Leaf Coneflower †</b>	<b><i>Rudbeckia laciniata</i></b>	A native perennial offering tasty leaves for humans and a bunch of foods for wildlife... plus they are very pretty. The leaves are most tender in spring but remain edible through the season. 5'+ tall blooms resemble Black-Eye Susan. Strong colony former, so leave lots of space or harvest heavily.

### Vines:

<b>Hardy Kiwi ☼</b>	<b><i>Actinidia arguta and A. kolomikta</i></b>	These small fruit range from the size of a grape to about 3 times that size. They are in the same genus and the more familiar fuzzy kiwis and have a similar but more intense flavor (I like them much better). They are vigorous woody vines that require annual pruning. Both species are dioecious, meaning that there are male and female plants. Both are needed to produce fruit, but only the female vine produces fruit. <i>Arguta</i> Kiwis are larger and set more fruit, but the vines are so rampant they need a good strong trellis and should NOT be grown against a building. <i>Kolomikta</i> kiwis are smaller and less productive, but are more ornamental (often having 3 color variegated leaves) and much easier to control. For most people I recommend the <i>kolomikta</i> . Do not abandon.
<b>Schisandra</b>	<b><i>Schisandra chinensis</i></b>	A beautiful vine with delicate white flowers and red leaf stems. Thrives in part shade, tolerates full sun with adequate moisture. The bright red strings of berries are beautiful and are the most flavorful fruit I have ever tasted, although not everyone likes the flavor. Highly regarded in herbal medicine. Has an odd pollination strategy, so plant at least 3 for proper pollination, the cultivar "eastern prince" is self-fertile and has larger, better fruit than seedlings. Fedco trees carries seedling plants.
<b>Grapes †</b>	<b><i>Vitis spp.</i></b>	While grapes are a little more prone to disease issues less tolerant of shade than kiwis or Schisandra, they are still a good option. Concord types, especially the cultivar "Beta" are the easiest in this climate. <i>V. Labrusca</i> is the preferred native option.

## Extra Reference info:

### Reading:

- **The Holistic Orchard: Tree Fruits and Berries the Biological Way** by Michael Phillips

Details on growing fruit, the level of management described may be intimidating, but is only necessary if you have to have consistent harvests.

- **Gaia's garden** by Toby Hemenway

A great introduction to permaculture. By mimicking nature in your landscape design you can create a low-maintenance system that works for you and the environment.

- **Around the World in 80 Plants** by Stephan Barstow / <http://www.edimentals.com>

On paper or the internet, almost no one can match Stephan Barstow's knowledge of edible ornamental plants.

- **Edible Forest Gardens** by Dave Jacke

This is the book that first got me into the depths of edible landscape design, 2 massive tomes full of the most fascinating info and ideas.

### Local Plants and Materials:

- **Edgewood Nursery**, [www.edgewoodnursery.com](http://www.edgewoodnursery.com) 4 Cruston Way, Falmouth, ME. My business. I specialize in unusual edible plants. Almost everything grown on site without pesticides or non-compost fertilizer. I offer bare root plants, potted stock, seeds, cuttings and tubers. Open Tuesdays 9-5 in the growing season or by appointment.
- **Fedco Trees**, [www.fedcoseeds.com/trees/](http://www.fedcoseeds.com/trees/) 213 Hinckley Rd., Clinton, ME. Order online in winter, last call typically in early march. Best source for woody landscape plants, especially fruit trees. Better quality, better selection and better prices. Many locally grown.
- **Fedco Seeds**, [www.fedcoseeds.com](http://www.fedcoseeds.com) Order online. Best local source for seeds, great selection of annual veggies, but also the best selection of perennial veggies of any one place i know of.
- **Lucas Tree**, [www.lucastree.com](http://www.lucastree.com) 636 Riverside St, Portland, ME. If you want dyed wood chip mulch (commonly called "dark bark mulch"), this is my preferred source. I use plain wood chips whenever aesthetically acceptable, but if a client wants "dark bark mulch" this is the source i go to. I prefer it for 2 reasons, 1. it's much cheaper then at a nursery. 2. It is made from chipped tree pruning, rather than wood of indeterminate origin.
- **Wilshore Farms**, 85 Hurricane Rd # R, Falmouth, ME, (207) 797-4287 Great compost at a reasonable price.
- **Many Town dumps / transfer stations** provide free compost and/or mulch materials to residents.
- **Sy's Trees**, [systrees@gmail.com](mailto:systrees@gmail.com), Sweden, Maine. Local nursery with an excellent selection of edible woody plants. Email for details and availability.
- **North Branch Farm**, [www.northbranchfarm.org](http://www.northbranchfarm.org), Monroe, Maine. Nice nursery stock, often including Cornus mas cultivars.