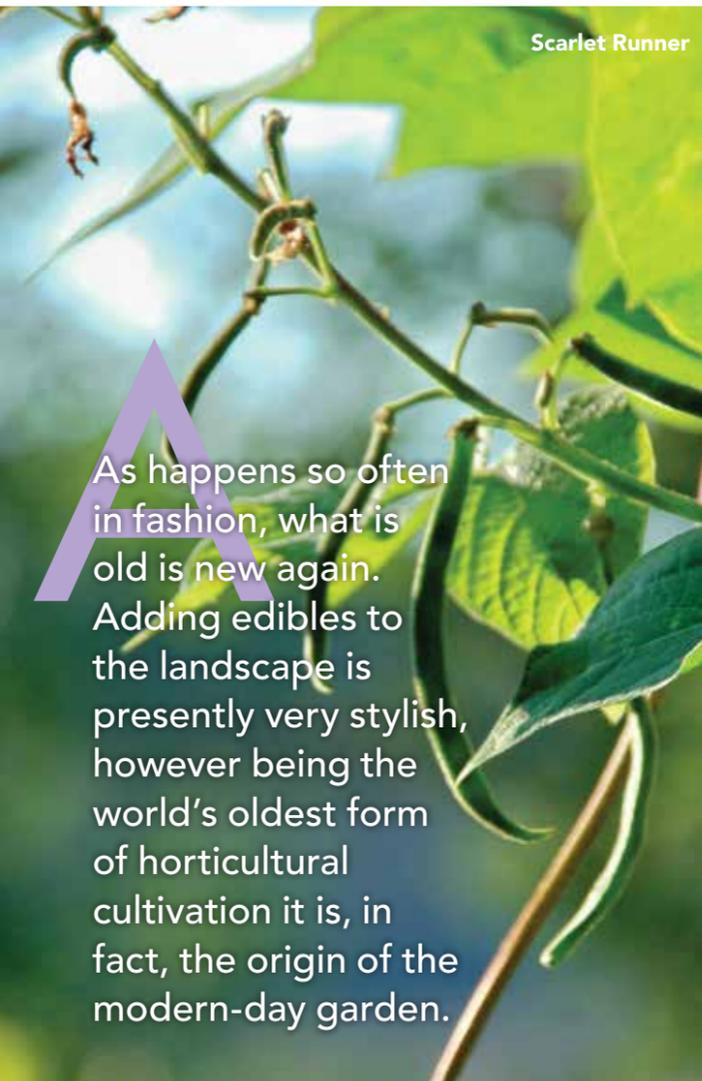# A BEAUTIFUL *and edible* LANDSCAPE

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY
MELANIE REKOLA

Scarlet Runner

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As happens so often in fashion, what is old is new again. Adding edibles to the landscape is presently very stylish, however being the world's oldest form of horticultural cultivation it is, in fact, the origin of the modern-day garden.

Evidence suggests plant-based gardening began in prehistoric times where our ancestors planted favoured food species along jungle-clad river banks. By 10,000 BC, we were enclosing our food gardens, very likely to protect our crops. The word "garden" descends from the Old English term "geard", meaning fence or enclosure.

Adding food plants to your landscape is easier than you may think. Many are quite lovely, performing double duty. Other common garden plants are both edible and delicious proving there is no need to sacrifice beauty for a food-fare garden.

Add A Fruit Tree Or Two

I never hide the fact that I am in love with woody plants of all types. Most properties lack trees for privacy, to mask ugly sight lines, to ground the house and to give outdoor spaces that content and cosy feeling. Many fruiting trees are quite good looking, and though you may have heard fruiting trees are high maintenance, by choosing disease-resistant varieties, you can cut your work in half. Yes, you will have to prune thin to increase the size of the remaining fruit and spray a safe, chemical-free pesticide to be successful, but the reward far outweighs the work in my opinion.

They all bloom, and some are even fragrant. Many are self-pollinating (meaning you only have to plant one), yet others must be planted in pairs, of male and female, to produce fruit. Select tree placements wisely. If you are not judicious about harvesting, the fallen fruit will attract wasps. Therefore, they are best planted away from patios and walkways. If fruit trees are not your thing, then don't forget about the low-care nut producing trees and sugar maples for syrup.

Berry-Bearing Shrubs

Fruiting shrubs are lower maintenance than fruiting trees due to the smaller size and faster maturation of fruit that makes insect infestation less likely. As they take up less space than trees, they are also easier to fit in.

Serviceberry (can also be a tree) produces tasty berries, and it looks gorgeous with lovely grey bark, great form, fluffy white flowers and red scarlet fall pigment.

Elderberry is another great choice. It comes in standard leaf and lacy cut-leaf variation that mimics a Japanese maple (but is much hardier). Leaf colours also vary wildly from yellow to deep wine, making them highly ornamental. Its prolific berries taste great on their own and also are perfect for pies.

Low-growing velvet leaf blueberry is appropriate for the front of the border. Though it is not highly ornamental, it makes a good filler plant and is worth considering due to its supremely luscious berries.

MELANIE'S TREE PICKS

Fruit Trees:	Nut Trees:
• Apple	• Chestnut
• Pear	• Shagbark Hickory
• Peach	• Walnut
• Plum	

Nasturtium

Oregano

MELANIE'S PLANT PICKS

Herbs:	Perennials:	Annuals:
• Chives	• Daylily	• Nasturtium
• Thyme	• Echinacea	• Pansies
• Oregano	• Lavender	• Calendula
• Sage	• Yucca	
	• Violets	

Underused and vigorous, vivacious vines are a wonderful way to screen unsightly walls or fences and maximize vertical space. They also give a garden a much-needed sense of age.

For grapes, by deciding on native or cold hardy, disease-resistant varieties and by using careful pruning techniques, you'll have a great chance of success!

Hardy kiwi is a lower-maintenance but aggressive vine to ponder with lovely reddish stems, thick mid-green leaves and succulent fruit.

Scarlet runner beans are yet another delightful option. They grow fast and have gorgeous red blooms that hummingbirds love and develop into edible beans. Scarlet runner beans are an annual and, for this reason, require planting every year, but it's easy to let a few beans develop and save the seed for sowing the following year.

Edible Perennials (and a few annuals)

Interestingly, the flowers of many common garden perennials are edible or partially edible. Flower cookery can be traced back to Roman times but was especially popular during the Victorian era. Most herb blooms

Chives

Arctic Kiwi Vine

Daylily

are just as tasty at their foliage, and many are quite handsome, available in colourful leaved and variegated variations. You may recognize some of these edible and vibrant annuals, perennials and herbs (listed above) already growing in your very own garden. And if cooking with flowers doesn't delight you, they can be used as a lovely plate garnish or frozen into ice cubes for a fancy dinner party.

Gorgeous Kitchen Garden

You could also choose to be all-out obvious with your edibles and plant a kitchen garden. Kitchen gardens can be a thing of beauty when formal geometry is bordered with low-herb hedging, and are best situated in a spot with easy kitchen access. Select but one good-looking food plant per quadrant. Finish the look by decorating the space with lovely potted edibles such as vibrant hot peppers. Save those ugly tomatoes and potatoes for the designated veggie plot.

In a world where many children grow up eating from the grocery store (and many ingesting mostly packaged food), it is especially important to demonstrate just where all this food is coming from. Growing edibles creates an important teaching opportunity by showing first-hand the life cycle of food, including the importance of (and the importance of protecting) our pollinators. To sum it all up, food gardening can be both attractive and appetizing, is fun, convenient and healthy, offers educational opportunity and will save you money. What's not to love? **OH**

Melanie is a certified horticulturist and landscape designer.