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## EDIBLE LANDSCAPING

This bulletin defines “edible landscaping” and outlines considerations for developers and contractors responsible for installing or replacing landscape plants. Edible landscaping is the term used to “describe the practices of using food-bearing plants for landscaping purposes in place of more commonly used ornamental plants” (Southeast False Creek Urban Agriculture Strategy, Final Report, 2002). In 2003 the City of Vancouver adopted policy supporting the development of a sustainable food system for the city. As part of this Food Policy mandate, the City of Vancouver recognizes that connection between the urban environment and the growth of food (urban agriculture) offers a number of creative solutions to move towards a more sustainable population. Growing food in the city increases the understanding the natural processes of food growth and can provide greater local control of the food system. Edible landscaping supports these goals. Incorporating edible plants such as fruit and nut trees, berry bushes, vegetables, herbs, and edible flowers into urban landscapes maintains aesthetic values, while also providing many other benefits such as:

- **Environment:** Using edible plants to replace common ornamental plants or to fill unplanted areas enhances biodiversity. Many edible plants are native and part of local ecosystems, they are adapted to the local climate and provide habitat for urban wildlife. Edible plants are also food for birds, animals, and beneficial insects.
- **Education:** The use of food plants in the landscape has the potential to connect people with where their food comes from and how it grows. For example, people might not know that kiwis grow on a vine or that they can eat salal fruit, an important food plant for coastal First Nations people.
- **Culture:** There are many food plants that have important uses in different cultures. Edible landscaping provides the opportunity to grow plants that are not readily available in grocery stores or the natural landscape. This also allows for others to learn about new foods they may have never seen before.
- **Recreation:** Edible plants provide people with the opportunity to interact with the landscape by engaging them in growing, harvesting, and eating edible plants. Such interactions can also foster a sense of landscape stewardship among people.
- **Community:** Educational, cultural, and recreational benefits all lead to community building. Desirable communities include opportunities for social interaction and environmental connections.
- **Economic:** Edible plants add value to conventional landscaping. In addition to their aesthetic quality and habitat value, the fruits produced can supplement people’s diets and grocery budgets. In Vancouver the average family spends almost \$4500 per year on groceries. Growing and harvesting food right outside people’s doors could supplement grocery bills as well as healthy diets.
- **Health:** In addition to the recreational health benefits, participating in growing and harvesting edible plants can also allow people to have more control over how their food is grown.
- **Sustainability:** Edible landscaping is another component of urban agriculture. By enabling the growth of more food in the city, access to food is increased. At the same time, growing food locally has the potential to reduce fossil-fuel emissions as less food is shipped from far off places.
- **Aesthetics:** Combining edible plants- including annual vegetables, perennial herbs, berry bushes, and fruit trees- with conventional landscaping can be very beautiful. As these plants are recognized as edible they help create a stronger sense of place and a more memorable experience in yards, plazas, gardens, and parks.

The following table includes examples of edible plants that are suitable for the Vancouver area:

Common Name	Latin Name	Edible Part	Form	Landscape Value	Maintenance
<b>Ground Covers:</b>					
• Cloudberry	<i>Rubus chamaemorus</i>	Sweet orange berries	Mat-forming, semi-evergreen	Excellent under shrubs, along edges, or trailing over walls	Native; hardy; sun or part shade
• Bunchberry	<i>Cornus Canadensis</i>	Sweet red berries	Mat-forming perennial	Beautiful in shady areas	Native; damp areas; shade
• Woodland strawberry	<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	Small sweet strawberries	Mat-forming perennial	Attractive under shrubs and along edges	Native; hardy; sun or part shade
<b>Vines:</b>					
• Chinese gooseberry	<i>Actinidia arguta</i>	Bite-size kiwi fruit	Woody, deciduous vine	Over sturdy arbors and up trellises	Well drained soil; sun or part shade
• Grapes	<i>Vitis labrusca</i>	Sweet eating grapes	Vigorous, woody, deciduous vine	Over sturdy arbors and up trellises	Well drained soil; sun or part shade
<b>Evergreen Shrubs:</b>					
• Evergreen huckleberry	<i>Vaccinium ovatum</i>	Sweet black berries	1-3 m rounded shrub with glossy leaves	In borders or as a hedge	Native; hardy; sun or part shade
• Sage	<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	Fresh or dried leaves season food	0.5 m mounding shrub with grey-purple leaves	In borders or containers	Drought tolerant; full sun
<b>Deciduous Shrubs:</b>					
• Wild black currant	<i>Ribes laxiflorum</i>	Round black berries	1-2 m open shrub with nice fall colour and spring flowers	In borders or as a hedge	Native; hardy; sun or part shade
• Blueberries	<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i>	Commercial blueberry	2-3 m upright shrub with nice fall colour and spring flowers	In borders, as a hedge, or in containers	Well drained soil; sun or part shade
• Hazelnut	<i>Corylus cornuta</i> var. <i>californica</i>	Hazelnuts	1-5 m shrubby tree with great fall colour	In borders or as a hedge	Native; hardy; sun or part shade
<b>Evergreen Trees:</b>					
• Sweet bay	<i>Laurus nobilis</i>	Dried leaves season cooking	8-12 m multi-stem tree with glossy leaves	In borders and containers or as a screen	Well drained soil; sun or part shade
<b>Deciduous Trees:</b>					
• Wild crabapple	<i>Malus fusca</i>	Crabapples	2-10 m open tree with beautiful spring blossoms	In borders or trained along fences and walls	Native; hardy; tolerates damp soil and shade
• Apple	<i>Malus speciosa</i> Var. <i>belle de boskoop</i>	Apples	3-6 m tree depending on rootstock	In parks, borders, or trained along fences and walls	Well drained soil; full sun
• Pear	<i>Pyrus communis</i>	Pears	10-20 m tree with glossy dark green leaves	Shade tree or dwarf varieties in borders and containers	Hardy; full sun
• Indian plum	<i>Oemlaria cerasiformis</i>	Small plum-like fruit	2-5 m shrubby tree with early white blossoms	Attract many birds in parks, borders, or as a hedge	Native; hardy; well drained soil; sun or part shade

This table is **just a sample** of the many edible plants that will grow beautifully in the Vancouver landscape. For a more comprehensive list of edible species including annuals, perennials, woody shrubs, trees, and native plants, please visit the City of Vancouver Food Policy website at:

Website: [www.vancouver.ca/foodpolicy](http://www.vancouver.ca/foodpolicy)

Email: [foodpolicy@vancouver.ca](mailto:foodpolicy@vancouver.ca)

Additional reference material that is online includes:

- Brochure: Edible Landscaping
- Report: Southeast False Creek Urban Agriculture Strategy, 2002