

GARDEN TO KITCHEN: PLANT LIKE A GREAT CHEF

# GARDEN DESIGN

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# WE ASKED

What goes into a successful edible garden?

BY JUSTINE GUIDRY

01

## Judy Seaborn

Co-founder, Botanical Interests

botanicalinterests.com

"When people start plants from seed, they're usually surprised at how easy it is. Squash, for example, only takes three to four days to sprout after you've planted it, so it's ideal to start from seed. I'm fond of the 'Max's Gold' and 'Emerald Delight' zucchinis and 'Cube of Butter' and 'Dirani Lebanese' summer squashes. And a lot of cool-season edibles do better when you start them from seed. For example, parsley and spinach like to start out in cool soil. So if you sow them this way, rather than transplanting them from warm to cool soil, they're more successful.

I love having lots of greens available in my garden to make a fresh salad. I always plant one of my garden beds thickly with greens like lettuce, kale, and arugula. 'Toscana' kale, also known as dinosaur kale and black kale, is really popular right now, and I'm crazy about it. One of my and my two daughters' favorite dinners involves picking several leaves of kale, chopping them up, and then heating them in a pan with some olive oil and garlic until the leaves wilt slightly. Then we serve it on pasta with parmesan cheese—it's delicious!"

02

## Rosalind Creasy

Author & Landscape Designer

rosalindcreasy.com

"I'm all about heirlooms right now. That's not to say that I don't have my favorite hybrids—I do. But heirlooms are what I'm really excited about at the moment. It's just nice when you think about the fact that you can grow the same vegetables your grandfather grew. And some of the heirloom vegetables have a deeper color, which means they may have more flavor and more nutrition. Take *Beta vulgaris* ssp. *cicla* var. *flavescens* (rainbow chard), for example. Why would you grow white chard when you can grow this? They come in vibrant shades of red, orange, purple, and yellow, plus white. Its rich pigmentation indicates rich nutrients.

When planting your edible garden, remember that it should still have form, interesting lines, a pleasant geometric design, and good color combinations. Sometimes people are surprised that my edible garden is pretty. But just because you're working with edibles doesn't mean your garden can't have a sense of design! Use your imagination and think about aesthetics. For example, I painted a garden trellis blue, laid it on top of my raised bed, and planted lettuce in each square of the trellis. Think outside of the box and figure out what you can do to make it beautiful."



03

## Jon Carloftis

Garden Designer

joncarloftis.com

"My mother and father taught me that if you're going to do something, do it with style. To create an edible garden with style, you need a plan. That sounds obvious, but a lot of people just buy plants and start throwing them in. When I look at an empty plot of land, I imagine the end result. Consider the structure of your edible garden, because come winter you'll want it to look nice. Think of hair in the South—you've gotta take it higher, especially if you have little space to work with. I take things higher by creating teepees or obelisks out of white birch branches and tobacco sticks which look great and last. You can grow beans and cherry tomatoes through them. Plants that are perfect for this are 'Sweet 100' tomatoes. They've been around forever, and I love them because they're delicious and you can get them to grow 6- to 7-foot tall on a pergola or tripod.

When styling your garden, work off of the theme of your house. At my cottage-style farmhouse, I added white picket fencing around my garden. Of course you want an edible garden that tastes good, but why not create something that brings happiness to your life when you look at it?"

04

## Rebecca Sams

Landscape Designer & Contractor

mosaic-gardens.com

"Here's a good basic tip: not all vegetables are created equal. Let's say you use a lot of high-nitrogen fertilizers. Your greens will go nuts! You'll have incredible chard and beans. But if your tomatoes are in that same soil, you'll have these huge tomato plants with beautiful green leaves...and tiny tomatoes. So that typically high nitrogen level will give you great vegetative growth, but there won't be much energy going into the fruit. Different plants need a different soil balance. It can be overwhelming, so to start, pick your favorite edibles. Learn how they grow best and go from there.

When it comes to deciding what to grow, I recommend going to your local farmer's market. Look at the size and quality of the produce to get an idea of what grows well in your area. You can even talk to the farmers about what they have success with—don't do it when there's a big crowd though, wait for a quiet moment! If there are two types of broccoli, ask what the difference is. Do they notice a big difference in growing them? If there's something delicious and beautiful that you're interested in planting, ask how difficult it is to grow. These people are gardening experts, and they have local knowledge."