



# Nursery News

March 2006 - Research & Development  
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## Landscaping Not Just For the Birds

Tired of only the local wildlife enjoying the fruits of your labor? Get a taste of your landscape with edible landscaping.

Landscaping with edible plants dates back to ancient Egyptian gardens, where edibles were mixed with ornamentals. In the Renaissance era when gardens became more formal, plant types were separated. In more recent times, edible landscaping has made a comeback, as we strive for sustainable and useful landscapes.

With the wide variety of useful trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants, edible landscaping is an easy way to provide color and texture, as well as healthy food for all creatures. Incorporate edible plants that complement the existing style into an established landscape, or start fresh with fruit or nut bearing trees and shrubs, and fill with vegetables and herbs. Plant in formal rows or beds, or better yet, inter-plant for design and diversity, which can also minimize pest damage. Edible landscapes can fit into any site, from natural forest landscapes, formal gardens with hedges and espaliered plants, to even container gardens with dwarf trees or fruiting shrubs.

### Health Benefits

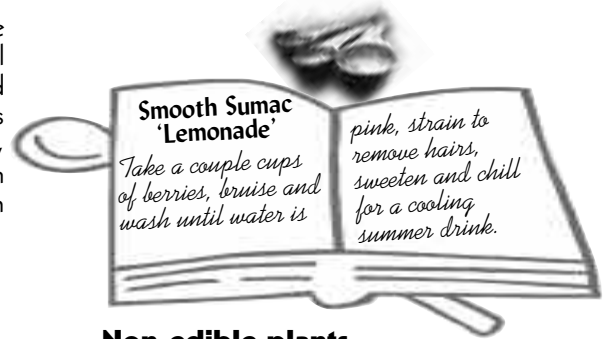
Growing your own food allows you to better control inputs and outputs. You decide what chemicals it takes and how much pollution is released to grow your food. By getting your food closer to the source, there are fewer hands touching your food, and less chance for contamination. Many edible fruits and nuts contain vitamins and antioxidants essential for human health, and many of these nutrients are higher in raw unprocessed food.

### Design

Consider the usual size, form, and site issues, but also think about yield, sustainability, fruit set, pests, microclimate, and fruit quality. As you would design a landscape for seasonal interest, a good edible landscape will have products available in each season. Plan as a typical landscape with layers of tall canopy trees, smaller understory trees and shrubs, low plants and groundcovers.

Each level can contain edible plants:

- **Canopy-** Alternatives to maple or ash as a shade tree
  - o Cherry, walnut, hickory, oak, mulberry, chestnut, or beech.
- **Understory-** many ornamental trees or large shrubs used as a specimen or focal point, have not only attractive flowers or form but edible fruits as well.
  - o Crabapple, Plum, Cherry, Dogwood, Hazelnut, paw-paw, serviceberry, other fruit trees
- **Shrubs-** There are many fruiting shrubs, most are bitter, but many make good jams and jellies, and play a major role in supporting wildlife. Use as a single specimen, in rows, or mixed with trees.
  - o Blackberry, currant, elderberry, gooseberry, raspberry, spreading rose, smaller serviceberry.
- **Herbaceous-** can be edible, for mulch or to attract beneficials.
  - o Vines including grape, hops, beans, or wisteria (fixes Nitrogen) can be used. Ground level annuals and perennials such as strawberries, nasturtium, violets, herbs, or vegetables can be used to fill in.



**Smooth Sumac 'Lemonade'**  
 Take a couple cups of berries, bruise and wash until water is pink, strain to remove hairs, sweeten and chill for a cooling summer drink.

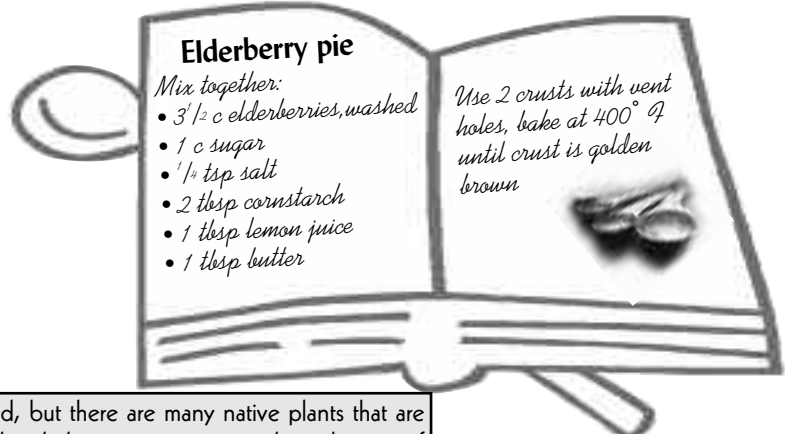
### Non-edible plants

Diversity is always important in landscaping. Be sure to include other useful plants such as nitrogen fixing plants, (see 'A Word of Caution on Fertilizing Woody Plants' at [www.beesongrows.com/ArchivePage.html](http://www.beesongrows.com/ArchivePage.html)) or cover crops to provide nutrients and mulch. Include plants that attract and support beneficial insects or wildlife. Provide habitat for birds, and they will thank you by spreading seeds, providing fertilizer, and eating bad insects. Make your landscape welcoming to toads, who also eat insects.

### Landscaping for Wildlife

#### Plants can supply:

- **Food-** fruit, insects, nuts, seeds
- **Cover-** thorny dense plants- protect them from predators
- **Nesting-** dense shrubs are good for nesting
- **Water-** leaves catch moisture



**Elderberry pie**  
 Mix together:  
 • 3 1/2 c elderberries, washed  
 • 1 c sugar  
 • 1/2 tsp salt  
 • 2 tbsp cornstarch  
 • 1 tbsp lemon juice  
 • 1 tbsp butter  
 Use 2 crusts with vent holes, bake at 400° F until crust is golden brown

**Native Fruits** Many of the typical fruiting plants have been imported, but there are many native plants that are edible. The Native Americans had diet rich in native fruits. Canada is already beginning commercial production of some native fruits like Saskatoon Serviceberry.

Inquiries or more information is available by contacting **McHenry County Nursery** Propagator Mary McClelland  
 Phone (815)943-TREE [www.beesongrows.com](http://www.beesongrows.com) [mcn@beesongrows.com](mailto:mcn@beesongrows.com) Fax(815)943-3511

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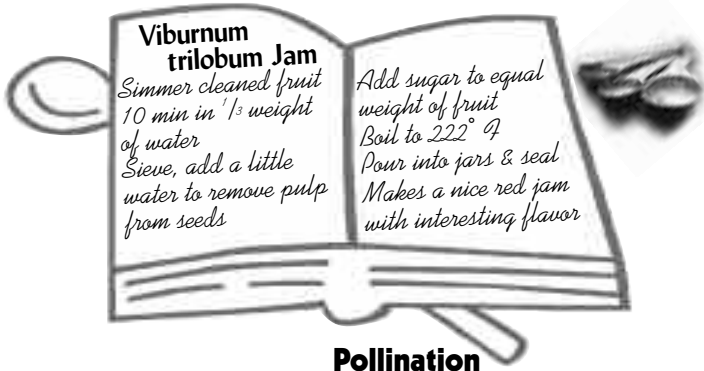


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## Landscaping Not Just For the Birds (cont.)



### Pollination

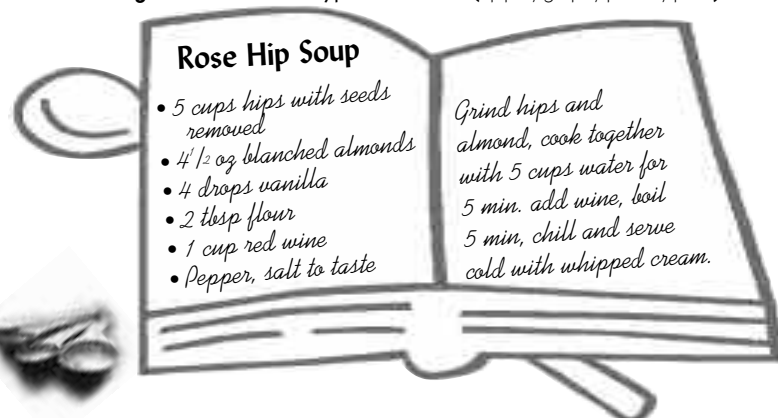
Some edible plants are self-fruiting; only one plant is necessary to bear fruit (serviceberry, most berries, stone fruits, currant, gooseberry, and grape). Others are partial self-fruiting; more than one will improve fruiting (blueberry, elderberry, pawpaw, and pear). The rest need cross-pollination with other plants nearby (apples and crabapples, butternut, walnut, filbert, hickory, cherry and plum).

### Maintenance

The edible landscape should be practical as well as functional, so plan a site where litter from surplus fruits will not be a nuisance, especially for plants with fleshy fruit. Select pest and disease resistant species or cultivars to minimize pesticide applications. Nut crops usually have fewer problems compared to fruit crops. Use groundcovers to minimize weeding or herbicides. Select drought tolerant plants to minimize irrigation.

Edible plants with:

- **Minimal Maintenance-** butternut, walnut crabapple, currant, elderberry, filbert, gooseberry, hickory, paw paw, serviceberry, strawberry.
- **Medium Maintenance-** apricot, blackberry, cherry, raspberry, blueberry
- **High Maintenance-** Typical fruit trees (apple, grape, peach, pear)

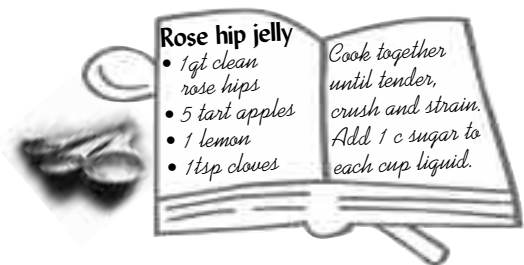


### The Incredible Edible Oak

Squirrels, jays and other animals relish acorns of the many oak species, but acorns were also a staple food for humans at one time. Acorns are enjoyed today in many different forms and places all over the Northern Hemisphere. Before the age of agriculture, or in places where grains were scarce, acorns leached of their bitter tannins made for a nutritious food. The old word for Oak in Tunisia means 'the meal-bearing tree'. Native Americans ate acorns and acorn flour in bread or mixed with meats, fruits, and seeds. Some areas of North Africa still eat bread from acorn flour. The oil from acorns can be used for cooking.

- Koreans use acorn products including acorn flour and jelly.
- Kurds, Iranians, and Iraqis make sweet juice or 'manna' from distilled oak sap collected from aphids and scale insect 'honeydew' left on the leaves.
- Chinese use leached acorns in stews with water chestnut.
- Turks make 'racahout' a hot drink or porridge from the flour.

See William Bryant Logan's new book *Oak-The Frame of Civilization*, 2005 for more on the many connections of human societies and oaks.



**Cautions-** some landscape plants are poisonous, make sure you know what you are eating, be careful and start with small amounts in case of allergies.

### Some toxic landscape plants

- **Buckeye-** all parts
- **Hydrangea-** foliage
- **Gymnocladus-** leaves and seeds (unless roasted)
- **Oak-** especially red oak family, tannins (unless leached)
- **Rhododendron-** all parts especially foliage
- **Rhus-** foliage
- **Taxus-** seeds, leaves
- **Ilex verticillata-** 'feverbush' - fruits are poisonous
- **Euonymus** - also known as 'bitter ash'



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## Landscaping Not Just For the Birds (cont.)

Latin Name	Common Name	Fruit	Fruit Ripe	Wildlife Value*	Plant Facts	Uses
Amelanchier alnifolia	Serviceberry Saskatoon	Tiny Black Purple Berry like Pome	June-July	3	Staple of native Americans , Canada has commercial cult. Sweet & juicy with a hint of almond. 'Regent' cultivar is sweeter	
Amelanchier canadensis	Serviceberry Shadblow	Tiny Blue to Black Berry like Pome	July	3	Sweet & juicy	
Amelanchier laevis	Serviceberry Allegheny	Tiny Blue to Black Berry like Pome	June-July	3	Earliest flowering native tree. Sweet & juicy	
Aronia melanocarpa elata	Chokeberry Glossy Black	Black Purple	Sept-Nov	2	Astringent fruit, juiced as alternative to cranberry	
Asimina triloba	Pawpaw, Custard Apple	Large Banana-like, Greenish Yellow	Sept-Oct	1	Rich luscious custard-like pulp, high in food energy, lots of potassium, much more iron, calcium, and magnesium than typical fruits. seeds are poisonous	
Carya laciniosa, ovata	Hickory Shellbark Hickory Shagbark	Sweet Nut	Oct-Nov	2	Indians made cream or butter from oil of nuts from cooking	
Carya illinoensis	Pecan	One of the Finest Nuts	Sept	2	Does not have high yields in the midwest unless using northern strains (have more oil, a sweeter nuttier flavor, smaller nuts, less disease problems)	
Celtis occidentalis	Hackberry	Bright Red Fleshy Drupe	Sept-Oct	3	Slightly sweet, date flavored, birds love, very hard seed	
Cornus mas 'Golden Glory'	Dogwood Corneliancherry Golden Glory	Bright Cherry-Red Drupes	July, Aug	3	Tart, similar to cranberry or tart cherry, birds love.	
Corylus americana	Filbert American, Hazelnut	Light Brown Hazelnuts	Aug-Sept	2	One of the oldest used nut species. Gather and toast hulled dried nuts, crush, add to pancake batter, watch out for worms!	
Crataegus	Hawthorn Washington, Winter King	Bright Red Drupe	Sept-Oct	2	Some have better fleshier fruit than others	
Fagus grandifolia	Beech American	Sweet Beech Nut	Sept	2	Dried and roasted as coffee substitute, nut butters, food of the passenger pigeon	
Juglans cinera, nigra	Butternut, Walnut	Sweet Tan Brown Nut	Oct-Nov	2	Nuts used by Indians, extracted oil for cooking, butternut is the sweetest	
Lindera benzoin	Spicebush	Scarlet Red	Sept	1	Leaves and fruits for tea, Dried berries can be substitute for allspice	
Malus spp	Crabapple	Yellow, Orange, Red	August	3	Various sizes, shapes, colors	
Morus rubra	Mulberry Red	Orange, Red, Purple	June, July	2	Soft red edible fruit makes a pleasing sweet drink	
Myrica pensylvanica	Bayberry Northern	Blue Gray	Sept-Nov	2	Leaves as flavoring substitute for bay leaves. Berries attract birds	
Prunus americana	Plum American	Apricot Yellow - Red	August	2	Large stone, variable size and sweetness, few insects or diseases	
Prunus virginiana 'Canada Red'	Cherry Canada Red	Red to Dk Purple	Aug-Sept	2	True cherry, related to domestic stone fruits, one of the most important native American foods, bark and seeds poisonous	
Quercus spp	Oak	Brown Acorns	Aug-Sept	2.5	Crushed acorns (dried and boiled to remove tannins), or raw- Q. shumardii is a sweeter, low tannin species.	
Rhus glabra & gl. Laciniata	Smooth Sumac, Lemonade Berry	Red Berries	Aug-fall	2	Cooling summer drink, leaves are poisonous	
Rosa spp	Rose	Hips	August-fall	2	Large hips, 40-60 times more Vitamin C than an orange weight for weight	
Sambucus canadensis & cvs	Elderberry American	Blue Purple Black Berry-like Drupe	Aug-Sept	3	One of the highest in iron of native fruit. Flowers can also be used fried, pickled as substitute for capers, wine, or dried for tea	
Viburnum lentago	Viburnum Nannyberry Lentago	Blue/Black Berry-like Drupe	Sept-Oct	1	Good winter food for bird	
Viburnum prunifolium	Viburnum Blackhaw	Blue/Black Berry-like Drupe	Sept-Oct	1	Good winter food for bird	
Viburnum trilobum & cvs	Viburnum American Cranberry Highbush	Red Drupe	Sept-Oct	1	Flavor improves if left to freeze and thaw on the plant. Some cultivars may be better tasting. Hah's was developed for fruit production	

\*Wildlife Value: 3= Excellent 2= Good 1= Fair

Uses: Fresh, Frozen Jams, Jellies, Preserves Juice, Wine, Cordials Baked Goods Tea Nuts, Seeds Oils

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May 2007

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## Landscaping Not Just For the Birds (Aronia add-on)

After we put this article together, we were inspired to try some of the fruits listed. We tasted serviceberry right off the plants, they were sweet and juicy! Elderberry and Black Aronia berries were a little more tart, but had potential for baking. A large block of Black Aronia shrubs on one of our farms had a bumper crop of berries last fall, so we picked buckets of them, and experimented with wine, jam, cookies, and bread recipes. They are really quite good and freeze well. This year we hope to try more of the edible plants in our nursery.

### Black Aronia Pinwheels

Makes about 60 cookies

#### Ingredients

1 cup Aronia berries  
 1/4 cup packed brown sugar

1 cup butter  
 1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
 2 eggs  
 3 cups flour

**Filling:** in food processor combine berries, pecans and brown sugar

#### Dough:

- Beat softened butter for 30 seconds
- Add sugar, baking powder and salt and beat until combined
- Beat in eggs and orange peel
- Beat in as much flour as you can with the mixer, then mix by hand
- Divide dough in half and refrigerate for 1 hour
- Roll each half into a 10 inch square
- Spread with filling and roll up
- Chill for 4 or more hours
- Cut rolls into 1/4 inch slices
- Bake at 375° for 8-10 minutes, edges should be firm and bottoms lightly browned

### Aronia melanocarpa elata- Glossy Black Chokeberry

Purplish black fruits have a dry flavor. The fruit clusters ripen in the fall and are best picked when fully black but before the first frost hits. They can be cleaned and used right away, but freezing the berries will release more juice. Aronia berries have a high concentration of anthocyanins and flavonoids, five to ten times higher than cranberry juice. They also contain beneficial nutrients such as antioxidants, polyphenols, minerals and vitamins. Commercially Aronia fruit is used to make juice and wine, alone or blended with grapes or apples. The strong natural color is also good as a food coloring.

1 cup pecans  
 1 1/2 cup granulated sugar  
 1/2 teaspoon salt  
 3 teaspoon shredded orange peel

### Other Delicious Black Aronia Uses:

- » in muffin mixes
- » in pancake or waffle mix
- » juice or wine
- » jam, jelly, or sauces
- » in cold cereal or oatmeal
- » topping for ice-cream
- » mix in yogurt with granola

### Black Aronia Bread

Makes 2 loaves or 4 mini-loaves

#### Dry Ingredients

4 cup flour (or 3 cups flour and 1 cup oatmeal)  
 1 1/2 teaspoon baking soda

#### Wet Ingredients

2 beaten eggs  
 2 cups yogurt, buttermilk, or orange juice

#### Berries & Nuts

2-3 cups Aronia berries

1 1/2 - 2 cup sugar  
 1 teaspoon salt

1/2 cup butter

1 1/2 cups walnuts

- Mix together the dry ingredients and wet ingredients in separate bowls
- Combine the wet and dry bowls and stir until just mixed
- Fold in berries and nuts
- Pour batter into greased loaf pans
- Bake at 350° for 45 minutes or until toothpick inserted in middle comes out clean

