

Possibilities of Using Ornamental Vegetables in Landscape Architecture

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Abstract. The importance of vegetables is known by people worldwide by being a healthy and important food product. In this paperwork it is underlined the fact that vegetables are not used only in alimentary purposes, but can also be used for decoration. So, for diversifying the area of utility for vegetables plants, the so-called “edible landscaping” system is practiced. Root vegetables can be used in the purpose of creating carpets and beds made from vegetation. The kale is used in borders, squares, flower stands and can also be combined with other ornamental plants. The vegetables that are cultivated for pods, beans and capsules can be used in decorating pergolas and towers. For creating a colorful view or a contrast of colors, it is preferred to use green vegetables. To arrange beautiful garden using ornamental vegetables some basic landscape architecture principles need to be followed and the plants that are going to be used, chosen carefully.

Keywords: ornamental vegetables, edible landscape, landscape architecture

INTRODUCTION

The importance of vegetables in people’s life is well known; a lot of studies show that vegetables are an important perspective food product and are highly beneficial for the maintenance of human health and prevention of diseases. They contain valuable ingredients which can be successfully used to build up and repair the body.

That is why vegetables are grown, even on a small piece of land. But in the same time a beautiful and colorful garden is preferred, a wish that led to the invention of the “edible landscaping” concept. This concept consists of cultivating vegetable species next to ornamental plants or of cultivating ornamental vegetables species in landscaping.

The “edible landscaping” system has its advantages. This system offers a healthy food source and at the same time a beautiful garden design for the owner. Nowadays the landscaping design is more and more important.

VEGETABLES SPECIES USED IN ORNAMENTAL PURPOSES

For a vegetable garden to be decorative it is very important to use a lot of species (Larkom, 2002).

Even if ornamental plants or vegetable species are used, when a garden is created, the same landscape architecture principles must be respected. Any plant can be decorative if is chosen the right spot, even if the plant is a flower, a dendrologycal specie or a vegetable.

Depending of what kind of the landscape design is created or the pedo-climatic conditions, vegetable species can be chosen to fulfill the purpose. Like the decorative species there are vegetable species that decorate with their design, leaves, flowers and color.

A disadvantage is that the decorative vegetables are fewer. But now there have been

created decorative forms for all the important vegetables groups. But wonderful gardens can be made using classical vegetables species, too; the secret is to put them in the right spot with flower species.

The vegetables from roots-vegetables group, like: carrot, parsley, celery, red beet and radish can be used successfully in landscape. These are used especially to create vegetal carpets because they have rich leaf system. The carrot, like the ferns, has the leaves in rosette and can be used to create vegetal beds to delimitate the batch. The parsley for leaves, also, is used for a nice esthetic aspect, using parsley with curly leaves with classical ones. Other decorative vegetable from this group, who bring a colorful spot with its leaves, is the red beet. The most decorative variety is Bull's Blood witch has dark red leaves.

The next group of vegetables is the cabbage group that comes out with its variety of colors, but also with its design. There are flowering kales varieties that are light colored, with one color: green, white, pink, purple, blue or red; or with two colors: green with white, dark red with pink, green with pink or green with red. The variety Spivony, as ornamental cabbage, presents corrugated leaves, and the heads are small, miniaturized, and have a diameter of 7-8 cm. Then there is the red cabbage that has young plants that have light blue or grey color with dark red nervures, and at maturity they become dark blue and then red with grey shine.

The cabbage is the most decorative vegetable even if it's grown for its head or for leaves. It has a great variety of hybrids. The winter decoration can be successfully assured by this vegetable, because of its low temperature resistance, and also at the first frosts the colors are intensified, beautiful and decorative.

From the bulbs group, the most decorative is the leaf onion and the leek. These decorate with thin leaves and with their help we can create contrasts with other leaves shapes. Another good thing is that they have compact and constant growing. But their best aspect is their blooming period, when they form lots of floral stems, with different colors, and the decoration is at maximum. But the blooming period is short, from 3 weeks to a month.

The *Solanaceae* group is represented by the pepper and tomato. The pepper decorates with its plant, soft leaves, dark green color and fruit. The fruit decorate with many colors: white, yellow, red, purple; the shape, the fruit number – almost 100 fruit on a plant; and with the position on the plant: pendent or erect. Tomatoes, also, are very decorative with their plants, leaves and different fruit color and shape.

The vegetables cultivated for pods, beans and capsules don't have a very important decorative values, but they are climbing plants with elastic stalks and they can be decorative if they have support. When they bloom, the flowers are very colorful.

Another group of very decorative vegetables is the cucurbits group. The fruit are the most decorative of this group. They have different, interesting and wonderful colors and shapes.

The vegetables for leaves. Some vegetable from this group are very decorative. Such as: petiole beet, fennel, chicory and lettuce. They decorate with their shapes, leaves and color, offering us the possibility to create wonderful chromatic games.

PATTERNS FOR USING ORNAMENTAL VEGETABLES

Using the vegetables for decoration is not a new principle. Looking back, this practice is from Persian gardens and Antic Egypt period, when in the palaces parks and gardens, the vegetables were cultivated next to the ornamental plants.

Ignatius Saint said: "Is not enough to cultivate vegetables with care. You have the duty to match them with their color and to frame with flowers to look like a well done meal

table.”

The garden of the famous Villandry castle represents the greatest example of this practice. The castle was built in the XV- century by Jean le Breton. The vegetables garden was made in geometric style, renaissance, and specific for that period. It has lot of vegetable species and its characteristic was its perfect order and symmetry.

A vegetables garden can be considered conventional or ornamental like aspect looking at how the plants are arranged (Larkom, 2005).

Regarding the style of a vegetable garden, which has additional ornamental value, the option are divided between formal (geometric) and informal design, the last one nearer to natural landscape (Hudak, 2003; Sima, 2009).

The possibilities to decorate a garden with ornamental vegetables are multiple. Vegetables species can be used in borders, rounds and square with flowers.

The flowering kale is the most often used in this kind of landscaping, because it has a high decorative potential, we can create chromatic games with it and it decorates even in the winter (Fig.1).



Fig. 1 Square planted with flowering kale
(http://superfoodwow.blogspot.com/2010_12_01_archive.html
<http://www.hongyue.cn/news/071261314102360.asp>)

For vegetal bordures, carrots with annual flowers can be grown with great results. Contrasts can be obtained with the shapes and the colors of the leaves, growing side by side: carrots with red lettuce or parsley with ornamental curly cabbage or red chicory Trevison.

The onion for leaves and the leek can be also used successfully in different landscaping ways with flower or dendrological species, but the difference between the heights of the plants have to be very small. These two species can be used in rocky gardens.

For pergolas, towers and terraces that are often met in private gardens, plants with voluble stalks are preferably used, like the decorative beans, *Phaseolum coccinea*, that delight the viewer eye with the colorful flowers (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Fence decorated with *Phaseolum coccinea*.
(<http://davesgarden.com/community/forums/fp.php?pid=2349203#b>)

In landscaping decorative pumpkins can also be used. They decorate with their colors and shapes. Special attention should be given to the hybrid chosen according with the colour and dimension that is needed in the garden.

The possibilities and the varieties using the decorative vegetables in landscaping are uncountable, thinking also at lots of kind of different factors: the climate, the ground, the humidity, the pH, the field, the owner needs and wishes and not at least the imagination of the landscape engineer.

CONCLUSIONS

Vegetables species can be an important part of a garden landscape, giving an interesting view and also a healthy source of food.

It is not really hard to create a garden like this we can take care of the landscaping lows and free the imagination.

It is very important that ornamental vegetables species are chosen carefully. When using vegetables as a decoration, people have to be informed about all the new hybrids and all the decorative aspects. For great gardens with new species is very important that the engineer is connected with worlds news in this field.

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