

Year Round Gardening

Pretty Vegetables

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For a garden where form meets function, turn to vegetables that are also pleasing to the eye. Cultivation of edible ornamentals is ideal for gardeners who want to use limited space as both a place of beauty and a place of production.

POLE BEANS, a great choice for containers, grow up, instead of out, and continue producing delicious beans for a couple of months. They require some type of support to climb on. You can even use pole beans as a privacy wall or curtain. 'Scarlet Runner' beans are an Heirloom used by native Americans. These large, beautiful, vigorous vines have clustered flowers of the brightest scarlet and are a Hummingbird favorite.

LETTUCE loves containers. Grow loose leaf varieties and cut only the outer leaves and the plants will continue growing for months. Lettuce does best in cool weather. Containers can be moved to shady locations and grown all summer or moved to protected locations and grown into late fall. 'Flashy Trout Back' and 'Freckles' varieties have splashes of crimson on bright green leaves giving a pretty speckled appearance.



Photo courtesy of Debra Stinton Othitis

SWISS CHARD is a superstar in the garden. The stunning and easy-to-grow 'Bright Lights' or 'Rainbow' varieties have stems in gold, pink and crimson with savoyed rich green and bronze leaves. It can be harvested at various stages of maturity. The whole plant with tender, young leaves can be used for salads, while the individual large-sized, mature leaves can be harvested for sautéing and cooking dishes.

KALE probably appears on lists of healthy foods more than any other vegetable. Red Russian kale is a delicious grey-green variety that is pretty enough to plant among the flowers or as a decorative edging plant. The stems are purplish and the leaves are shaped like big oak leaves and colored a velvety gray green. The purple colors become richer after frost, when the flavor becomes sweeter. Surprisingly, the big leaves are very tender and delicious.

CARROTS' ferny foliage is very attractive in floral containers. You will be pulling the carrot roots before the Flowers completely fill the pot. However, to be successful, you must choose a fast-growing round or baby carrot, like 'Babette' or 'Paris Market.' Use just seed a few carrots with potted flowers.

PEPPERS - Each year there are more ornamental peppers being introduced to the landscape market. Some of the newer purple peppers can add unique interest to your garden beds or containers. 'Purple Flash' and 'Tricolor variegata' are two examples. With purple fruit and white variegated leaves, these are two of the showiest peppers available. Fruits are hot, best used as a garnish, and turn from deep purple to bright red at maturity.

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