

# Groceries from the garden

By Jenny Jorgensen

Imagine you are planning an event, a dinner party or barbecue and all you need to do for fresh produce is step outside into your garden and fill up your shopping basket with all your favorite ingredients. This can really happen and your menu choices can be endless. Your recipes can be ingenious. Your guests will be amazed.

Begin with a cocktail hour consisting of fresh, fruity drinks garnished with sprigs of assorted mints plucked from your herb pots. Hors d'oeuvres could be fantastic recipes created with fruits from your own trees and vegetables from your garden. Add herbs to flavor and garnish, dips to dunk. You have a lot of very healthy choices.

Follow that with a salad of tasty lettuce varieties, spinach, tomatoes, cucumbers or crisp radishes. You could add apple slices and walnuts, all from your garden.

Potatoes and onions will go with any meat of your choice. Vegetable dishes of crunchy carrots, green beans, corn on the cob and sugar-snap peas sound great. Fresh seasonings for these dishes abound; envision chives or rosemary, even garlic or horseradish.

The best is saved for last: dessert. Think of warm apple crisp, strawberry-rhubarb pie, blueberry cobbler or homemade strawberry ice cream.

With a little planning and preparation on your part, this can become your reality. That's what's so great about gardening with edibles. It can be as personal as you want it to be. You decide what to grow and where to grow it. It can be decorative as well as functional. It can be simple or elaborate. It's all up to you.

The bottom line is that growing, harvesting and eating the fruit of your labor is a smart thing to do; as well as providing great-tasting, fresh foods, "edibles gardening" is a healthy activity. Most people find it emotionally rewarding and personally satisfying. It also does wonders for the pocket-book.

If you are intrigued by this concept, I recommend visiting your local nursery/garden center. Experienced and new gardeners alike will find more plant material and seeds than they could ever imagine growing. Nurseries are filled with fruit and nut trees, fruiting vines, berries, root crops, vegetables and herbs. They are staffed with knowledgeable, experienced gardeners eager to share with you what they know. There, you will also find the tools and supplies you need to make your project easier and more successful.

"Shopping" in your garden begins with careful planning. Where you plant does matter. It must get at least six hours of sun per day. Choose plants that are agreeable to our Pacific Northwest climate. The concept is called "Right Plant, Right Place." Your success depends on it. Whether you have

space for a big garden in the ground or pots and planters on your deck, patio or apartment balcony, you still need to follow the same guidelines.

Planting vertically can add a whole other dimension to your garden. Some plants like peas, beans, grapes and kiwis like to ramble up a support. This can actually be a fun idea. You can grow espaliered trees horizontally for tight spaces.

Many edibles are happy to be planted

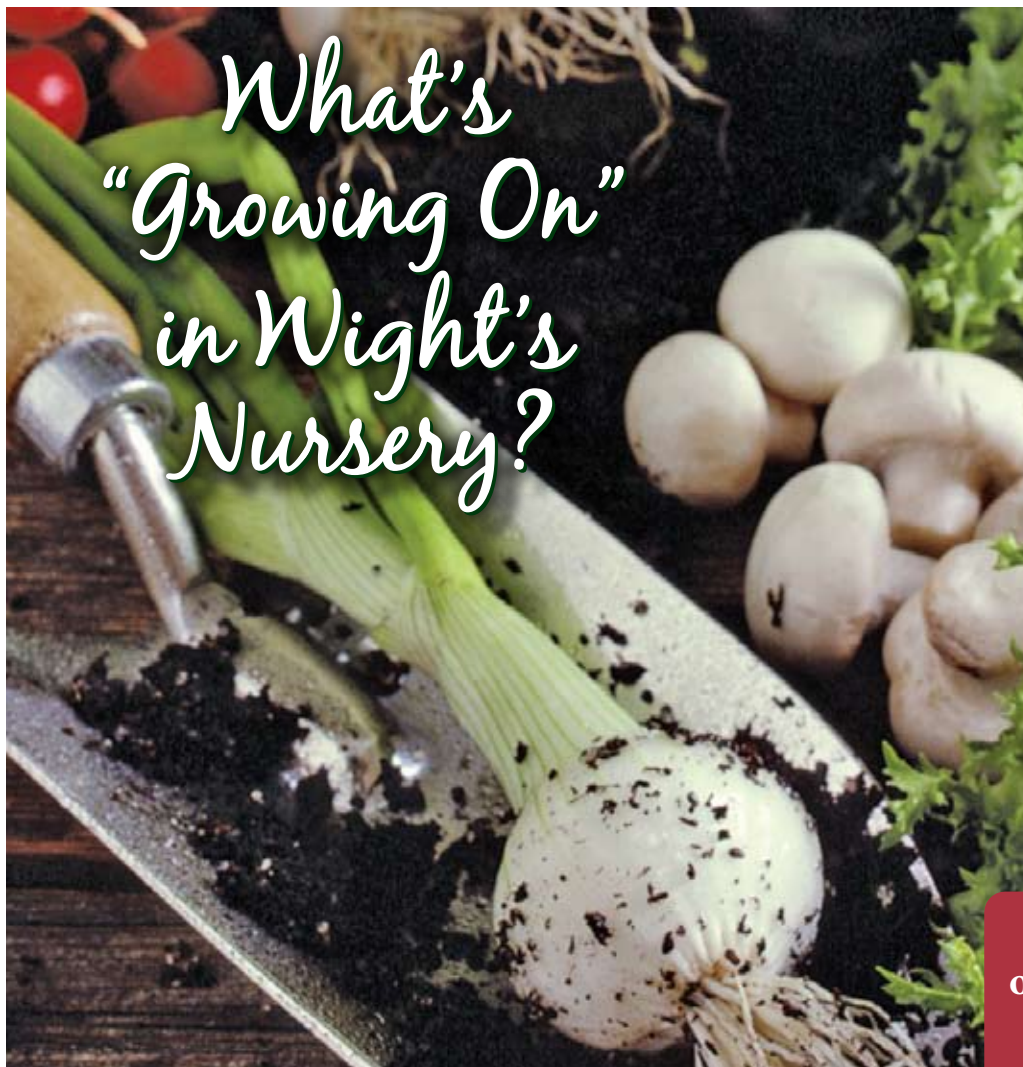
amongst your everyday landscape plants. Rhubarb, for example, has dramatic foliage. Blueberries have a very shrub-like appearance and great fall color. Strawberries make an interesting groundcover.

For decks, patios and porches it's great fun to create "salad bowl" planters. Hanging baskets can be planted with tomatoes or strawberries. You can try almost anything you want in a planter. There are even dwarf, mini-dwarf and colonnade fruit trees that will do fine in a

pot if it's big enough.

Remember, plan ahead. A trip to the nursery will get you started on your new adventure. Now that you know that growing edibles is easy, one day soon you will step out into your garden to "shop" and you will be proud.

*Jenny Jorgensen is a certified professional horticulturist and nursery manager at Wight's Home and Garden in Lynnwood.*



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