



The Edible Front Yard: The Mow-Less, Grow-More Plan for a Beautiful, Bountiful Garden

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“Front lawns, beware: The Germinatrix has you in her crosshairs! Ivette Soler is a welcome voice urging us to mow less and grow some food—in her uniquely fun, infectious yet informative way.”
—*Garden Rant*

People everywhere are turning patches of soil into bountiful vegetable gardens, and each spring a new crop of beginners pick up trowels and plant seeds for the first time. They're planting tomatoes in raised beds, runner beans in small plots, and strawberries in containers. But there is one place that has, until now, been woefully neglected—the front yard.

And there's good reason. The typical veggie garden, with its raised beds and plots, is not the most attractive type of garden, and favorite edible plants like tomatoes and cucumbers have a tendency to look a scraggly, even in their prime. But *The Edible Front Yard* isn't about the typical veggie garden, and author Ivette Soler is passionate about putting edibles up front and creating edible gardens with curb appeal.

Soler offers step-by-step instructions for converting all or part of a lawn into an edible paradise; specific guidelines for selecting and planting the most attractive edible plants; and design advice and plans for the best placement and for combining edibles with ornamentals in pleasing ways. Inspiring and accessible, *The Edible Front Yard* is a one-stop resource for a front-and-center edible garden that is both beautiful and bountiful year-round.

The Edible Front Yard: The Mow-Less, Grow-More Plan for a Beautiful, Bountiful Garden Details

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From Reader Review The Edible Front Yard: The Mow-Less, Grow-More Plan for a Beautiful, Bountiful Garden for online ebook

Courtney says

This volume had gorgeous illustrations and I might have gleaned more from it if I lived in Southern California as does the author, but I was unimpressed but how little information was actually contained in this book. No mention on the components of a healthy soil or suggestion of getting a soil test before investing in plants and hardscaping, and some of the sidebars are clearly padding as no one needs to have the instructions for removing a sidewalk (her advice? get a sledgehammer, bust up the concrete, pry up with a crowbar and take the pieces away in a wheelbarrow). I'd have felt more confident if the author had suggested other works or resources (like the cooperative extension office) but she neglects to do this. I think my biggest issue is the vague understanding of who is the intended audience for this book - there isn't enough for the beginner to truly make a start, the intermediate gardener will crave more details, and the advanced gardener will find themselves covering familiar ground.

I'd suggest checking this book out from the library, instead of purchasing it.

Crystal (Goddess in the Stacks) says

I would definitely give this book the full five stars. It's filled with gorgeous, full-color, glossy photographs that really show off the concepts illustrated in the book. Soler describes both some common vegetables (corn and beans, for example) as well as some things I didn't even know were edible, like daylilies and nasturtiums! She includes a lot of unusual edibles, like artichokes and bananas, the latter of which I can't grow outside here in Maryland. She lives in LA, though, and I completely understand how it must be complicated to write a book applicable to the entire United States!

Her chapters range from "Curb Appeal" – WHY should we care what our yard looks like, and what actually looks good? – to "The New Front Yard Plant Palette" which is all about classic edibles that also look great. Another chapter is about helper plants – plants that aren't necessarily edible (though some of them are), but that serve other purposes in the garden, such as pest repellent or predatory bug attractants. Both of these chapters list a TON of plants, with short descriptions about why they're on the list, how to take care of them, and what to use them for. EXTREMELY useful.

Soler has her own blog – The Germinatrix – but unfortunately it doesn't look like it's been updated since 2012. Her Twitter seems to have died about the same time, and her Facebook hasn't seen a post since early 2013. I'm still hoping to find her presence online, as I love her writing style and would love to find more of her work.

You can find all my reviews at Goddess in the Stacks.

Slee says

The Edible Front Yard by Ivette Soler is a good jumping off point for a person who is ready to start making the transition from growing a great big lawn of useless and resource wasting grass to having a functional

garden space planted with the things one loves to eat while still maintaining the all important curb appeal. Her descriptions of various ornamental edibles that one might not consider growing, hello nasturtiums and orach, are truly useful in planning a garden. I appreciate that she includes a description of color, height, habit, days to maturity, drainage requirements, hardiness zones, and even what to do with the various edibles. That said, I wish she had included light requirements. It is not safe to assume that all plants need the same light, and while on a rare few Mediterranean herbs she says they require a lot of heat and sun, I know that my plant wish list, if drawn from this book, is going to require a substantial amount of light checking while in the planning phase. It just seems silly that with all of the details provided, that this one was omitted. Still, it's a good book to have on hand when you're planning and drawing a blank outside the go-to garden veggies and looking for something both yummy and pretty.

You can read more about my edible gardening plans and dreams at [Paisley & Pretties](#).

Leslie says

The Edible Front Yard describes how to replace boring, needy, thirsty grass with a diverse mix of ornamentals and edibles. It is filled with beautiful photos and lots of design ideas for various regions and climates. There is advice for shade plants and sun plants, how to remove grass without poison and how to prepare the soil for planting.

There is also a section on building codes, restrictions, permits and neighbors who think your plants are weeds. I am not doing anything that grand, maybe a small retaining wall and a trellis or two. Half my grass is staying put, but it's nice to know how to handle some of those issues.

One of the ideas I did like and will consider is a beautiful trellis with a section of climbing plants. Another are the herbs. Sage comes in many varieties, makes pretty flowers and is hardy in most climates. I've been using chives as perennials for many years. They make gorgeous purple flowers. If you live in a warm climate rosemary is also a beautiful shrub and can be used as a hedge. Last year I let my parsley go to seed and it make big white flowers and also attracted many swallowtail butterfly caterpillars. I hope to have many butterflies this year as a result.

I have been pulling out sections of grass in the front and back yards for a few years now and replacing it with native shrubs, clumps of tall grasses and wildflowers. The benefits are many. They are pretty, add diversity and interest, butterflies and humming birds have appeared, they need little water, little maintenance and no chemicals or fertilizer. Until I saw this book I really hadn't thought of using my herbs and maybe even a veggie or two out front.

If you are looking for ideas to add some edible and pretty plants to your landscaping I recommend this book.

Barbara says

Beautiful photographs and lots of ideas and inspiration for planting edible plants in the front yard, and having a beautiful and inviting front yard at the same time.

Having a lawn is time consuming and wasteful with nothing real to show for it. A lawn that requires time to mow, lots of water, and chemicals that run off into water supplies can be turned into a beautiful and inviting space that can also provide your family with fresh, organic vegetables. This book gives you the basics of

getting started.

Rachael says

I really enjoyed this book. Its full of colorful pictures of various plants and has good descriptions many, many plants that are edible and look good, or would go well with an edible landscape. I love the idea of this book, and will, someday, have an edible front yard. For now, I will strive to make my backyard garden look nicer.

Main complaint: most of her examples and pictures are of easy-to-grow-things climates, whether nice temps or water-rich. Sure, she says that if you live in Arizona, your edible front yard will look different that if you live in the NW, but she doesn't directly address it all that much. She does give a short list of drought tolerant edible plants, but there were only about 5 on that list. I know this is likely due to her writing about what she knows... she lives in Southern California, which is an easy-to-grow-things kinda climate (I lived there for 6 years, and grew all sorts of stuff in pots on our balcony). Why do I have a lawn out front here in central Texas? When it brown from 3 1/2 months of 100+° weather and rain twice in 6 months, it doesn't look overly bad. The garden, on the other hand, is looking not so great, and it gets watered every few days.

Anywoo, a fun gardening book, worth getting if only for the pictures.

Sarah says

I didn't find the book useful because its descriptions of suggested plants ("pretty" edibles) were not organized in a way that made it easy to determine whether a plant was appropriate for a particular climate or location. Hardiness zones were not consistently listed in the same place (or sometimes at all) and the full description had to be read to determine whether a plant was appropriate for shady/ dry/ high-traffic/ etc. areas. Maybe it's intended more as an inspirational read than a practical one?

Ann Keller says

Having a front yard is a love-hate relationship. You love it when your front yard looks great, but hate keeping it up. Wouldn't it also be awesome if you could put some of that great real estate to good use?

In The Edible Front Yard, designer Ivette Soler presents the reader with some stunning ideas how to utilize a front yard as a colorful, dramatic statement from which one can grow a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. Be bold! Cast the brilliant red stems of chard against the bushy leaves of Italian parsley. See how sea lavender or ruby-red loose leaf lettuce can edge a path to perfection, while an espaliered apple tree climbs ever skyward behind a thriving bed of tomatoes. Even if you don't have a lot of space, you'll find some useful ideas in this stunning book filled with pictures and a host of creative information.

R. C. says

The section on design principles was the first of it's kind I've seen in a book written for the permaculture-

concerned reader. Ideas like structure and repetitions and borders were not obvious to me as someone who did not grow up gardening so I really appreciated being provided with a primer on the elements of the art from an author who was using edibles as examples of how to incorporate style functions.

Gina says

The title gives a very clear focus: for the front yard, curb appeal is important, at least more than in the backyard. So while there is a focus on the edible part, there is a lot on appearance, with practical tips, like which plants are unlikely to look neat, how to organize some, and how elements like contrast can improve the result. To show the way, half of the book is lush photos.

Pam Penick says

I've never been eager to grow my own food. I'd rather plant ornamentals any day than tend a row of snap peas or struggle to keep borers from destroying my squash. But that's why *The Edible Front Yard* appealed to me. It's about making your veggie patch as ornamental as the rest of your garden — so ornamental, in fact, that you feel no qualms about bringing it into the front yard for all the world to see.

Ivette's enthusiasm for gardening, plants, and getting her hands dirty is apparent in every descriptive, encouraging sentence. But along with her love of the garden and more-is-more personality, she has the discipline and know-how of a designer. She argues that front-yard food growers must often practice restraint in order to fit into the traditional neighborhood and win over skeptical neighbors. Her book is about much more than growing vegetables; it's about creating a front-yard edible garden with the structure and style of an ornamental garden — not always an easy task given the feast-or-famine nature of most vegetable gardens.

Some of her suggestions: Use structure to tide the garden over when plants are past peak. Incorporate thoughtful hardscaping (it doesn't have to be expensive) to define the vegetable garden and give it good bones. Mix vegetables into your ornamental beds to camouflage them if your HOA won't allow front-yard plots. Use edibles with a pleasing form, and make sure they'll hold their good looks for the whole growing season; save those that get ratty at the end of the season for the back yard.

A little less than half the book contains plant suggestions that meet her criteria for front-yard vegetable growing. Much of the rest is about design: the importance of structure, repetition, texture and form, and harmony or contrast with color. She even provides some edible garden design plans. She also gives practical information for getting started, planting, maintenance, harvesting, and planning for next year, as well as simple hardscaping how-tos.

One thing I really like about Ivette's book is her emphasis on do-it-yourself projects. A beautiful garden does not have to be expensive. With some research, planning, and, yes, hard work, and with the use of simple but timeless materials like locally sourced gravel and stone, cedar and redwood, a DIYer can make her own paths, raised beds, trellises, and obelisks. Of course, there's much benefit to hiring a designer too, whether for coaching, a design, or a full installation. But Ivette's point is that there are options that will work for you no matter your budget.

Lynette says

lots of color pictures are a plus

*** Jennifer says**

I wanted this book because I wanted to create an attractive, edible garden in my back yard. One that wouldn't look like your typical "vegetable garden". It was an excellent resource. I was really pleased with the advice, the plant lists and the layout suggestions as well as the tips to consider when planning your garden. Lots of beautiful full colour pictures as well. A great find.

Jessica says

Great book to scratch the surface. Lots of interesting how tos and good information to get me started. I feel at times it can be a little vague but it was a great start for my revamping project for my front yard.

Kandise says

BRB tearing out my front yard and planting it with lettuce.
