



GREEN GIANT



KITCHEN GARDEN EXPERT ELLEN ECKER OGDEN'S VEGETABLE PLOTS ARE RENOWNED FOR THEIR FRESH FLAVORS AND EVEN FRESHER DESIGNS. SHE TELLS US HOW HER GARDEN GROWS.





It might seem an unlikely choice to train pole beans up an arbor, but I want my small backyard garden to have some visual rewards, too. Just because you eat it, doesn't mean it needs to look plain or practical.



When I planted my first vegetable garden, I was fresh out of art school and thought it would be a good way to feed myself. It was constant trial and error, but the thrill of dashing to the garden to clip a few leaves of frilly Lolla Rossa lettuce and crimson Bull's Blood beet greens kept me at it. My kitchen garden has evolved into more than a place to grow food, and my long, straight rows have given way to fancy arcs and geometric triangles. I found inspiration from European kitchen gardeners and formal design. Today, I grow a compact four-square potager design in my southern Vermont backyard. Every year I start with a plan on paper, the blank canvas of rich organic soil, and then start to decorate with plants, adding bamboo structures that provide drama and height. My garden includes plenty of quick growing lettuce and ornamental flowers, along with fruits, herbs, and other heirloom vegetables, blending color and variety in every bed. Seeds and plants are this artist's paintbrush.





Pea-gravel paths separate the four quadrants and keep things orderly. Stepping-stones within the beds make it easy to navigate. I include a bench in my gardens. It's great for a quick rest or to sit and watch the garden grow.



MEET THE GROWER

ELLEN OGDEN

Author of *The Complete Kitchen Garden* (\$24.95; ellenogden.com)

I GET INSPIRED BY Talking to other gardeners and seeing other gardens.

MY 80:20 PLAN Grow 80 percent tried and true plants and 20 percent new-to-me, heirloom vegetables.

RULE WORTH BREAKING Forget straight rows. Plant in color blocks or swirls, staggering heights for interest.

FAVORITE TOOL A garden dibber helps with spacing, marking rows, and making holes for planting.

PLANNING AHEAD Saving seeds for vegetables—peas, beans, salad greens—means you are always ready for spring.



IN MY KITCHEN GARDEN

ELLEN'S 25X25-FOOT GARDEN YIELDS PRODUCE FOR TWO WITH EXTRA FOR SHARING, PICKLING, AND FREEZING. HER FAVORITES INCLUDE...

FRUITS

- Tomatoes
'Brandywine',
'Big Rainbow', and
'Green Zebra'
- Cucumber
'Boston Pickling'
- Sweet pepper
'Corno di Toro'
- Eggplant
'Rosa Bianca'

ROOTS

- Garlic
'German Red'
- Carrots
'Touchon' and
'Chantenay'
- Onions
'Red Torpedo',
'Walla Walla Sweet',
and 'Summer
Bunching'

LEAFY GREENS

- Kale 'Lacinato'
- Swiss chard 'Five
Color Silverbeet'
- Collard 'Champion'
- Mesclun
Cutting lettuce,
arugula, mustard,
cress, and chervil
- Endive 'Marai chere
Tres Fine'

VEGETABLES

- Pole bean
'Trionfo Violetto'
- Peas
'Green Arrow'
and sugar snap
- Artichoke
'Imperial Star'

“Edibles don't have to be planted in rows. Grow with whimsy, and work becomes play.” ELLEN ECKER OGDEN



Clockwise, from top left: Native species in the perennial beds attract pollinators.

The focal point wood obelisk is easily moved if needed each season.

A viburnum tree in the center of the garden becomes a natural trellis for morning glories or red runner beans.

'Lemon Gem' marigolds and artichokes lean out of their beds at the entrance. ■

