



Eat your lawn out, Baltimore!

Los Angeles architect and artist **Fritz Haeg** is trying to help people garden and eat better. Along the way, he's also having great fun raising the hackles of homeowners associations.

It is possible to do good and make mischief at the same time, as Haeg's Edible Estates project is about to prove in Baltimore. Haeg is looking for a local lawn to rip up and replant with "a highly productive edible landscape" — meaning fruit, veggies and herbs.

He doesn't want just any lawn. He wants a front lawn, preferably along Main Street, U.S.A.

The house "should be on a somewhat lengthy typical residential street lined entirely with uninterrupted groomed front lawns," the project guidelines say. "[I]n some ways 'conventional,' 'iconic,' 'American.'"

In other words, someplace where the neighbors will freak out.

"We would particularly like to do the Edible Estate prototype on a street where the interruption of the endless lawn would be dramatic and controversial," the guidelines say. "A monotonous housing development of identical homes and front lawns would be ideal!"

Creating a stir is the whole point, Haeg told me in a phone interview yesterday.

"It wouldn't be really meaningful to do these projects in places where it's already been accepted," he said. "It's meant to be a provocation on the street. ... The project is really about contrasts, showing these diverse, productive, edible gardens" against a "monoculture of lawns."

Haeg planted his first Edible Estates garden in Salina, Kan., on Independence Day 2005. Since then, he's planted in Lakewood, Calif., Maplewood, N.J., and London. He's also put out a book, *Edible Estates*, with this subversive subtitle: "Attack on the Front Lawn."

Next up: Austin and Baltimore.

Haeg is coming to Charm City at the invitation of the Contemporary Museum, which has commissioned a garden as part of a larger exhibit that will "break down the barriers between art and life," said **Irene Hofmann**, executive director of the museum. Baltimoreans who'd like to volunteer their lawns should send images of their



Volunteers work on an Edible Estates project in front of a home in Maplewood, N.J. Los Angeles architect and artist Fritz Haeg is looking for a lawn in Baltimore that he can subvert in similar fashion.

houses and streets to info@edibleestates.org. There is no firm deadline to apply, but Hofmann said Haeg is coming to town in a few weeks to tour sites and make his pick.

Warning to my Southwest Baltimore neighbors: I'm thinking about offering up my own lawn. The way the newspaper industry is going, I'll need to live off the land.

The computers didn't work on purpose

Ross Goldstein, deputy administra-

tor of the Maryland State Board of Elections, would like to correct the Primary Day record. One of my polling place spies had reported that polls stayed open until 9:30 because of bad weather, but computerized voting machines shut down automatically at 8 p.m., forcing officials to resort to paper ballots.

Not quite, Goldstein writes.

"The computers did not shut down automatically," Goldstein says in an e-mail. "Instead, according to the Help America Vote Act, provisional voting is required to be used during an ex-

tension of voting hours. The policy reason behind the requirement is to allow those ballots to be held apart from the regular votes in case the extension is determined to be invalid after the election. If the ordered extension is not overturned the ballots are counted along with the other provisional ballots."

CONNECT THE DOTS

The *Wall Street Journal* the other day profiled "12 People Who are Changing Your Retirement," and the Baltimore area was well represented. One of the dozen was **John Erickson**, who launched his retirement home empire in Baltimore County. Another was **John P. Stewart**, executive director of Baltimore City's Commission on Aging and Retirement Education, who is "working on a blueprint for making city services receptive to all the needs of older Americans." A third was nursing home reformer **William Thomas**. His unmentioned local tie: He is a professor at the Erickson School of Aging, Management and Policy at UMBC. ... In a piece titled "Beltway Bacchanal," *Harper's* magazine contends some members of Congress use campaign funds and so-called "leadership PACs" to spend lavishly on themselves. Among the lawmakers singled out for his "pricey tastes" is Maryland's own **Steny Hoyer**. "[D]uring the 2006 election cycle alone, his Leadership PAC doled out \$66,146 on hotels, including the InterContinental Hotel in Chicago, the Ritz-Carlton in Phoenix, the Breakers in Palm Beach and the W in Seattle." No immediate comment from Hoyer's office. ... Bumper sticker from the folks at O'Malleywatch.com (whoever they are): "OWE'MALLEY." Off to the side, it says, "Leadership that TAXES." ... The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra has been there, done that. Which doesn't preclude milking it. "First woman to lead a major American symphony orchestra? That's so 2007," reads the e-mail. "Find out what the BSO is doing in 2008-2009 on Wednesday, February 27 at 9:30 a.m. at the annual Season Announcement, delivered by Music Director **Marin Alpay** and BSO President and CEO **Paul Meechan**."