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Incredible Edible Estates

By: Abigail



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[Guidelines for Edible Estates Site Selection](#)

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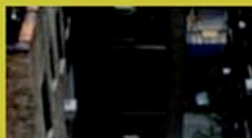


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Less than a year later in 2006, after the well-publicized success of this first project, [Edible Estates #02: The Foti Residence](#) project was initiated over Memorial Day weekend in Lakewood, California (land of the cul-de-sac) and completed on June 24, 2006 with invaluable input from The Foti Family and a dedicated volunteer landscaping and gardening team.

Both Edible Estate projects surely had their sceptics and the host families were in turn under a lot of (self-imposed) pressure to insure that these ideas took root as a garden laboratory and test model for future sites. Haeg has subsequently gained enough steam to migrate east to launch his next Edible Estates Project in New York. He is specifically looking for a suburban neighborhood or community that exhibits many of the challenges presented in the previous two projects. (Haeg encourages those who are interested in proposing a site, to review the previous projects and [guidelines posted on his website](#)).

In a conversation with Haeg before he traveled on from NYC to lecture at ICA in Philadelphia and Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh, I asked the gardening architect whether there are [DIY guidelines for creating one's own Edible Estate](#) in places like NYC or any (sub) urban environment for that matter. Haeg emphatically stated, "yes", and that it was perhaps a matter of how one approaches the three-part symbiotic relationship between ECOLOGY, COMMUNITY, and (experience-related) POETRY that frees one to invent and adapt organically to any situation or locale. Given that Haeg refers to architecture as "a reconciling membrane between inside and out", the Edible Estates model does indeed seem to have rich applications beyond the lawn and neighborhood as we know it.

The following are some comments harvested during a conversation with Fritz Haeg, though the my cell phone connection was not ideal, so some paraphrasing occurs:

AD: What are the relationships, from your experience, between architectural, movement, and gardening practice?

FH: In working with my students I am helping them to not only define a practice for themselves (whatever that medium might ultimately be) but also to work with a specific project, to create a meaningful piece that has a certain resonance that, in turn, might ultimately create a path for a student or group of students. This might ultimately lead to one's working in architecture or design, or another related field whose practice necessitates a shift in thinking and the traditional use of materials. As with creating a garden, one must acknowledge where in the plot "succulents" should be planted or where another species might thrive or successfully take root.

AD: Is finding one's "intelligent edge" a new form of ecological or sustainable design practice and/or methodology? That is, are there instances where not building, designing, and/or making more "stuff" might be the more responsible or sound design decision?

FH: Sustainability can be a dangerously over-used, almost non-productive term. I prefer, in general, the idea of "remediation" to the term "sustainability".

AD: Yes, sustainability, as a term or catch phrase, is perhaps all too vague and more damaging than we realize at this juncture.

Haeg will be hosting and conducting the following programs as part of his Sundown Schoolhouse course offerings for 2007:

For Spring 2007, the theme is "Planet of the Humans."

For Fall 2007, the theme is "People to People."

Information on the [course offerings](#) appears on Fritz Haeg's website.



Flickr's image database of Suburban Lawns



Composters.com/Lawn and Garden Gear

There is a lawn and garden revolution currently taking place in the heartland. "Garden," as we know it, typically conjures up images of a private, enclosed space - a protected visual oasis - a patchworked quilt of cultivated herbs and seasonal vegetables. "Lawn", for most, has less romantic connotations, though its origins, "laund", suggests a wide open plain or plowed meadow, which over time became ye olde word, "mawan", or the verb, "mow", as we know it today.

Garden or lawn need not equal mow, though.

The green-thumbed architect, [Fritz Haeg](#), might finally have a solution for our fixation with the lawn as ego and suburbia as a vapid showcase for increasingly archaic landscaping strategies coupled with the weekly Olympic mowing events.

Haeg's [Edible Estates](#) project is reseeded our ideas about personal turf, the suburban lawn, and an "in-your-neighbor's-face" food production plan. Haeg, who lives, creates, gardens, and teaches in and around his multi-purpose [geodesic dome](#) complex in Los Angeles, recently visited NYC as a guest speaker at The Whitney's Architectural Dialogue Series. That same day he also served as the chief propagator of a [Dancing 9-to-5](#) movement-a-thon held at the Altria's public atrium on 42nd Street.

During his talk at the Altria, Haeg openly broadcasted the fact that his conception of Edible Estates was essentially a reaction to the outcome of the 2004 presidential elections. As a practicing architect and founder of the [Sundown Salon](#) and its subsequent [Sundown Schoolhouse](#), Fritz became concerned post-elections about the bald-spots of democracy and the thinning, bio-regional diversity that was becoming prevalent in our heartland. He wanted to initiate a hands-on project that not only penetrated the red state/blue state map, but also might provide alternative methods for addressing monoculture in the American landscape, foodscape, and privatized mind.

Fritz Haeg outlines how suburban lawns have been pervasive in America for more than fifty years. Our love affair with the lawn began with the English manor house and the overt display of one's "spread" via a rather non-utilitarian use of the green paddock out front. These vast estate lawns often included an idyllic exhibition of grazing livestock as well. Vegetable gardens were typically hidden, out of sight, behind the manor house. Even Thomas Jefferson's [Monticello](#) followed this rule of thumb by concealing vegetable and herb gardens from the estate's approach or main entrance.

The suburban communities of [Levittown](#) and [Lakewood, CA](#) followed suit in the aftermath of World War II rebuilding efforts, as an entire nation settled in to the idea of manicured lawn usage, replicable, shrinking plots, paved connectivity, and the glamour of food stuffs being manufactured and shipped in from the non-local sources.

What exactly is the Minnesota-raised Fritz Haeg up to then with Edible Estates and his desire to penetrate the grassy comforts of suburban ideology? It is conceivable that lawns converted into lush, edible gardens might prevail in a sunny, feel-good state like California, but how might one export this idea to regions of the country where social engagement, the fabric of community, and the rules of the neighborhood are generally not to be uprooted?

Consider then Haeg's first Edible Estates Project launched with input from [The Land Institute](#) in Salina, Kansas. The heartland of Kansas was an ideal testing ground for both Haeg's ideas as well as the Land Institute's ongoing efforts to address the reintroduction of native plants species and a re-examination of prairie agriculture and soil conservation. [Edible Estates #01: The Priti Cox Residence](#) was initiated on July 4, 2005 in the front yard of Priti and Stan Cox and was commissioned by the Salina Art Center in conjunction with their 2005 exhibit "[Eating: Exploring What, How, & Why We Eat.](#)"



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Books and Other Projects

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[Michael Pollan/Edible Writing/Publications](#)

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