Sponsored by the Salina Art Center
for the exhibit: *Eating: A Community Project Exploring What, How and Why We Eat*
Curated by Stacy Switzer

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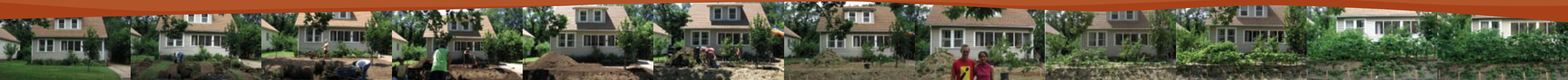
Edible Estates: Edition #1
Stan and Priti Cox Residence
712 Custer Street Salina, Kansas

Edible Estates

A gardenlab project
to replace American lawns with edible garden landscapes responsive to local culture, climate and landscape www.edibleestates.org

Edible Estates
a gardenlab project
EDITION ONE
Salina, KS



Edible Estates is an attack on the American lawn and everything it has come to represent. Why do we dedicate so much land to a space with so little function but requires the consumption of so many precious resources and endless hours of maintenance while contaminating our air and water? Lawns cover 30 million acres of the United States while 349 million acres are used for crops. Americans spend $750 million a year on grass seed alone and more than $25 billion on do-it-yourself lawn and garden care.

The American lawn is almost entirely a symbolic gesture. Exactly what it represents has shifted from its ancestry in English estates to today's endless suburban carpet of conformity. Originally manicured by grazing animals, an ornamental sweeping lawn would occupy otherwise valuable farmland surrounding a manor estate, demonstrating the owner's wealth while keeping the production of his vegetable garden out of view. In this tradition, today's American lawn has become the default surface for any defensible private space. An occasional lawn for recreation can be a delight, but most lawns are only occupied when they are being tended.

The lawn divides and isolates us. It is a buffer of anti-social no-man's-land that we wrap ourselves with, reinforcing the suburban alienation of our sprawling communities. The mono-culture of one plant species covering our neighborhoods from coast to coast celebrates puritanical homogeneity and mindless conformity. The lawn devours resources while it pollutes. It is maniacally groomed with mowers and trimmers powered by the two-stroke motors responsible for much of our greenhouse gas emissions. To eradicate invading plants it is drugged with pesticides which are then washed into our water supply with sprinklers and hoses dumping our increasingly rare fresh drinking resources down the gutter.

Meanwhile, at the grocery store, we confront our food. Engineered fruits and vegetables wrapped in plastic and styrofoam, cultivated not for taste, but for ease of transport, appearance and uniformity, then sprayed with chemicals to inhibit diseases and pests that thrive in an unbalanced ecosystem. Organic farming accounts for less than 1% of the United States agriculture output. The produce in the average American dinner is trucked 1,500 miles to get to the plate.

We don't know where the food came from or who grew it. Perhaps we have even forgotten that plants were responsible for this mass-produced product we consume. This detachment from the source of our food breeds a careless attitude towards our role as custodians of the land that feeds us. Perhaps we would reconsider what we put down the drain, on the ground and in the air if there was more direct evidence that we will ultimately ingest it.

Edible Estates proposes the replacement of the American lawn with a highly productive domestic edible landscape. Food grown in our front yards will connect us to the seasons, the organic cycles of the earth and our neighbors. The banal lifeless space of uniform grass in front of the house will be replaced with the chaotic abundance of bio-diversity. In becoming gardeners, we will reconsider

our connection to the land, what we take from it and what we put in it. Each yard will be a unique expression of its location and of the inhabitant and their desires. Valuable land will be put to work.

The Edible Estates project will gradually be implemented in various communities throughout the United States. Each project will respond to the unique qualities of the land and people that it is for.

The first application of the Edible Estate project is in Salina, Kansas, close to the geographic center of the United States. Stan and Priti Cox have offered their typical American front lawn as a working prototype for the region. They have dared to defy the sweeping continuity of their neighborhood's green lined streets. Working together with the family and additional helpers, we removed the front lawn in June 2005, and replaced it with an edible landscape. This food-producing garden was designed to respond to the unique characteristics of the site, the needs and desires of the owner and the local climate. You can visit their Edible Estate at 712 Custer Street to see how their crops are doing.

What You Will Need To Create Your Own Edible Estate:

A rented sod-cutter

A rented roto-tiller

A truck load of compost, calculated to cover the size of your estate

Shovels, hand trowels and rakes

Friends and neighbors to help

Irrigation system, such as soaker hoses

Stakes and string

Fencing material to deter animals

Selected vegetables, herbs and fruits as seeds, starts, or trees for your region

Basic Instructions To Create Your Own Edible Estate:

1. Use a sod-cutter to remove existing grass, roll it up, give it away, compost it, or find a new use for it
2. Use roto-tiller to loosen compacted soil
3. Spread around about 2-5 inches of compost
4. Till the soil again to mix in the new compost
5. Mark out a plan for your edible estate with stakes and string
6. Plant your seedlings, starts, trees and seeds according to the planting calendar
7. Water them in thoroughly with a garden hose
8. Install an 18" – 24" fence to deter local animals, like rabbits, if you have problems
9. Establish composting system

Some Questions To Think About When Planning Your Edible Estate:

Where is south? Where are the shady and sunny areas?

Where should tall trees or lower groundcover go? Are there views to frame or obscure?

What do you want to eat from your estate? What can't you get from the grocery store?

Alot of fruits and vegetables grow on vines, do you have something for them to grow on?

How do you want to move through the edible estate?

Where should paths go?

What kind of mulch to use? Straw, bark, compost, leaves will retain moisture, block weeds and decompose into the soil.

Is there an area in your estate for people? A place to relax and enjoy the plants and food growing?

Resources:

Kansas State University Agriculture Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service www.oznet.ksu.edu

Organic Community Garden at KCK Urban Academy www.kckurbanacademy.net/YLDCOrganicCommGardens.htm

Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education www.kacee.org

Garden Centers:

Earthcare Services Garden Store 470 S. Ohio Street (785) 827-9056

Ten Acre Gardens 8853 E Cloud Street (785) 536-4672

Garden Oasis 3363 W. Armstrong Rd (785) 493-0199

True Value Hardware 460 S. Ohio Street (785) 823-6400

Books:

How to Grow More Vegetables: And Fruits, Nuts, Berries, Grains, and Other Crops Than You Ever Thought Possible on Less Land Than You Can Imagine, John Jeavons, Ten Speed Press; 6th edition, 2002

Edible Wild Plants of the Prairie, Kelly Kindscher, Univ. Press of Kansas, 1987

Encyclopedia of Edible Plants of North America, Francois Couplan, Keats Publishing, 1998

Gardening in the Heartland, Rachel Snyder, Univ. Press of Kansas, 1992

Midwest Gardener's Handbook: The What, Where, When, How & Why of Gardening in the Midwest, Jan Riggenbach, Cool Springs Press, 1999

The Rodale Book of Composting: Easy Methods for Every Gardener, Grace Gershuny, Rodale Books, 1992.

Culture and Horticulture: A Philosophy of Gardening, Wolf D. Storl, Biodynamic Literature, 1979.

Gardening: Plains and Upper Midwest, Roger Vick, Fulcrum Publishers, 1991

The Complete Book of Edible Landscaping, Rosalind Creasy, A Sierra Club Book, 1982. Also see other books by this author. (This is the definitive book on the topic!)

Edible Estates

a gardenlab project

The Edible Estates project is part of the **gardenlab** program, established by Fritz Haeg in 2001. With the garden as metaphor and laboratory, **gardenlab** initiates ecology based art and design projects. For more information visit www.edibleestates.org and www.gardenlab.org.

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April
lettuce • radish • collards • endive • green onions • spinach • swiss chard • cauliflower • peas • turnips • beets • beans (snap)

May
carrots • broccoli • potatoes • beans (lima) • cucumber • eggplant • melon • peppers • okra

June
onions • sweet corn • tomatoes • squash • cabbage

July
carrots • broccoli • endive • cauliflower • kale • lettuce • potatoes

August
radish • pumpkins • salsify • sweet potatoes

September
spinach • turnips

October