



## Edible Ornamentals/Unusual Edibles

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With more people interested in edible landscaping, uncommon fruits and edibles are coming into their own. Some familiar, ornamental plants have wonderful fruit or unusual berries. Aronias (chokeberries), for example, are well worth incorporating into your garden for both their beauty and their edible berries. Also, don't overlook the decorative qualities of traditional fruit and herbs! Figs, persimmons, espaliered fruit trees, berries, and grapes can all be added to your landscape, while many herbs make wonderful additions to borders and planters. See Sky's Fruit Tree List, Herb List, and Berry Information Sheets for detailed descriptions of our more conventional edible selections.

A number of flowers grown primarily as ornamentals are also edible. Roses and violets are noted below, but other edible flowers include daylilies, nasturtiums, and many more. See Sky's edible flower list for a more complete list.

Please note: plants grown and sold commercially primarily as ornamentals, such as rose bushes, daylilies, and flower starts such as pansies, may have been treated by growers with chemicals not registered for use on edible plants. If a plant you purchase has not been grown specifically as an edible, wait a year after planting to harvest from it. In our detailed list following, plants Sky purchases solely as edibles will be starred. Here at the nursery, tables and beds marked "edibles" contain only plants grown specifically for consumption. (For example, we sell organic edible flower starts such as violas with our vegetables and herbs, conventionally-grown ones with annual flowers.)

Many edible ornamental trees and shrubs have roughly similar cultural requirements. Unless otherwise noted, they produce best in full sun and rich, moist soil that drains well. Make sure the garden bed has plenty of organic matter; work in 3" of Cedar Grove Compost, Fertil-Mulch®, or other good compost to prepare the soil. Weeds, lack of ample water, and birds will limit yields. Mulching with compost or bark will limit competition from weeds and conserve moisture. Most of these plants will produce well if fertilized once a year with organic rose and flower food. Huckleberries, tea camellias, lingonberries, salal, and wintergreen prefer organic rhododendron food. Follow the package directions according to the size of the plant.

It can be hard to find edible plants for shady areas. Most of the following plants produce better in full sun but will tolerate shade. The italicized plants actually prefer partial shade.

Shrubs: aronia, Chilean myrtle, currant, elderberry, gooseberry, highbush cranberry, honeyberry, red huckleberry, *evergreen huckleberry*, *Oregon grape*, serviceberry, tea camellia, some bamboos

Groundcovers: alpine strawberry, lingonberry, salal, *violets*, *wintergreen*

Vines: akebia

Trees: pawpaw

There are many excellent books on edible landscaping for those interested in more information.

## GROUNDCOVERS

### \***Alpine strawberry** (*Fragaria vesca*)

This European strawberry may have tiny berries, but oh, the flavor! It's a nicer groundcover than regular strawberries, too, with its finer foliage and more controlled expansion. Sometimes white-berried forms are available: equally tasty, but more unusual than the red. For a French treat, drop a few berries in your next glass of champagne. Alpine strawberries tolerate shade better than the larger strawberry cultivars, but they produce best when given full sun, rich soil, and yearly feeding.

### \***Cranberry** (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*)

This evergreen groundcover will grow to about 6" tall and will be covered with bright red berries in the fall. Its diminutive size, glossy leaves, pink flowers and bright red berries make it a nice groundcover for a sunny area. No, it doesn't need a bog, but keep it well-watered in the summer.

### \***Lingonberry** (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*)

You don't have to go to Ballard for your lingonberry syrup if you grow your own. Lingonberries spread nicely through underground rhizomes. Growing 6-12" tall, its small glossy leaves, white flowers and bright red berries make it a nice groundcover for a sun to part-shaded area. It loves the same conditions as camellias and rhododendrons.

### **Salal** (*Gaultheria shallon*)

Salal berries were so highly prized by the indigenous people that they were sometimes used as trade items! The plump dark blue fruit has a somewhat mealy texture and tastes rather like a blueberry (its distant cousin). It's pleasant for fresh eating, can be dried, and made into jelly, preserves, pies.... Don't let the birds get ALL your crop anymore! As an evergreen groundcover, this sturdy and attractive native stays low in sun, grows taller in shade, and tolerates neglect.

### **Violets** (*Viola species*)

All violet species, including sweet violets, wild perennial violets, pansies, Johnny-jump-ups, and violas, have edible flowers and leaves. The flowers typically have a slightly minty flavor; the leaves are blander, tasting a bit like lettuce. Perennial violets and violas will spread by seed or underground stolons; most have attractive heart-shaped leaves that will be evergreen in milder winters. An excellent groundcover for a shady area or woodland garden! Sky typically carries some viola starts grown organically specifically for eating. These ones may be harvested freely their first season.

### **Wintergreen** (*Gaultheria procumbens*)

This beautiful Eastern U.S. native is a close relative of salal. The plant looks rather like a tiny salal with brighter green leaves; the berries are shiny, red, and have that refreshing wintergreen flavor. A favorite with children! Give it woodland conditions.

## GRASSES

### **Bamboo** (*Phyllostachys species*)

Among Sky's bamboo selection are several that produce abundant, tasty shoots. All are "running" bamboos, meaning they'll spread vigorously if not contained by a bamboo barrier. Depending on variety, bamboo canes can reach 10-80' and take sun or part shade. See Sky's current [Bamboo List](#) for full descriptions of all varieties carried this year—those with tasty shoots are so noted.

## SHRUBS

### **\*Chilean Myrtle, Orange-Bark Myrtle** (*Luma apiculata*)

This South American native is a beautiful ornamental year-round. Growing 5-15' tall, it has dark evergreen foliage set off in June or July by masses of puffy white flowers. Both foliage and flowers are fragrant. In the fall, it has shiny purple-black edible berries about the size of blueberries. Its greatest attribute as an ornamental, however, is its glowing cinnamon to orange bark. It is happy in either sun or partial shade and tolerates drought once established. It is hardy to about 20°F, so it may need protection in colder winters.

### **\*Chilean Guava, Strawberry Myrtle** (*Ugni molinae*)

This South American native is another beautiful evergreen. Growing 5-8 tall (taller in warmer climates), it has fragrant dark foliage that can be used as tea. The fall-ripening fruit is small, red, and aromatic, with a flavor like wild strawberries. Chilean guava prefers full sun. It is hardy to about 35°F, so it will need protection in Seattle winters. One option would be to grow it in a container and move it indoors for the winter.

### **Chokecherry/ Aronia** (*Aronia melanocarpa*)

This American native is valued for its tasty and nutritious fruit. Aronia juice is now available in supermarkets—it's tart, tasty, and high in Vitamin C. The 4-6' plant is also very ornamental. It has glossy, thick foliage, which turns fire engine red in October. In spring it is covered with snowy white flowers. The blue-black fruit can hang on the plant well into winter if you don't eat them first. The fruit is eaten fresh or used in juice or preserves. The plant adapts to most soils, takes full sun to partial shade, is hardy to -40° F, and is rarely bothered by pests and diseases.

### **Elderberry** (*Sambucus* species)

Elderberries have been eaten by people in Europe, Asia, and America for millennia. The deciduous bushes grow rather like lilacs, with arching branches that grow 6-15' but can be kept smaller with pruning. The tiny flowers come in large, flat, ornamental clusters in June, followed by black berries in September. For best fruit production, you need two varieties for cross-pollination. The berries make delicious preserves, pies, wine, or juice. Flowers can be eaten in fritters. Sky carries several varieties bred for their their high quality berry production.

### **\*Goji aka Chinese Wolfberry** (*Lycium barbarum*)

Chinese wolfberry grows as a shrub to semi-vine, reaching 8-10 feet high. It has profuse purplish-blue flowers in spring followed by orange-red berries. The berries taste a bit like raisins; the leaves and young shoots can be eaten as a green vegetable. Both berries and bark have been used in Chinese medicine for over 2000 years to support the immune system, eyes, liver, and circulation. Western studies confirm that the berries are extremely rich in vitamin, minerals and antioxidants. Dried goji berries and juice are widely sold, but to get the fresh berries, you need to grow them yourself. Chinese Wolfberry likes full sun and well-drained soil. It is drought resistant and easy to grow.

### **Highbush Cranberry, European Cranberry** (*Viburnum opulus*, *V. opulus trilobum*)

Not a cranberry at all, but it has an acidic, beautiful red fruit, so.... A beautiful 10' tall, shade tolerant ornamental with showy white lacecap spring blossoms. The red fruit is attractive to birds and can be used to make preserves, syrup or wine. The fall foliage turns a brilliant orange or red. Self-fertile. Full sun or partial shade. A great hedge plant.

**\*Honeyberry** (*Lonicera kamchatika* aka *L. caerulea* var. *edulis*)

This member of the honeysuckle family offers tasty small blue fruits that look rather like elongated blueberries. It likes sun to partial shade and rich organic soil. The arching (3-4' high by about 5-6' wide) bushes have creamy white to yellow flowers in early spring, followed by the bright berries in early summer. Sky carries several cultivars; pick two different varieties to ensure cross-pollination.

**Huckleberry** (*Vaccinium* species)

This Northwest favorite needs little introduction! Huckleberries, besides being tasty, contain even more antioxidants than their relatives, blueberries. Sky Nursery carries several native species. **Red huckleberry** (*Vaccinium parvifolium*) has tart, red, almost transparent fruit. It is deciduous, but its angular green branches are attractive in winter. The other two bear black berries. **Evergreen huckleberry** (*V. ovatum*) is a stunningly ornamental plant with shiny dark foliage; florists often use its cut branches in arrangements. Its berries are sweeter than those of the red huckleberry. The deciduous **thinleaf huckleberry** (*V. membranaceum*) has the most delicious berries of all. Huckleberries do well in shade but produce best in sun. They are shallow-rooted; try not to mulch too deeply or to cultivate around the roots.

**Oregon Grape** (*Mahonia* species)

You've admired the purple-black berries on this plant, but did you realize that they're completely edible? The tart fruit is best sweetened; it makes excellent juice and jelly. The shiny holly-like evergreen foliage, fragrant yellow flowers in late winter, and fall berry display make this a superlative ornamental. Give it rich well-drained soil and part-shade for best performance.

**\*Pineapple Guava** (*Feijoa sellowiana*)

This evergreen shrub has attractive foliage—large leathery leaves with silver underside—but what's spectacular about it is the large flowers. They have fleshy white petals and bright red stamens; bees and hummingbirds love them, and they are edible, tasting like cinnamon cotton candy according to Raintree. The fruit requires a hot summer to ripen (or keep the shrub in a container and bring indoors to finish ripening); it tastes like pineapple crossed with guava with a hint of mint, hence the name. Pineapple guava is hardy to about 15°F and will grow about 10 feet tall and wide.

**Pomegranate** (*Punica granatum*)

Pomegranates grow as small deciduous trees or shrubs. (We class it here with shrubs because the variety we offer for fruit production is shrubby.) They have showy bright orange-red blooms and the familiar orange to red fruit. Pomegranates are generally hardy to about 15° F, and the fruit requires a long warm period to ripen. They are ideal for container culture so they can be moved indoors as needed.

**Rose** (*Rosa* species)

Many species roses, including the natives and the rugosa roses, bear rose hips which are excellent Vitamin C sources. They are most commonly dried and used to brew rosehip tea, but can also be cooked and eaten or used in jams. Ounce for ounce, they contain more Vitamin C than oranges, as well as valuable bioflavonoids.

**Serviceberry** (*Amelanchier*)

An American native, this plant was used extensively by early settlers for preserves. Canada has started growing the fruit commercially, though it's not readily available yet in our country. The fruit looks like a tiny blue apple and tastes rather like a blueberry. It can be eaten fresh, dried as "raisins", or used in pies and preserves. Different cultivars are available; some can be trained as a small tree, some as a large bush. The plant will be covered with white flowers in late spring, with berries in July, and with bright yellow foliage in the fall—a good multi-season plant!

**\*Sichuan (Sechuan, Szechuan) Pepperbush** (*Zanthoxylum simulans*)

This handsome deciduous shrub or small tree is the source of the pink Sichuan "peppercorns" used in Asian cooking. Like Japanese pepperbush, the young leaves and shoots are also used for salad greens and in soups and stews. It is a great ornamental, with dark green ferny foliage that is aromatic when bruised. Fragrant yellow-green flowers in May are followed by red fruit. Fall color is a clear yellow. It takes sun to part shade, grows to about 7' tall, and likes rich soil that retains moisture. Said to be self-fertile, but you'll get better berry production with two plants.

**\*Tea Camellia** (*Camellia sinensis*)

Yes, true tea—green, black, or oolong—comes from a close cousin of ornamental camellias. Like them, Tea Camellia is a beautiful evergreen ornamental that finds the Northwest climate nearly ideal. Tea Camellia can grow to 6-8'. Its leaves are narrow, dark, and glossy, and the fragrant, pearly white single flowers appear in the fall. Sky has an information sheet on how to pick and process your own green tea. We are carrying the variety 'Sochi', a hardy Russian variety from the northernmost commercial tea-growing region in the world. Tea camellia likes full sun to partial shade, well-drained soil rich in organic matter, and yearly feeding with rhododendron food.

**VINES*****Akebia quinata***

Akebia vines are extremely handsome trained up a trellis—thickly growing, evergreen most winters, with slightly chocolate-scented flowers in early spring. There are white, rosy pink, and purple-flowered varieties—you need two varieties for fruit set. The fruit is sweet, sausage-shaped, and very unusual. Akebia likes sun or part shade and normal garden conditions and care.

**\*Hops** (*Humulus lupulus*)

Hops are vigorous, hardy plants that produce scented flowers essential to would-be home brewers. Sky carries two different types of hops: the golden hop vine which is grown primarily for its ornamental foliage, and various green-leaved cultivars which have been bred for flower production and brewing quality. Be sure to choose the one you need. Typical brewing varieties include Cascade, Centennial, Mount Hood, Nugget, and Willamette. Hops will die back to the ground in winter and grow up to a foot a day under ideal conditions in summer, reaching up to 25 feet. They like full sun, good rich soil, plenty of water during the growing season, a good strong support, and plenty of room to stretch vertically. They will reward you with luxuriant-looking foliage and fragrant light-green flowers that can be used for sleep pillows or for brewing beers and ales.

**\*Kiwi** (*Actinidia* species)

Kiwis are vigorous growers that will reward the adventurous gardener with an abundance of fruit. Being deciduous, they are great grown over an arbor or large trellis screen for summer shade. Most varieties have glossy green leaves. Several species thrive in our climate. The supermarket fuzzy kiwi is *Actinidia deliciosa*. *Actinidia arguta*, the hardy kiwi, is smaller and smooth-skinned, but equally sweet and delicious. Most kiwis require a male plant to pollinate each eight females. However one variety, 'Issai' is partially self fertile. See Sky's current Kiwi Information Sheet for details on the different cultivars we're carrying and for information on growing and training the kiwi vines.

**\*Maypop** (*Passiflora incarnate*)

This East Coast American native passionflower is hardy to -20° F! It is usually grown as an ornamental for its unusual flowers, but it will produce tasty egg-shaped fruit. It likes sun and rich well-drained soil; like akebia, it will be evergreen in mild winters.

**Passionflower Vine** (*Passiflora caerulea*)

A hardy perennial vine. Temperatures below 20 deg. F. will kill the top of the plant, but mulched around the base it will regrow in the spring and flower and fruit each year. The amazingly ornamental flowers have white petals and white and purple crowns. The orange colored oval fruit is used to flavor beverages.

**TREES****\*Bay Tree** (*Laurus nobilis*)

This aromatic broadleaf evergreen makes a great accent in a bed or a container. Its natural habit is to grow as a small (10-15' in the Northwest) pyramidal tree, but it can also be trained as a topiary or even sheared as a hedge. In a container it will usually stay smaller and more shrubby. The dark green, glossy foliage is highly aromatic, and the leaves are the true bay leaves used in cooking.

**\*Chestnut** (*Castanea species*)

Chestnuts are majestic, spreading shade and timber trees that ultimately grow to 40' or more and can live for hundreds of years. In the summer they have cascades of fragrant yellow catkins and glossy dark leaves. They like full to part sun and well-drained soil. The sweet nuts ripen in late fall and are excellent roasted, in stuffing and baked goods, or ground and used as a flour. Chestnuts require cross-pollination; if you don't have room for two separate trees, plant two in the same hole and grow as a multi-trunked tree. They are primarily wind-pollinated, but some bees like the pollen.

**Cornelian Cherry** (*Cornus mas*)

This dogwood relative has been grown for its fruit in Greece and Eastern Europe for thousands of years, but has more typically been grown in America as an ornamental. The fruit is olive-shaped, red, rather like a tart cherry in flavor but with a drier texture. The fruit ripens over a long period. Cornelian cherry grows as an attractive small tree (to about 15-25 feet); its starry yellow flowers light up the late winter landscape, and it has attractive fall foliage.

**\*Filbert/Hazelnut** (*Corylus* species)

Filberts are handsome, rounded small trees, generally growing 10-20 feet tall; they can also be planted about four feet apart and pruned as shrubs to form a 6-10 foot tall edible hedge. Yellow catkin flowers provide interest in late winter. Filbert nuts, also called hazelnuts, are small, round to acorn-shaped, and sweet. The Northwest native hazelnut does produce nuts, but for the tastiest nuts and best resistance to Eastern filbert blight, get our named varieties, which have been bred for flavor and disease-resistance.

**\*Loquat** (*Eriobotrya japonica*)

Loquat is a beautiful landscape tree. Its small (15-30 foot) size, long dark evergreen leaves, and resistance to pests and diseases make it a nice addition to the edible landscape. Unfortunately, its bloom time means it often fails to set fruit in our climate. Providing frost protection and pollinators (orchard mason bees) may help you get a crop of crisp, juicy, delicious apricot-sized fruit.

**\*Mulberry** (*Morus* species)

Mulberries are ornamental trees with lush, tropical-looking foliage. The fruit is like a large, juicy, sweet blackberry. The trees will reach 30 feet in height and spread, but they can be kept smaller with pruning. Mulberries like at least a half day of sun (all day is better) and well-drained soil. Mulch to prevent freeze damage; hardy to about 10° F. Mulberries may be harvested while red for a tarter berry, or left to ripen fully for greater sweetness.

**\*Olive** (*Olea europaea*)

Olive trees are picturesque, stately evergreens hardy to about 10° F. They require full sun and well-drained soil. In warm summers, early-ripening varieties should ripen fruit. Olives are great for their oil or eating fresh! For maximum ripening, plant against a south or west-facing wall in full sun.

**\*Pawpaw** (*Asimina triloba*)

This beautiful small tree adds a tropical look to your landscape with its long glossy leaves and pyramidal shape. The 3-6" fruit is tropical tasting too, reminding some of a banana, others of vanilla custard. Pawpaws grow naturally as an understory tree, up to 10 feet. They are one of the few fruit trees to produce well in shade gardens. Here in the Puget Sound area, they will also enjoy full sun. Plant two for pollination.

**Pine** (*Pinus* species)

Edible pine nuts, or pignoli, are produced by all species of pine. However, most produce nuts or crops that are too small for most foragers to bother harvesting. The Korean stone pine (*Pinus koraiensis*), however, is one of the world's three foremost commercially harvested pine-nut producers, and it is also a beautiful ornamental. Another good pine-nut producer is the Siberian stone pine (*Pinus cembra* spp. *siberica*). Pines will ultimately grow into large trees, but these two varieties are both slow-growing.

**\*Quince** (*Cydonia oblonga*)

Back when everyone made jelly or preserves, quince was a part of every farm's orchard for its aromatic, high-pectin fruit. A gnarled small tree or large shrub, quince is a great ornamental as well. It is covered with fragrant white flowers in the spring and golden fruit in the fall. Check our fruit tree list for this year's varieties!